



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Hans
Namuth, 1971 Aug. 12-Sept. 14

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Hans Namuth on August 12 and September 8, 1971. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's August 12, 1971 - Paul Cummings talking to Hans Namuth in his studio in New York City. You were born in Germany - right?

HANS NAMUTH: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Could you tell me something about life there and growing up and education and how you got started? You were born in - what? - 1915?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. I grew up during the war years and inflation. I have memories of the French Occupation and shooting in the streets. The French occupied Essen. We had a French deserter living with us who taught me my first French. I went to the equivalent of a gymnasium, Humboldt Oberrealschule in Essen, hating school, loathing school. I would say it was a prison. Eventually I started to work in a bookshop in Essen at the age of seventeen and became very affiliated with Leftist groups in 1932 when everything was brewing and for a moment we didn't know whether they were going to go all the way Left or all the way Right. I think the Communist and the Socialist Parties at the time lost a big chance of gaining power in Germany by not uniting in 1931-1932.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. That seems to be quite a common feeling, because I've talked to other people who grew up in Germany around that period and they said pretty much the same thing.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: People who seem to have the same type of sensibility.

HANS NAMUTH: Things were a little bit different for me because my father joined the Nazi Party in 1931 after a bad Liberal life, I mean life as a Liberal. He suddenly became disillusioned about the economic decline he found himself in and joined the S.A., Storm Troopers, Brown Shirts, and became some kind of district leader in it. Which brought us only further apart.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Before we get really this far, what did you do in school? Did you have brothers and sisters?

HANS NAMUTH: I have a sister who is younger than I. She lives in Canada. What did I do in school?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have any particular pursuits, or things that you liked or disliked?

HANS NAMUTH: No. I should mention the fact that the thing that marked me most for life was the German Youth Movement which I found myself drawn into. This was a very Liberal and, as it turned out later on, anti-Nazi movement which could almost be compared to today's Hippie movement and the communes and the return to earth and back to nature kind of thing. We went out every weekend and every vacation. We discovered the countries. We traveled all over the place hiking a great deal. Once a week we'd meet at various spiritual meetings for singing and so forth. This kind of thing. I joined this movement when I was twelve and stayed with it for three or four years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there an interest in your home in literature or music or art, things like that?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. My mother was very much responsible for pushing me into musical activities, art, and so forth. I must point out that Essen had already then a very important

museum, the Folkwang Museum and the Folkwang school. The museum had an extraordinarily good collection of German Expressionists and French Impressionists, all of which were banned later on. I became thoroughly familiar with art before I reached the age of seventeen, with contemporary art, I should say - Klee, Cezanne, Max Liebermann. I got all my artistic background actually away from school that way. I joined evening classes at the Folkwang Museum. I took trips on weekends to visit the Baroque churches of Westphalia. I became politically more and more active, especially when on January 33, 1933, Hitler was elected to power. I'll never forget the night this happened. I listened to the news on my radio, a crystal type radio with earphones which I had built myself. Von Papen had appointed Hitler to become chancellor. This was the most horrible event of my youth because I realized then that eventually this would mean war. And I had been a pacifist for the previous two years of my life. Shortly afterwards, in July of that year, I was arrested for political activities and spent some days in this terrible prison in Brettinghausen near Essen. I got out thanks to my father's intervention. And after I was out I set everything in motion to get out of Germany.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you still working in the bookstore?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes, I was working in the bookstore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That lasted for . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: That lasted almost until I was ready to leave. Which I did in September. I left Essen and Germany and father and mother and everything on September 20, 1933. I was eighteen years old.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did your parents know about your leaving?

HANS NAMUTH: I made it appear to be a temporary exile. I said that I would be back very soon. Which, of course, I had no intention of doing. But this made the departure easier for them. I never went back.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Working in a bookstore you must have had all kinds of availability for information and everything?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, of course; all vibrations, cultural, political, human, started there and were centered there. This really brought me into close contact with life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you go? Did you know where you were going when you left?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. I went straight to Paris. That was the only place to go.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a reason to go there other than to . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, the reason was that I knew somebody who was going there also. We more or less went together, and for the first few weeks and for the first two weeks or so shared a room together in Paris. He was somebody who had already been there before, so it was easier for me to get acquainted with Paris and, most of all, find a way of making a living. That was the most difficult thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What could you do in Paris at that age in the thirties?

HANS NAMUTH: The first thing I did was to sell newspapers in the streets, the *Paris Soir*. Actually, that went very well, except that I was scared of the police because I was not allowed to work. I had a four weeks' visitor's visa when I arrived and intended to stay with that. And did for years. The French police were very tough, very tough.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, weren't you checked? Did you have to register?

HANS NAMUTH: I had to report to the police and I was eventually recognized as a refugee. But it was very difficult to be under a constant threat of expulsion.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you get to know other people in Paris who were coming there from Germany or Austria?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, yes. In fact, I was helped with some committees with assistance and advice and help with my papers, restaurant coupons, lunches and things like that.

Eventually I met all the Liberals of that time, including a writer who became a very good friend, Rudolph Leonhardt, who recently died in Berlin. Slowly, gropingly, I started on my way up from newspaper boy to plongeur (which is a dishwasher), to researcher, secretary, and a few months in the Pyrenees on a Quaker farm, an experimental farm.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How in the world did you get involved with that? That's kind of unusual.

HANS NAMUTH: It had to do with an unhappy love affair. I was in love with a girl who left Paris for what is now Israel, then Palestine. For me then Paris had lost all its meaning and attraction. I went to join the people on the farm. Eventually I couldn't stand it any longer, and I up and left to join this girl in Palestine. I never reached her in Palestine. But I went all the way through Italy and landed in Greece in 1935 where I learned that the girl had gotten married to somebody else. Thereupon I joined a friend who in the meantime had become a photographer and had asked me to join him in an enterprise in Mallorca. I left Greece for Spain in July or August 1935. We had a photographic studio in Puerto de Pollensa on Mallorca. We photographed people and did what was for that time some very excellent portraiture work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was this your first involvement with photography?

HANS NAMUTH: This was my first involvement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the beginning of it?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, had you had interest in anything specific before that? Or were you just trying out these things?

HANS NAMUTH: My dream had been to become a director in the theater, which I think if Hitler had not come to power I would have taken that direction. Photography is very close to that in a way because you direct people when you photograph them. And this was sort of my sublimation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm always curious about so many who have directorial interests who have ended up involved in photography and various aspects of the arts.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. I'm often asked whether I had ever wanted to become a painter. The answer is no, I never wanted to become a painter. I did want to become a director.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you gone to a lot of theater?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, yes! God, yes! Germany had an excellent theater and probably still does because it's Subsidized by both state and city governments.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's very interesting. How long did you stay then in Mallorca?

HANS NAMUTH: Until the season ended, which was in late October. We went back to Paris and continued to work as a team in Ivry-sur-Seine which, you know, is in the outskirts of Paris.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was this other person?

HANS NAMUTH: Georg Reisner. He was my age. We were very, very good friends. He died in 1940 in Marseilles, a suicide. He couldn't take it any longer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that really developed your interest in getting back to Paris and working. What did you do there? The same kind of photography?

HANS NAMUTH: Reportage, mostly, portraiture. Those were the days I think when Life magazine was founded, just barely founded, and the great French magazine *Vu* (V-u), which was I think the forerunner of *Life*, only better; the great Monsieur Vorgere who later on came to New York and died here. In late June 1936 we went back to Mallorca, back to Puerto de Pollensa, back to the same house and installed ourselves. We had an assignment for *Vu* to photograph the events of the Olympics in Barcelona, which was like a counter Olympics to the Munich Olympics, the German Olympics - no, they were held in Nuremberg, I believe - I've forgotten where they were held. It was sort of the free countries of the world assembled

in Barcelona, and they tried to attract Socialist countries like Czechoslovakia, Poland, even the Scandinavian countries. The French sent a team. Then on July 18, 1936, Franco, as you know, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and landed in Spain and started the Civil War. Only it did not take the course he had planned. Half of Spain was immediately fighting back the Franco forces. And so was Barcelona; after a short period of fighting Barcelona became Republican. As did all the south of Spain - Valencia, Madrid, Malaga. All the northern part, with the exception of the Asturias, remained in the hands of Franco. And so all of a sudden we found ourselves in the midst of a civil war as photographers. Which was a fantastic event and, in a way, a great journalistic chance to show our alertness. I remember I woke up in the pensione where we were staying to sounds of what I thought were fireworks. I thought the festive event had started. Instead it was machine gun fire. I looked out the window and there was a cannon in front of my window and shooting away. So we took our . . . I can show you some of the pictures that I've saved from that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long were you in Spain then?

HANS NAMUTH: Of course we lost everything we had left behind in Puerto de Pollensa, because Mallorca was overrun by the Franco forces. We stayed almost a year in Spain.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you sending things back?

HANS NAMUTH: We sent things to Paris. We had an agent there who distributed them. We had things published all over the world. Let me see, I left in March 1937 and went back to Paris. Things became very sticky in Spain because slowly the Communist Party took over. Russia was the only power that actively helped Spain. All the other countries united in the non-aggression, non-intervention agreements that Leonard Blum had so foolishly advocated then. It became very difficult for us not to join the Communist Party. We felt no inclination to do so, especially in light of the Moscow trials which were at their height in those days, 1936. You may remember Radek and everybody else was put on trial. Koestler's famous book *Darkness at Noon*, surely you remember, gives you an idea of what we knew and learned about. Although we felt very much in sympathy with all of the Leftist causes, we just couldn't think of giving active support.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you feel a great deal of pressure from the government or the people to . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. Very much so. Very much so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think more so because you were photographers than they would normally do, or not?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, one . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because you were doing things that went out all into the world?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes, of course, we were kept under very strict surveillance. Our sympathies lay with the Spanish Republican cause, and we had a very good reputation. We were not harassed by the government. But actually we were harassed by the Russians. I was arrested at one point, and Louis Fischer, the American, saved my life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really!

HANS NAMUTH: In fact, I think he writes about this episode in *Men and Politics* at one point in his memoirs. We were standing with him and a group of correspondents near the front lines in Madrid. The first Russian tanks had arrived, which was a marvelous event because, you know, at last they were able to fight back. And we with our cameras became under suspicion to have photographed the tanks; I was - not Georg. The Russian commander wanted me to climb into his tank and be carried off to some distance. I refused to do so. Since he didn't speak any French or German or Spanish, Louis Fischer, who happened to be around, interpreted and prevented him from carrying me off, and suggested finally that I turn over my film. Which I did; I emptied my camera and handed him the film and that was the end of it. Harassment of this kind became more frequent. In fact, my friend George spent a few days in the famous jail in Barcelona. When he was freed he decided to quit. Much to my regret. My whole heart was in this fight, and I had a horror of going back to the indifference of the Western world. When I returned to Paris I just couldn't understand how indifferent everybody was to what was going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really! I always got the feeling that many people were involved.

HANS NAMUTH: People; yes; but not nations. And not even the majority of people. Intellectuals were involved. But the whole French press without exception was . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think it was so important to the intellectuals and not so much to other types of people?

HANS NAMUTH: Because that movement was being played. They were the ones who foresaw the events to come. You know, like in other periods of history, the artists and the intellectuals sense more of what the events of the day prepare.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do then on returning to Paris?

HANS NAMUTH: We continued photography. In 1938 the World's Fair took place in Paris and that opened up, as far as work was concerned, a great number of opportunities for us and we did very well as a team again. Also we became more known. We had made a reputation during the Spanish Civil War.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you specializing at that point in any kind of work?

HANS NAMUTH: Reportage. Just journalistic work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was it. Well, in doing that and being involved with all kinds of people, did you develop associations in the intellectual world? Or did that shift because of your activities?

HANS NAMUTH: You mean my relation to art and artists?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I mean writers and people like that.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. Since I was always associated with the Leftist cause, obviously I was very much involved with the intellectual movement of the time. I think we should come to...

[break in taping]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were talking about the World's Fair in Paris?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, yes, that and various other things. I remember we photographed Titulescu, the Romanian statesman who was in Paris at that time. And we interviewed photographically as well as in writing the President of Catalonia, Cavallero, who was later on killed by the Germans. We had, I think, a fairly good business. But there was always Spain, and the Spanish Civil War continued. It ended in 1939, that same year that World War II began. The Civil War ended in March and World War II broke out in September. So the outbreak of the World War found us in Paris. I was then, as I was in 1933, a German refugee as far as the French authorities were concerned. I still had my papers not in order and was always reporting once a month to the prefecture to get my blue stamp and so forth. So when war broke out against Germany we were asked to let ourselves be interned by the French authorities. The notice was published in the newspapers that we were all to report at such and such a time to the sports stadium of Paris. I was one of the last ones to go. I realized that if I tried to stay away that sooner or later I would get caught. And then one of my most miserable periods of my stay in France began with this humiliating experience of being interned by the country that we were willing to serve and to help in the fight against Hitler. It was really miserable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did they put you?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, first for days on end we were under the stars in the open in the big sports arena.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, they just kept you there?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes; until finally they transported us to Brioc in the center of France where we interned again in a circus, in a tent, for a period of time. And then eventually we were sent to a village called Villeurbanne - I mean my group was - and this turned out to be one of the better camps, concentration camps, I should say, around. We had relative freedom to walk about during the day and play chess; that is actually all we did. Fortunately I had a

passion for chess playing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there many people in your group?

HANS NAMUTH: In this particular village we were about three hundred; we were about ten groups of thirty each distributed over various barns and cow stables.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was really quite primitive.

HANS NAMUTH: It was very primitive. Very much so, yes. And if we had decided to escape nothing would have been easier because there were hardly any guards around. Foolishly enough, nobody ever thought of escaping.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's extraordinary. Well, you had no communication with anybody or anything, then, did you?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, we received mail. And actually some of my French friends visited me there. They came from Paris and spent a day. And those are the people who reestablished my faith in France. There is always the official France and then the other. Eventually a friend of mine and I decided to volunteer for the Vin d'Ange, the picking of grapes. France was short of manpower. They had all gone to the Maginot Line and there weren't enough people around to gather the grape harvest. We spent three very tough and wonderful weeks working in the fields with a Loire wine farmer of the most wonderful class. The days in the fields and the nights and the winepress are unforgettable. Once a week we had a day off and were able to roam around freely and go and have a marvelous meal in a restaurant and so forth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you didn't have any identification on you that you were . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: No, we were treated as prisoners. However, when this was over we had to go back to Villeurbanne, back to camp. About this time the French Government had changed the law that permitted us finally to join the French Army, the ones who wanted to. And I was one of those. We were able to sign up in the French Foreign Legion, not for five years as had previously been the case, but for the duration of the war. Which, of course, could have meant thirty years. In December 1939 I became a French Legionnaire. I received my basic training in Morocco - incidentally, I love Morocco, it's a beautiful, beautiful country. Eventually we were off to Tunisia to fight the Italians who had just declared war ten days before the war ended. Before we even got a chance to even get near Tunisia the war had ended. In May 1940 the Armistice was declared leaving us as German refugees in a very strange situation. Half of France was occupied. Morocco under General Nogues almost went over to the Allies but then switched to Petain, to Vichy. In October 1940 it managed finally to be demobilized thanks to the fact that I was only engaged for the duration of the war. I went back to Marseilles as a civilian, stateless, with no papers except a French military passport which helped me in many situations. And eventually thanks to friends and an American committee under Varian Fry - you may have heard of him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

HANS NAMUTH: . . . and a very dear friend back in New York, Sam Barlow, who had intervened on my behalf with the State Department, I got an American visa, a so-called danger visa.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of papers would you get - French documents?

HANS NAMUTH: No. I had an American visa in lieu of a passport with which I was able to travel.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you got papers in order to get to this country then from France?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get here?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, again of course that was a very serious problem. I could not see myself going through Spain where I had been fighting Franco, and then go back into this Gestapo-infested country and risking arrest. On the other hand, I also risked arrest right there in Marseilles because the French had signed an armistice which included a paragraph in which

the French agreed to surrender any German national who was named by the German authorities to them in order to be arrested. And several people were picked up and turned over to the Germans. By the way, Varian Fry's book has the title *Surrender on Demand*, which is a quote actually from this paragraph of the armistice agreement. The Gestapo was very active right in Aix-en-Provence, which is very near Marseilles. It was very, very sticky. So in February 1941 the chance came to leave Marseilles by boat, which was ultimately going to Martinique to serve Fort-de-France in Martinique. And from Martinique I made my way to the Virgin Islands where I was interviewed by the governor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

HANS NAMUTH: I was such a strange animal. I was German and yet I had no passport; I was traveling on an American visa in lieu of passport; I was a very strange animal. And I was the only one to arrive. So he received me in audience. From St. Thomas I finally fetched a boat to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where again I was stuck for at least ten days before there was another boat finally to New York. On April 20, 1941, I arrived in New York with a six months' visitor's visa which actually was the form of visa I had received and very romantically was called a "danger" visa because I was considered to be in danger, as many others were; emergency visa I think they called it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. I always had the feeling that more people moved as kind of organized groups when they were leaving France. But then you read that so many did it almost individually; like you really weren't a group; you kind of found your own way.

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, God, yes! The Fry Committee it was called - the official name was the American Emergency Rescue Committee - helped many, many people out and many of them illegally through Spain and North Africa; but always singly; nobody could travel in groups.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you really didn't know what was happening? It was really a day to day . . .

HANS NAMUTH: Existence. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And then of course, three months later many who didn't make it out got trapped. Some later on joined the French Underground. Some were arrested. The friend with whom I had been picking grapes, Andreas Becker, was arrested in Saintes Maries de la Mer, which is a famous artists' colony (Chagall, Arp, Max Ernst, and many, many artists had been there or had lived there), he was arrested and taken back to Germany. Somehow he survived this whole ordeal. Last year when I was in Germany for the first time since I had left it with the American Army I saw him and he was well and healthy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you couldn't do any photography during this period, could you?

HANS NAMUTH: Of course not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you were just surviving.

HANS NAMUTH: That's right. I had lost all my equipment. It was gone; confiscated or stolen. The Gestapo came to our place in Paris and took whatever was still there. We rescued some of my negatives and I still have some negatives of the Spanish Civil War. I'll show you some of the prints. They are quite fantastic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had mentioned someone that you knew in New York. So when you arrived here you did have a point of contact?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. Sam Barlow.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Who is he?

HANS NAMUTH: I have a book here that he wrote. He's a writer, musician. He lived in Gramercy Park. I had met him many years before that in France. He was the first one to greet me here in New York, and he helped me to establish myself. As it turned out, I was not allowed to work here at first.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure, because you had a visitor's visa.

HANS NAMUTH: Because I had a visitor's visa. And it was absolutely silly. I had to ask for permission; I had to get a labor permit which took months to get. In the meantime I started

to work first as - what should I call it? - a tutor in a little college town in Michigan - Albion.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. How in the world did you get out there?

HANS NAMUTH: This was suggested to me by a committee in New York, the American Committee for Christian Refugees. It was one of the committees that sprang up. They actually did a great deal to help. You know, how could we find our way through this mass of red tape and get a labor permit and so forth and so on. And I welcomed this. First of all, I wanted to know more about this country. To go to the Middle West seemed at that time quite exciting to me. This was still in the deepest isolationist period in America. America did not want to enter the war, you remember. I found it outrageous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you had seen quite a different thing happen.

HANS NAMUTH: I had great missionary zeal. I wanted to say to everybody that the only thing to do was to declare war on Germany. You know, it was shocking. It took Pearl Harbor to do that. And I got right into the center of, you know, *ChicagoTribunecountry*, ColonelMcCormick, and America First. I had a very interesting time there. In fact, even with my poor English at the time I was asked to deliver a address to the Lions Club of Albion.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's really getting to the heartland.

HANS NAMUTH: The next day the Albion paper reported on the headlines, "German Jew says America Should Enter War."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, great. Fantastic.

HANS NAMUTH: My task was to tutor this Professor Rathje (R-a-t-h-j-e) who was teaching French and German at Albion College, to tutor him in both languages, especially German. I was a member of the family, so to speak.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How much time did you spend there?

HANS NAMUTH: About three months. And then I was really anxious to come back to New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was enough.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. In the meantime I took some time off to do some hitchhiking. I visited a friend who was living then, as now, in Decatur, Illinois. I hitchhiked from Albion, Michigan, to Decatur and back. I had a very, very interesting time doing that. However, to go back to New York I had to start taking a bus. And back in New York I managed to . . . By then I had a labor permit. But not at first; my first job I took as a photographer without having any papers; nobody asked any questions here. It was easy to get a social security number and card; that was all one needed. And I started working as an assistant . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where was that?

HANS NAMUTH: In some big studio called Stone-Wright on Fourth Avenue, now Park Avenue South near Union Square. I remember my weekly salary was fifteen dollars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible. Even then.

HANS NAMUTH: It was ridiculous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what kind of work?

HANS NAMUTH: At first it was just darkroom work and then slowly - oh, I'm wrong, it was thirty dollars, and thanks to doing a lot of overtime sometimes it was double that. But still it was very little. Eventually I left and took a job with a very well-known photographer, Johnny Pruesser. Do you know him? He's an artist who turned photographer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know the name.

HANS NAMUTH: That was where I learned really most of American ways of photography and dealings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you hadn't really studied much photography, had you? You just kind of started, didn't you?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, actually I had done a great deal of studying with a man in Paris, Joseph Breitenbach, who is now in New York. When I came to New York I studied again with him here for awhile to catch up after the war years. He is a marvelous teacher. He teaches at The New School and also he teaches privately. So I had done my studying. And of course one learns by doing it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. In the early years were there any photographers you were particularly interested in?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. Hoynigen-Huene; Horst; and then, as now, the greatest, Cartier-Bresson; Robert Capa was a good friend of mine for awhile - we met in Paris and again in Spain; Stieglitz; Paul Strand; and the great master, Weston, whom I always loved. Those were the guiding lights of their time, and still are, especially Weston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's September 8, and this is Side 2. Well, could we start by talking a little bit about . . .

HANS NAMUTH: Joseph Breitenbach. Yes. He is one of the oldtimers in photography, somebody who has all the techniques at his fingertips and yet not overemphasizing it. He can teach camera techniques, photo techniques better than anybody I know by making it very easy: objects, chemistry. And yet he has a very personal approach to the visual, and his photography is simply beautiful. I remember all his life he has taken nudes and has discovered the human body as a landscape. He must be in his seventies, and he is still doing exactly that kind of personalized photography. He travels a lot. Every summer he goes to the Far East which he adores.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find him as a teacher? You studied with him both in France and in New York.

HANS NAMUTH: Well, because simply I felt I needed to be taught. I looked around and asked people and they recommended him to me first in Paris and then later on - as I've already said - I felt I had to brush up, having neglected photography during the war years. And I did my brushing up with him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was he about matters like style? Did he develop particular styles in the people who studied with him? Or did he let them go their own way?

HANS NAMUTH: He let them go their own way, which I think is more important than having to adopt somebody else's style.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So he really gave you a broad range of things -

HANS NAMUTH: Technical things. This is what I went to him for, technique rather than style.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That's fascinating. You know, his name has come up so often as a teacher. So many people seem to have studied with him.

HANS NAMUTH: Maybe you should look him up. I have lost track of him recently. But he must be in New York. He's a marvelous man. He is very well known in Germany. He has had several national shows there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long did you study with him here then? - very long?

HANS NAMUTH: No. Over a period of months I took three evening classes. That's all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had shifted from one photography concern to another one. But then you got involved with the Army quite soon after that, didn't you?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that all about? What happened with that?

HANS NAMUTH: I think I told you that my arriving in the United States was merely due to the fact that France had lost the first battle of the war. And I was then forced to flee France.

Otherwise I would have stayed there; I wanted to stay. And coming to the United States made me aware of the necessity for the United States to enter the war. Don't forget that I came here before Pearl Harbor. And especially in the Middle West where I spent several months - I think I've talked about that - I felt the indifference and the isolationism terribly strongly. My desire to do something about everything was so great that I volunteered to join the OSS at the time. I had a number of interviews. I suppose I was about to be called when I met my present wife who was very upset at the prospect of my leaving so soon and I delayed things somewhat at the time when we fell in love.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What is her name?

HANS NAMUTH: Carmen Herrera. She was born in France, to this day is a citizen of Guatemala, and was brought up in Europe. Therefore I waited until I was drafted, which came about in December 1943. I had my basic training in Spartanburg, South Carolina, shortly after which I joined the Military Intelligence Service and went to military training school at Camp Ritchie, Maryland.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What appealed to you in all of these activities?

HANS NAMUTH: What appealed to me?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was obviously a very interesting kind of activity than just being another soldier.

HANS NAMUTH: I wanted to come to grips with the thing that had caused me to leave Germany in the first place, the politics. I wanted to combat the forces that had driven me out of Germany and Europe - Nazism, Hitler. I was very much of an idealist in those days. The only way for me to do that was to fight and to enter the war. I would never have shown the same ardor if I had been sent to the Far East, incidentally. I wasn't interested. That was not my war. My war was in Europe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was your personal situation that made it more important to you than otherwise. That's fascinating. So where did you go and what happened to you then?

HANS NAMUTH: I was in England for about six months before D-Day, mostly in Tenby, in the south of Wales. When the invasion came I was with the Second Infantry Division. We landed at Omaha Beach a few days before D-Day in June 1944. I was with that fighting division throughout the various campaigns that led to the Armistice in Europe in May 1945, which came exactly five years after Hitler's Army marched into Paris.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What specific kinds of things did you do? Did you have very unusual activities?

HANS NAMUTH: My department, my special field was called M.I.I., Military Intelligence Interpreters. I was with a team that interrogated civilians to find out about enemy battle situations that needed to be researched. We were actually with the front lines trying to make it easier for the troops to get into enemy territory: in other words, tactical information. The civilians, of course, in France were very cooperative, as you can imagine. It was a very wonderful way of gathering information.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did your unit get into Germany again?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, yes. After the French campaigns were over we entered Germany at Aachen. And finished up the campaign in Czechoslovakia where we arrived in May 1945. I should have taken note of all these things. On the spur of the moment it's very difficult for me to remember correctly, and then I get all mixed up with dates and things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you in intelligence interpretation all the way through?

HANS NAMUTH: All the way through, yes. My function when we entered Germany changed somewhat from interrogating civilians to interrogating prisoners of war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that a great shift in the way you operated then?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. The whole climate of my work became much more severe. After all, whereas before we had to deal with friendly civilians, now we were facing enemy soldiers

and very few of them still under the shock of battle were willing to talk. However, we had a few fantastic encounters. I discovered one man, a German, near Malmedy, who gave us an extraordinary amount of information which led, I think to a great deal of . . . From time to time we had a wonderful cooperation. But most of the interrogations were done on very hostile ground

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why would somebody be so cooperative, do you think?

HANS NAMUTH: Because they were anti-Fascist, anti-Nazi. They were very eager to defeat the Nazis, Hitler. Then we found a few members of the German Resistance. In France it was easy. But in Germany it was much more difficult.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You rarely hear about that.

HANS NAMUTH: Really? Well, there are some documents on that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but not the way the French . . .

HANS NAMUTH: After all, remember the attempt to kill Hitler just before the end of the war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

HANS NAMUTH: Various attempts had been made. So there was a German Resistance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you stay there very long after the war? Or were you brought back here?

HANS NAMUTH: The Armistice was in May 1945 and the Japanese surrender came, I believe, in July, was it not? Do you remember when V-J Day was?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think it was just after the atom bomb; July or August, something like that.

HANS NAMUTH: I spent some time with the War Crimes Division in Freising near Munich, gathering up war criminals. I traveled throughout the American and the British zones to arrest a number of wanted Germans and brought them back alive to Munich and to Freising.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you there during the trials?

HANS NAMUTH: No, no. I was just there in the preparatory stage. And I did not have any of the big shots. I had some of the minor bastards. I left Europe at the beginning of October and was back in New York, a civilian, by the end of October.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was it like, you know, coming back to Germany this way? It was the first time in - what? fifteen years or more since you'd been there.

HANS NAMUTH: It was strange, of course. I really had cut my navel cord completely and totally, not just with my home and family but with the country as such. I was completely out of it. I had a very difficult time to realize that not all Germans were guilty of war crimes, guilty of having killed five million Jews; I felt that every German was either de facto guilty or just guilty by association. Perhaps I was unjust in that assumption that anyone who had protested could have done so or left the country. But I think to continue living in Germany and watching, or witnessing rather, what was going on made the whole German people guilty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting, you know, the idea of coming to France which you were so attached to and then going to Germany where it started and yet having those very negative feelings all the way through. Do you think it affected the way you thought about the people during your interrogations?

HANS NAMUTH: Surely. Surely it did. So much so that when I left Germany in 1945 I really never wanted to come back; never. And didn't, in fact, until last year when I had to go to Cologne. In all my European travels I have always bypassed Germany. Even in Cologne last year I felt very uneasy so many years after. And yet I have made many friends among the young people since. Like Mary Bauermeister and many German artists. But whenever I encounter anyone of my generation or older I have the same negative feelings as I had then. And I really think they're still there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what about coming back to New York and getting out of the Army? What kind of plans did you have? Or did you have any?

HANS NAMUTH: None. I had only a vague idea of making a success of myself and earning a huge amount of money. To which it never came. But I was determined to take shortcuts and not to return to photography at first.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really!

HANS NAMUTH: It was an entire mistake.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you want to do initially?

HANS NAMUTH: I wanted to raise a family and have enough, earn enough money to travel and do photography only as a hobby. Which I continued to do right away while I was working with a firm that was engaged in research to make waterproof paper, some kind of industrial engineers. Fortunately for me, that firm went bankrupt and I found myself without a job. And I immediately went back to photography without any hesitation and realized that for a full year and a half I had been very unhappy. I was doing something that really was not my dish.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what did you do then? Did you set up a studio? Or how did you start?

HANS NAMUTH: I started very timidly. I worked out of my kitchen as a darkroom and did location work and some assignments for architectural magazines. Then, as fate would have it, I encountered Alexey Brodovitch and took the courses that he was giving at The New School of Social Research on direction and photography. And that encounter with this man probably changed my life. He was no doubt one of the great teachers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you pick him? Did you just meet him socially? Or through other photographers?

HANS NAMUTH: Through other photographers. It was also my ambition to be published in *Harper's Bazaar*, of which he was the art director. I first started to study with him and then eventually was invited to work at the Bazaar. My association with the magazine lasted for several years . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was he as a teacher compared to . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: Ruthless, absolutely ruthless.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. He was absolutely devastating. And so often quite negative. But because of his ruthlessness he actually was able to change people's direction and thinking. He would never let any mediocrity pass by. In the weekly assignments that we were given when somebody was asked to show his work the following week and started to explain why he hadn't done any work or why he had done mediocre work, giving the excuse that he was too busy with other things, or that his grandmother had died, or some such, his answer to that was, "No alibis! No alibis!" spoken in a Russian accent.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he differ from Breitenbach as a teacher?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, well, his field was entirely different. Breitenbach taught me techniques. Brodovitch taught me to think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. I see.

HANS NAMUTH: And Brodovitch constantly made us think in new terms when we were approaching the problem, be it fashion photography, or still life, or portraiture, or reportage, he always made us think how to do it differently, how to find new ways of studying a man's or a woman's face and how to bring out new approaches. This had nothing to do with technique. He knew nothing about techniques himself. But he knew how to . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Develop an image and an idea. That's fascinating.

HANS NAMUTH: As you know, some of the most famous photographers were his students at one time or another. Like Richard Avedon, Hero, Tam, many, many others.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's amazing. Everybody seems to have worked with him at one point. But he also seemed to have been terribly influential about the developing of their careers after they had been students of his. Was that true of you?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, well, we became friends. Actually until his death there was a constant rapport. I have the last letter he wrote me; I think I received it about a month before he died. So from 1949 on we were always quite closely associated with each other in one way or another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mentioned that you started taking architectural photographs for magazines. Was that because you were interested in architecture?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. I have always been interested in design and architecture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

HANS NAMUTH: I've always felt it was a challenge and to this day I like architecture and give a great deal of my time to architectural photography.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you say that's an area in which you've specialized? - because, I mean, there are so many kinds of things that you've done.

HANS NAMUTH: Well, no, there is no specialization in my photography. I like to work with people even better. I like to do portraiture. And now, as you know, films.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You have done fashion photography and everything.

HANS NAMUTH: I have done very little fashion photography; well, I did children's fashions a great deal, yes; for many years. I did a campaign for Dunmoor shirts for boys. Back in 1950 I actually coined the approach in children's fashions which is now widely accepted but which at that time was still very revolutionary.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How would you describe that?

HANS NAMUTH: I wanted children to be themselves instead of posing them in stiff poses. I took them out of doors. I spoke to them. I made them play games. And while they were forgetting they were being photographed I photographed them. The pictures that came out of these sessions were very alive and very spontaneous instead of stilted. Then of course I photographed my artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that start? Have you always been friendly with artists since living here? Or are they just people you're in tune with.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes, I've always been friends of artists. But my actual involvement started with Jackson Pollock back in 1949. Through Pollock I met so many other artists that I soon became sort of their photographer. When they needed something they usually called me. And this is usually not a business relationship but I felt that somebody had to record them. And I think I was one of the few people who photographed, for instance, Clyfford Still way back in 1950 when he was really very much of a recluse and still is to this day. I was able to break through to him thanks to Barney Newman. And one thing led to another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you meet Pollock? Who was that through, or with? Do you remember?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, in a way Brodovitch was responsible for that because he made me aware of the importance of Pollock. I went to one of Pollock's first shows at Betty Parsons Gallery in 1949, I believe it was - well, I'm not sure that it was Pollock's first show at Betty's, but it was for me the first show of Pollock's at Betty's that I had seen. I had absolutely no rapport with Pollock at all. It was thanks to Brodovitch that I made an effort and went back several times. And as luck would have it, we rented a house in the Hampton's that year, that summer, and I immediately became involved with the community activities in East Hampton. There was an opening of a show of artists of the region one day and Pollock had a few paintings there. And he was present also. I took my courage in two hands and approached him and very timidly asked him if I could come to his studio some day and photograph it. I mentioned to him that I felt encouraged to ask him because of Brodovitch whom he knew. And immediately that broke the ice, the mention of his name. Jackson said yes, and we

made a date. I asked, "May I bring my camera and take some pictures?" and he said, "Sure." The day I arrived he told me that unfortunately he was all through with the painting but that, of course, I could take some pictures of him standing there. I asked him, "Could I see what you have just done?" He said, "Sure, come on in." And in his studio, which you are probably familiar with, on the floor was an enormous brown painting dripping wet; and the painting was finished. I was very discouraged and was ready to go home and asked him I could come back another time. Suddenly he looked at the painting and started to correct something. Before I knew it he had a pot of paint in his hand and a brush and then he started to paint and he destroyed what he had made before and a brand new painting emerged after - I don't know - half an hour. In the meantime I started taking pictures. You know, he obviously was not aware of my presence. I shot roll after roll. I was terribly excited. Some of the pictures were terribly unsharp. Even those unsharp ones became part of the series which really shows the creative process because those are the same pictures that you are probably familiar with. And that started the relationship with Pollock. From that day on I was accepted. Especially after he saw what I had done; you know, a week or two later I brought him some of the pictures and that sealed our relationship.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have you spent summers out in the Hamptons since then?

HANS NAMUTH: Ever since, yes. At first we rented a house, then eventually we found one to buy. It's over twenty-one years that we've been going out there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Getting into - it's hard to know which question to ask first here sometimes - you spent - what? - most of the summer weekends out there pretty much like you do now and worked in the city? Or did you spend a month or so?

HANS NAMUTH: No. Most of the summer weekends. My wife and the children were out there all summer and I returned to the city to work. I soon moved out of my improvised studio which I had at the house and I found a place, thanks to a painter by the name of George Sackby, at Third Avenue and 22nd Street, for \$100 a month, almost as big as my present one. And from that day on I was a professional. I actually had some very good accounts. I photographed automobiles; which was very lucrative. I photographed commercial ads for magazines. I worked a great deal with Paul Rand, whom you probably know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Yes.

HANS NAMUTH: He also became a good friend. He is probably one of the most creative advertising people around. And always coming back to my first and old love, photographing painters. The relationship with Pollock led to my first film - the one we have just . . . Did you see it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. The one done in 1951.

HANS NAMUTH: We started it in 1950 and finished it in 1951. All the outdoor scenes and the glass, all that was done in 1950.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did the glass come about? That wasn't his idea, was it?

HANS NAMUTH: No. It was my idea. I started this film as one starts still photography, when one takes pictures, only the medium was different. When I suddenly realized that a film is a different kettle of stew and that one needed to have a different complexion of things. I had already called my friend Paul Frankenberg into this, and we worked on the Pollock film together. He studied what I had taken on the weekends and we saw it together and then discussed it and he made suggestions on what to do. He never came out from behind the scenes but directed me and on a shoestring slowly evolved the bit of film. But I felt something was needed. My aim was to show, if possible, the man not just in the act of painting, but what's happening inside, what takes place in his face. How could I show that? One sleepless night I suddenly hit on the idea of showing him through glass. And when I suggested this idea to him he jumped on it. He said it was a great idea. And he built this construction on which the glass was resting; he was a great stage carpenter. He bought this piece of glass for ten dollars. It is probably worth \$100,000 now. This glass painting is now in Ottawa, Canada. I don't know how much they paid for it but at least that much, they paid Marlborough at least that much. We had no light. It was done in the open. We had the sun at the correct angle. We knew exactly when to start work. I was lying flat on my back photographing up, filming up, watching him work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was this the first film you made?

HANS NAMUTH: It was the very first, with one exception: I did some black and white footage on Pollock before doing the color as a sort of rehearsal exercise. But it turned out that this black and white footage, which I had neglected for many years and forgotten about, is also very exciting and I think should be preserved and perhaps made into a film, a different kind of film than the other Pollock one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he enthusiastic, as the various weekend sessions went on? You know, how did he like being an actor?

HANS NAMUTH: It worked. I mean it wasn't that he was . . . After all, I was an unknown photographer and he could have done this with somebody much more professional than I was. But somehow he trusted me. And I think it was a great sign of friendship, or rather trust, rather than thinking that he is going to be in a movie, as somebody who is writing a book on Pollock implies.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because he was very difficult at times, you know, from what people have told me.

HANS NAMUTH: What do you mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he was a very difficult personality at times.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. E was very taciturn - is that the word? Somehow we didn't need to understand each other. We had some kind of chemistry going, that immediately . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: You could just do what you were doing and it worked.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. I knew how not to abuse his time and I didn't intrude too much. I just worked it so that I was not a nuisance. Actually, we both looked forward to our sessions as it happened. During the time we were making the film he was on he wagon, he was no drinking. The day we finished shooting the last of the glass scene was a very cold October day and we were both frozen stiff as we had come to the end of a roll, and I called it . . . Will you excuse me a second?

[break in taping]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let's kind of just pursue the general activity after - How long did it take to really do the whole Pollock film? That was a series of summer weekends and then was put together?

HANS NAMUTH: Right. Then we put in the missing pieces at Bey Parson's Gallery in 1951 before doing his show then. And at the same time we put together a number of written statements of Pollock's together and, helped by him and adding a few new things, we did the narration. The narration, as you know, was a voice-over done at the beginning of 1951 in New York City. Pollock being very nervous and very self-conscious about the whole thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes

HANS NAMUTH: Interestingly enough, I have a tape here that kind of stems from a radio interview that he gave in Provincetown after we had made this film and in which he often refers back to the glass painting and events. He was much less self-conscious. I have it here. If you're interested . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, I'd love to. That's fascinating. There are very few . . .

HANS NAMUTH: Actually it was in the Jackson Pollock catalogue - it was transcribed and is in the catalogue of the big Pollock show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the Museum of Modern Art one? The Francis O'Connor?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's good to know where it is.

HANS NAMUTH: I have one copy, the Museum has one, and Lee Pollock has one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because there's so little material on him either talking or writing or anything.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you were doing all kinds of photography then. You've talked about the automobile accounts and he children's fashions. One thing I'd like to talk about for a while is the architecture. You've done a fair amount of that, I think, over the years. It's a kind of consistent activity. Do you work for the magazine in that case? or for the architect? or the builder? or how does that generally work? or is it something that interests you and you go out and do the buildings?

HANS NAMUTH: Well, again, I think that, aside from my interest in design, I was helped by a personal encounter in the early fifties with Peter Blake. I met him actually through Jackson. I met many interesting people through Jackson: like Clem Greenberg; Tony Smith - Tony was a great friend of Jackson's; and Barney Newman; an endless lot of people. Peter Blake had done a model for an exhibition showing Pollock's paintings inside an enormous room. I think the model is still in existence. At least it was published in one of the books, I think in the catalogue. So through Peter I became associated with a great number of architects. We did several things together. For instance, we did a story on the New Canaan and Westport architects who had all emerged from Harvard under Gropius; we did six architects in their own houses designed by themselves for Holiday magazine. Peter wrote the text and I did the photography. Breuer, Eliot Noyes, George Hanson, the three others I can't think of. Then I was commissioned by Harper's Bazaar to photograph Saarinen, Paul Rudolph, Gropius in Cambridge. And this way my vision was enlarged enormously.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you would work on a project like that would you work with the architect? or really just photograph his buildings?

HANS NAMUTH: Preferably with the architect, but it's not always possible; sometimes it is. Peter and I did many projects together that were not houses designed by Peter but he had picked them; they were his personal choice. It was very, very wonderful to work with a man like Peter Blake, you know, to see his vision and combine it with my concept. It worked beautifully.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Working with an architect would you do things from his point of view about how he wanted things?

HANS NAMUTH: No, not necessarily. I would certainly listen to what he had to say and carefully follow his concept, but that would not rule out my own interpretation of the thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Did you find any of them particularly rewarding or exciting to work with, or difficult?

HANS NAMUTH: I always liked Paul Rudolph's work. Even twenty years ago when he was just starting he did a few houses in Sarasota and elsewhere in Florida. George Hanson is wonderful to work with. Eliot Noyes. It's like seeing a work of art alone and then with the person who did it. It's really a different depth, a different perspective, and a new dimension.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that your photographs of buildings or series of buildings obviously present your idea of them? Or are you trying through the photograph to show the building for, say, somebody who couldn't go there and see it in reality?

HANS NAMUTH: There are only two or three ways you can photograph a building, a good building that you like. That is to show it to the best advantage. You can easily distort the thing and make it ugly. But you can also somehow redesign it in a way by choosing the best possible moment of the day, the best light, the best angle. I think that the honest way is always the best way. The straightforward way, no tricks and no gimmicks way, is in my opinion, still the best. But when you have a choice of photographing the building in a very dim light, and have a choice of making it strong by using a filter, I think one should choose the latter approach to the building.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have enough time to study the building?

HANS NAMUTH: I shall take the time. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You do? So you look at it and find the angles that you want to use and things?

HANS NAMUTH: I think it's very important. Like all work, things done in haste usually don't come off. So one has to take the time it takes to do it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If you're photographing a large building do you take many, many, many photographs, or selectively?

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, selectively, certainly. I've never really photographed a very, very large building. I only photograph houses really. I don't know how I might . . . Well, I've done Saarinen's Ark in St. Louis. That was a beautiful work of art. It's a monument. But there I interpreted things completely wildly and freely, and, as it turned out very excitingly. It's beautiful photography.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you do the - there's one incredible kind of angle photograph of the work that seems to go up like that.

HANS NAMUTH: It was published in the Forum. Is that where you saw it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think so, yes.

HANS NAMUTH: There were six pages of photographs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. What kind of camera would you use on a project like that?

HANS NAMUTH: What project? - the Ark?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

HANS NAMUTH: A 35 millimeter camera.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For everything?

HANS NAMUTH: No, for that; for that particular project. But usually when I do architectural photography I take a view camera with a tripod and a black cloth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Eight by ten?

HANS NAMUTH: Four by five. Although I have done things with an eight by ten. Which is still my favorite camera. I think I told you that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You like the large . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: I like the large. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There is something exquisite about working on that large ground glass . . .

HANS NAMUTH: Every shot counts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do you find in doing the houses - there are a lot of interiors you've done as I remember, and people's collections are there and furniture - do you find that there are similar problems? Or does each house . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: Each house has a different problem entirely. In fact, I welcome that. I don't like routine assignments. As I usually forget what I did the last time, everything is a new experience and a new agonizing challenge. I have a bad memory and I start from scratch each time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you do a series of photographs like that, do you kind of plan some kind of visual story? Or are they just a series of images . . . ?

HANS NAMUTH: When I do a building, or a house rather, completely on my own, I study it first and I decide which are the angles, which are the rooms, and which are the angles in the

rooms to do. Then the next thing to solve is the lighting, how to do it best. So the plan is being made after having seen the house and studied it. And then one just follows through. To do a house takes very often more than a day - I'm talking about a normal small house, not a large one - and often two days, sometimes more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Depending on how complex and . . .

HANS NAMUTH: Exactly. However, I do like to work with the editor or the architect on the project. It's too much work otherwise. I photographed DeKooning's studio last weekend, last Monday.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the big place out there. I haven't seen it.

HANS NAMUTH: You haven't seen the place at all?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

HANS NAMUTH: I can show you the pictures.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's incredible, I hear. All the space . . .

HANS NAMUTH: Oh, it's completely wild, and yet it falls so well together.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes?

HANS NAMUTH: It's marvelous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who designed it?

HANS NAMUTH: DeKooning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He did?

HANS NAMUTH: Yes. He made many mistakes apparently. He tore things down again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's an expensive way to design, isn't it? You know, one of the things I'm trying to get at is, you know, things that you did for *Horizon* or *Holiday* and various other magazines. Could you develop an idea for them, or do they come to you usually and say: here's a project?

HANS NAMUTH: Both ways. I've done both. In the case of *Horizon* they called me in the first time they did a large story on a particular part of the country, the Housatonic Valley. Did you see those?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think I remember that.

HANS NAMUTH: Would you like to see them?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

HANS NAMUTH: Then after we did that and it was very successful, I suggested that they should do the same thing for the eastern part of Long Island. And we did that eventually four years later.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are these projects that you will take a week off to do, or two weeks? Or are they done piecemeal?

HANS NAMUTH: No, this was done in one period of time. It was very well researched by the staff of the magazine, and well organized. I think we did a number of . . . Well, let me get the book. Here is Norman Rockwell. This is Ted Shawn. This is a group of artists I never heard from again, the Independent Six. I don't think you know them; do you know their names? Lindstrom, Fred Lancome, Stanley Bate, Homer Gann, Franc Epping, Harry Lane.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

HANS NAMUTH: That was 1960. Imagine that. Zino Francescatti, Richard Dyer Bennett, Mack Morgan, the singer. Russell Lynes. Robert Osborn. These were great fun. I had known him before. Nice to work with him. James Thurber. Lewis Gannett. Mark Van Doren. All of these

were done in color, but later on I found I couldn't do them all. Malcolm Cowley, Leonie Adams, Edmund Fuller, Peter Blume, Russell Carls.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know him.

HANS NAMUTH: Do you know him!

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

HANS NAMUTH: Yes? Do you know this house?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

HANS NAMUTH: God, I found it so incredibly beautiful. I wonder if he's still there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know. That's in New Milford?

HANS NAMUTH: New Milford, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think so.

HANS NAMUTH: Try to find out because -

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think he still is.

HANS NAMUTH: You see, it goes on and on. William Styron. Lawrence Langner is dead now. And Louis Untermeyer. This I think took - let me see - we did two a day. There are eighteen. So it took ten days. I think we went out for two weeks' time, five days each. And we were terribly lucky that it didn't take two months. Nobody had he mumps. And everybody was there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody was there and it worked.

HANS NAMUTH: Very few people were hostile. I remember when we knocked at James Thurber's door. We were absolutely on time. When he finally came to open the door he took one look at us, and the editor said a few words and said we were here from Horizon magazine to photograph him. And he said, "We have photographers and other people have mice!" There was a nice reception for you. You know, I felt like turning around and slamming the door.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Time to leave.

HANS NAMUTH: Anyhow he said, "Since you are here, won't you come in." And then, strangely enough, he warmed up so completely, so beautifully that within half an hour he said to me, "Have you seen my latest book?" - which at that time was *My Years with Ross*. I said, No, but I've been reading it in the *New Yorker*. He motioned to his wife to bring him a copy. She did. He took a pen and opened to a page and said, "How do you spell your name?" And then he made a drawing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

HANS NAMUTH: For the drawing he did like this. And then he handed the book not to me but to his wife with the pen and she put in two dots, one here and one there, and then she gave the book to me and said something nice. The drawing was the face of a dog and the two dots - he couldn't see well enough to place the dots - one dot was for the eye and one was for the mouth. And that was it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's marvelous. We've got to stop on that.

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Last updated... *October 2, 2002*

