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Oral history interview with T. Lux Feininger, 1987 May 19-1988 Mar. 17

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Contact Information
Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington. D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Lux Feininger on May 19, 1987 to March 17, 1988. The interview took place in Cambridge, MA, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: Perhaps we could begin just by -- what are some of your early memories, talk a bit about your family, circumstances of your birth or your early years.

LUX FEININGER: Right. The first real complete memory I have of my youth is the outbreak of World War I. I was four years old, not quite; and I remember it very well and have begun my autobiography, which is nearly ready to be published, with that event. Because I judge, and so do many other people, that life in the west of this globe changed forever with that event.

ROBERT BROWN: Where were you at that time?

LUX FEININGER: The family was at that time for the summer in Weimar, although living in a suburb of Berlin, where I was born; Zehlendorf. As a result of the outbreak of the war had to leave in a considerable hurry, was crowded back in a train -- everybody else was leaving because this news hit Germany like a thunderclap. I remember the crowds particularly well, and the troop trains thundering through the little railroad station without ever stopping. Finally a passenger train came after hours and we went back home. I was less than four. It was really on my memory.

ROBERT BROWN: Why do you suppose the family would try to rush home?

LUX FEININGER: They had to. They would be cut off from their base, so to speak. It was getting progressively harder to get transportation, there were no cars, this was all railroads. And the railroads were transporting troops to two fronts. I remember those beastly trains rushing both east and west through the Weimar railroad station, loaded with people, everybody cheering, horses, guns; a very vivid memory. At that time I wasn't old enough to heed the war, that came later. It was a fabulous spectacle but it hit home very soon afterwards.

We had a quite lovely young woman, not a "maid" really, who was in charge of the children -- I was one of three. And I'd just spent a few days in her home in a nearby town, in Eisleben, and there was a young man, her brother, who was extremely kind to me, a little fellow -- it was my first time away from home, with this lovely girl, Anni. Very shortly after we got back to Selendorf, Anni appeared all in black, absolutely destroyed by grief: her brother was already killed. The same girl had given me a bath a few weeks earlier in a tub on the floor of the kitchen. Dead. But I can't forget it. It's a mini-memory but it's stayed with me.

My father became an enemy alien in l9l7. We were well-known in that town, a very sleepy little suburb, now a part of greater Berlin but it was then absolutely rustic. We used to troop through the streets with an American flag. That stopped in l9l7. My father was supposed to register with the police every day as an enemy alien, but being well-known and liked they mitigated that and made him report once a week. But he couldn't leave town without permission, even for a short trip. He very rarely sought that permission but he did get it, notably to go to the Hartz Mountains with his family in l9l8. That was a very memorable year in his life because that's when he began his graphic production -- partly out of necessity, because paint materials were hard to come by and you couldn't travel with them anyway. But the [a proper name] production, which began in l9l8, has done as much as anything to make him the man he is in art history now. It was all in one short summer We boys all caught the fever too, we all made woodcuts, which he very obligingly printed for us; I have one standing there which was made when I was less than nine. My brothers too made some and I have some of their stuff too.

ROBERT BROWN: You had a retreat then -- this was the last summer of the war.

LUX FEININGER: That was the last summer of the war. And health was really getting pretty bad all around because nutrition was a problem. There was very little to eat, especially in the big cities like Berlin. Quite wretched stuff. The blockade was beginning to make itself very badly felt. Of course, the armies got everything. One could go to long . I have a little bit about that in the biography too.

ROBERT BROWN: Your father was, as you've said, declared an enemy alien. On the other hand, did he speak out politically? Do you recall as a little child any discussions of the war?

LUX FEININGER: Discussions I recall chiefly negatively because my parents got so depressed about the war that

it was a forbidden topic at table in the last years. Prior to that my father showed in his sympathies what a queer and untypical figure he was. People used to argue whether he was more American or more German and the thing was absolutely meaningless because he was either both or neither. He sympathized with the Germans because he was unaware of what had led to the war. He admired them for their courage and patience and so on and so forth, but he didn't knop what was going on outside of Germany. When he got wind of it, he became a war-hater and remained that, except for the second World War which he approved of because the Nazis were of course the great evil.

Again, whether it caused him a of crisis to hate militarism and war and yet support this one, I am unable to say except for my own person -- I'm also somewhat of a war-hater and yet I've spent more than three years in the U.S. Army working all I could to help put the Nazis down. I wasn't in combat but was in military intelligence, so my knowledge of Germany was there particularly useful; also my knowledge of the language. There again I make an exception -- that war had to be, I say. But I fondly hope that that one would be the last one that "had to be." That's now more than 40 years ago that I came out and I still have that somewhat outmoded view.

ROBERT BROWN: As a small child, apart from the war -- I'm sure that was the most vivid experience -- what were your parents like with you very small children? What was their method of raising you, would you say?

LUX FEININGER: Well, that's quite a nice question. Again, the biography makes something of the fact that my father didn't work at home, he had throughout my childhood and youth, he had a studio elsewhere by choice. He didn't want to be disturbed. It was nearby and easily reached but he you didn't just barge in there, you had to be asked. He came home for meals, and I have mentioned in my book what a treat it was. It was somewhat remote, very friendly, didn't seem to pay much attention to what the children were saying but heard everything, and interfered but rarely. My mother was much more in evidence. She was around but she had for the first years of my youth a considerable staff of servants. Like this Anni I mentioned, this wonderful young woman. And at one time two others, who gradually dwindled down to just one and so on. Those girls were easily as important in my younger years as our mother was, who lived her own life really, more or less. She was a very good mother but she didn't like the daily drudgery of looking after --

ROBERT BROWN: What interests did she pursue at that time?

LUX FEININGER: Art and literature mostly, and also to a considerable extent, I suppose, theater and film. In other words, she was essentially also an intellectual and had been a rather promising young artist herself when she met my father. She very soon gave up painting in order to sort of encourage him more in his work. This has often been described in the various books and articles that have been published and I believe she did absolutely right in that. Her father was a man of means, so there was really no lack of income until after the war. After my grandfather's death things were still comfortable but in the early years when my father was not earning anything through his art, and had on the other hand given up his lucrative employment as a caricaturist and cartoonist, my mother's father saw after the family's needs in a very kind and somewhat patriarchal way.

I remember him coming before Christmas every year to see that we got new suits made. We were measured by a tailor, the tailor was brought into the house, and these suits were bespoken and paid for by our grandfather. He was a widower, I never knew his wife, my maternal grandmother, she died before I was born. On the other hand, my father's mother, was alive until l927. She was very much more American than my father. She lived in Germany and died there but she had the American standards of education, which even as a boy I noted. She did not like certain traits of German childhood [he laughs] and made bold to say so.

ROBERT BROWN: She was more permissive or what would you say?

LUX FEININGER: She -- well, you know, this may lead astray, this goes into national characteristics -- she was permissive, yes and no, but she liked a certain standard of behavior which we didn't have. We were rowdies, I'm afraid. That came partly through school, which I have [laughing again] I have not much good to say for. At any rate, of my grandparents I knew only two -- my mother's father and my father's mother. My father's father was still alive but he was in America, never came home, he only died in l922. I admired him from a distance because he once sent a bundle to Germany right after the war that had some wonderful I thought typically American things in it which became my property. I was excessively proud of those things. There were all sorts of things -- there were some moccasins of Indian work, an Indian headdress that was made by Indians for children. There was also a pair of pants of exceedingly strong material which were of course a man's pants and my father wore them until I grew up, then I inherited them and by God, if I didn't take them back to America -- when I came to this country first in l936 I still had them. They would not wear out! So that's wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: You were in school -- what would you go to, a State school in Selendorf your first year?

LUX FEININGER: The Gymnasium, if you please. It was a classical education. The Selendorf Gymnasium was pretty good. It was very severe but it was all right, I have no complaints about that. The Weimar one was the one I did not like. Weimar was a little, bigoted town and it hated the Bauhaus and anybody who had to do with

the Bauhaus. We went to Weimar in l9l9 because the Bauhaus was founded. There I had much trouble -- not so much at first with the teachers as with the classmates. That is an unhappy memory, and altogether I would say I had only one year of decent schooling when we finally -- "we" meaning my brother Lawrence and I -- left this beastly school and went for less than a year to a boarding school near Dresden which had coeducation. And, really, my life begins with that school. I love it, love to think of it. But unfortunately it folded for lack of funds.

ROBERT BROWN: That was when?

LUX FEININGER: I was l4. Between l4 and l5 I went to that school, so that was early mid-20s.

ROBERT BROWN: What did it allow you to do that the Gymnasium --

LUX FEININGER: Well, it was simply a better class of people. They weren't as archaic and xenophobic and generally wrapped up in the era of the good old Grand Duke, you know, and happy times of the monarchy and the Bruderstadt. They didn't want any Bauhaus, they didn't want foreigners, they wanted tourists. It was different, but not us.

ROBERT BROWN: And this was even reflected in the children's --

LUX FEININGER: Especially. The teachers made certain efforts, at first at least, to collaborate with the Weimar Republic, you know, which had changed certain things, even education. And Weimar had been the seat of the convention that formulated all these laws. But as to the kids in the school, there was no forming, they were like so many Germans, they were superficially submissive and sat there like automatons until the teacher's back was turned; and then all the misery began. Well, the first run-in with anti-Semitism began right then and there. That wasn't created by the Nazis, it was merely expanded or was existent as a potential .

ROBERT BROWN: Attitude of one student toward another.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. I don't want to make too much of that. This is what I've probably made a little bit too much of in my biography -- in other words, generally the young years. But I did want very much to stress the fact that what a school change can do for a child, you know. When you get into a halfway decent school, all of a sudden life opens up in every direction. This was very much my experience, also my brother's, Lawrence. But my eldest brother was already out of school -- he got himself kicked out, he couldn't stand it. And he became an apprentice carpenter at the Bauhaus and led the trade from the bottom up and graduated with highest honors. But he, as I say, became a man of action rather than a man of intellect.

I am halfway between as an artist. My brother Lawrence, the middle one, became a scholar. He went to the university and got a doctorate in philosophy and musicology; although he hadn't wanted it, he finally consented and did very well. Once he had made up his mind, which took him about a year of floundering, then he went for --

ROBERT BROWN: Your parents wanted that?

LUX FEININGER: My parents wanted that, and they did well because they knew that for him there would be no place at the Bauhaus. His inclinations didn't go that way, whereas I seemed to have a very natural place waiting for me there. I became a very young student at the Bauhaus, in l926, and Andreas, the oldest, was already graduated by that time and was studying for his architectural diploma at a vocational school in Germany. He got that diploma and was all set to be an architect. But then later he branched out into photography and that soon took over completely, although he retained his interest in construction and his understanding of it and so on, which is seen in all his books on photography. I mean, he's always the one for doing things for yourself -- if you can't buy what you need, then make it yourself.

ROBERT BROWN: You've said that your parents had never urged you into being interest, though, did they.

LUX FEININGER: They didn't urge me and they didn't and they didn't prevent me. I slithered into it, that's all I can say. I was not opposed. The first thing I did, apart from drawing, which every child does and which I love to do and have always done, the first thing I did on my own at the age of less than l6 was to find out about photography. That was a queer year for me. I was not in school, I had a lot of free time, primarily due to bad health -- I had very bad hay fever that year -- and had to stay indoors a lot. I discovered a camera and got myself some film and started taking pictures without instruction. And pocket money, which at that time was enough to pay film, etc., led to developing my plates -- glass negatives, really; then made prints and finally enlargements, in other words, leading to darkroom work, all on my own really. And when I came to the Bauhaus I was already a little bit of a photographer. Before long I did a lot of pictures for other people.

ROBERT BROWN: What did you photograph, as a l5-year-old?

LUX FEININGER: The first things I did were little model yards and ships and other things that I and also my father had built. We were making model yards together -- my father loved to build model when he was younger, then he'd given it up. When he saw that I had interest, his own interest reawakened and he showed me what I needed to know about building them. And I built them, and he built his, and for a while we built them together in his studio. That was very nice. When I had something to photograph, I photographed it, and those were my first pictures.

But when I came to the Bauhaus and during the last few months in Weimar, I liked to go out in the streets and photograph what seemed to be of interest there. Not surprisingly, I suppose, motorcars were very interesting to me at that time. In Germany there were very few in the late 20s, and in a little town like Weimar especially if somebody bought a new car or even if a tourist came through, [laughing] the town knew about it. And before long it got itself photographed. I have one picture left of something like that. It was a Bugatti two-seater racing car that was standing in front of a hotel; I took a picture of it.

But at the Bauhaus, I photographed people mostly. And these people wanted their works photographed. They made these constructions in 's course, in which I also was, and they were really remarkable, and they wanted pictures of them. Very few people photographed then and I was one of them, so I got into quite an undeserved notoriety on the strength of that. Before long I had an agent, believe it or not, for my photographs; in Berlin -- a big agency that had photographers working for them in many places. An ex-Bauhaus student, Umbol, [phon. sp.] -- Otto Umbert was his real name but his trade name was Umbol -- came to the Bauhaus to photograph one of the big dances or feasts that they had and got acquainted with me, or re-acquainted, and told me about his agency and said I should show them my work. Which I did, so they set me up and I started publishing. I was less than l8 and I got myself published all over Germany and finally, even, abroad.

So [he laughs] there would have been something like a career though I never thought of it as such. It was for me just a hobby, although a lucrative one.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it sort of fore-ordained once you got in the gymnasium or once you'd left secondary school that you would go to the Bauhaus?

LUX FEININGER: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Your father had come over to Weimar at more or less the time that Gropius set it up, is that right?

LUX FEININGER: He was really the first faculty member that Gropius asked to join in this adventure. Gropius and my father had met during the war but Gropius was actually a soldier in the field and came home only on furloughs. When their acquaintance began I don't know but I'm sure that Gropius knew my father first through his work rather than as a person. He became of it through exhibitions and so on.

So in l9l9, my father responded to the invitation, although Bauhaus was very new and very different. There are some very interesting letters -- they all exist and some have been published ---that he wrote home from Weimar to my mother about the first steps of the Bauhaus. That's already documented.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your father quite confident in Gropius? Was Gropius one --

LUX FEININGER: They were friends. They didn't always see eye to eye. Nobody saw eye to eye with Gropius, [laughing] that was impossible.

ROBERT BROWN: Why?

LUX FEININGER: Well, I have written something about that myself. I've thought about the matter a great deal. Gropius was really a man of visionary power. I don't want to judge his architecture in comparison to other people's architecture, which is what people do nowadays. There, by your elbow --

ROBERT BROWN: It's a Howard Dearstein [phon. sp.] book, Inside the Bauhaus.

LUX FEININGER: That's right. He spends all his time trying to prove that Gropius isn't a patch on Mies van der Rohe, that Mies is much better architect, which is a point I don't want to judge. I know who was the director of the Bauhaus -- Gropius was the first and Mies was the last. Gropius created the Bauhaus, which is much more than a building or a vocational school. It was an idea about education that did not exist before, and Gropius's visionary powers made this possible. Of course it wasn't a dead shot from the first, it was experimental. And it was experimentation that led to the constant conflict with all his collaborators. But they didn't hate each other, they were just over-eager to get the thing going.

They did get it going and it was an absolute wonder. Whereas Mies van der Rohe was I'm willing to admit a very

competent architect, and certainly much better known in the United States at that time than Gropius was. But that's all. He was not a leader of a young generation. The generation was already turning old and sour when Mies van der Rohe came. It was ready to fall into the lap of the Nazis. And there is a big difference. As an architect, Gropius left the school because he'd done enough. And I dare say he had. He'd given up seven years of his life, the most productive time, very much for the sake of his creation, the Bauhaus. Then he felt it could be left to other hands and it came to Johannes Meier, who, I think -- again I can't judge him as an architect but he was certainly a much misunderstood man. I don't want to get into that --

ROBERT BROWN: Did you know him a bit?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. And I will say this, and again it's not easily put into few words, that of all the three directors, not one of them really cared much for painting. They cared for the painters because of the relationship with painters as teachers, but they were not to teach painting. And they didn't. They were simply so-called "form masters." Johannes Meier, the second director, also an architect, was a much more socially alert man and had a distinct leaning towards the left. He was Swiss and although the Swiss are not really a Socialist country, they have many ideas in which they were far ahead of Germany or the rest of the world in the cooperative movement which Hannes Meier really supported and, that is to say, at home and abroad, tried to introduce.

When that failed and got himself ousted after a few years, he went to Russia. And that is held against him now by the bluenoses. But it doesn't concern me. He did not care for my art, and Mies van der Rohe didn't know it existed. But [he laughs] by that time I was already outward bound and was on my way to Paris. Really, I was already a painter. I began painting in l929 and I knew very well that at the Bauhaus one couldn't do this for long and remain at the Bauhaus.

ROBERT BROWN: You remember, though, when you were a younger boy, early discussions about the Bauhaus. Did your father talk much about it? You say at home at meals he didn't. But were there evenings when others would come around?

LUX FEININGER: Very much so, yes. What I said about his not being willing to discuss things was during the war. That was a depressing time but he didn't want the war to be discussed.

ROBERT BROWN: In l9l9 --

LUX FEININGER: Then things looked up in all directions. But my parents were home less than ever before. And that meant [laughing] that three boys in a big house that he had rented grew up rather wildly and unsupervised. So I can't say that I had much contact with my parents on a young-adult basis until the mid-20s, when after many years my father resumed going to the seaside, which he hadn't been able to do before. And there, the first was crucial because due to my hay fever I was taken out of school prematurely, because I was simply dying with hay fever inland, and went to the seaside with my father. Whether he liked it or not I'm unable to say but he was very nice about it. I have commemorated that, too, in a little essay which I published in a German magazine by request years ago describing the first summer at the seaside.

I got to know my father very well that year. I was l4 and did again my acquaintance to this key [background noises] and from that time on that was repeated and it grew into a better acquaintance. First, through the model yard I've already mentioned. Secondly, I learned English very quickly, which neither one of my brothers was able to do. My father had already given up the idea of conversing with any of his children in English, when lo and behold, here he was doing it! [crashing noise obscuring phrase] English at the school in H , the coed school that I mentioned, that got me going. In Weimar it was not taught. And these few months were enough to keep me learning and studying and perfecting myself as much as possible. Of course the accent will never be quite right but it's fluent enough to make myself understood and reading it and writing it are something, too.

This was another point of contact too. And then the interest in painting I should hardly mention, perhaps, because my father didn't raise a finger either to encourage or discourage it. I did it on my own when he wasn't even around. My first painting was done when I was l9 and he was already away at the seaside and I was till at home finishing the Bauhaus courses. My friend Clemenz Roesler, a painter, said, "Why don't you try oil painting?" And I said, "What do I do?" He said, "Buy six or eight pans and two or three brushes. Your father has lots of canvas. Just take one." Which I did and [laughing] I painted a painting. It came off well and I did immediately another and several more. By the time my father and I met again, I had six or eight pictures to show him and he seemed to think I was all right. He certainly didn't mind my helping myself to canvases -- I didn't take all six from him, I took one, the first. [Brown laughs] Then I learned how to stretch them on the stretcher myself -- Clemenz showed me that. And from that time I haven't stopped.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Clemenz a student at the Bauhaus too?

ROBERT BROWN: Clemenz was a student at the Bauhaus. He had begun in what was called the wall-painting shop -- interior design and house painting -- and the last year of his studies he came to the Schlemmer workshop

where I was, the stage class --

ROBERT BROWN: You were particularly interested in that, weren't you.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. That was my chosen workshop at the Bauhaus. I had seen Schlemmer's work the summer before I joined the Bauhaus and had said it's that or nothing for me; that's all I wanted to do. I did it and was very happy in Schlemmer's class for better than two years. I was not so much interested in acting or dancing as in stage design and particularly costume and mask-making. I got good at that --

ROBERT BROWN: How was Schlemmer as a teacher?

LUX FEININGER: He was marvelously inspiring. Again, I have to a couple of printed pages to Schlemmer's influence as an educator, not only in that article which I think you've read on the Bauhaus in criticism, University, but also in a little memorial thing that I wrote for his 80th birthday, could it be? He died quite young, you know -- I wrote it for Mrs. Schlemmer in Germany, auf deutsch, and sent it to her, in which I tried to justice to his influence on me and others as a teacher, as well as an artist.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his personality like?

LUX FEININGER: Very unusual, very exciting. An extremely vivacious, perceptive, thoughtful man. Extremely well-read; knew everything. And had a strange inability to be decisive in decision-making. His favorite exclamation, which I think he made quite unconsciously but which I spotted as typical, was "Ja nein!" An exclamation which means "yes no!" [he laughs] perfectly. Some interesting letters of his have been published -- Dearstein has taken some but I had already ten years earlier had published the same letters in my essay on the Bauhaus, in which he describes teaching at the Bauhaus, how the students did not like a teacher who showed them things but how they liked to be kept in the illusion that they had invented everything for themselves, but didn't mind to be subterraneously directed. But the credit had to remain with them; influence they didn't admit.

But that is not only very true but it's also very keen-eyed of Schlemmer to have seen this even before he began teaching -- these letters were written during a time when he was trying to make up his mind whether he should accept or not. He was a very interesting person, very interesting. And his work seemed to be something that had already sort of agitated in me. Before I came to the Bauhaus, I had this peculiar attraction for masks. I made some myself in various materials and I also, when I had funds, bought books on masks. Especially the so-called exotic African/Oceanic works interested me enormously. Unfortunately, I've lost these books, they stayed behind in Germany.

ROBERT BROWN: Why do you suppose you were interested in masks?

LUX FEININGER: Well, that is an urgent type of thing you can't, you just know it's so. That cannot be explained. Amongst the very earliest photographs is a self-portrait wearing a mask of my own making that isn't a particularly good picture and isn't very bad, either. It's quite all right, but the fact that it is was enough. Disguises of any kind were also interesting but masks quite particularly. There/that is an archetype [?] for you.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you began, I guess, with the normal -- you were the youngest student ever admitted when you came in in l926. [Feininger confirms] Then you began the preliminary, the " course" --

LUX FEININGER: Yes, like every other student; that was routine.

ROBERT BROWN: You knew the teacher --

LUX FEININGER: I did almost nothing what Albers, Joseph Albers, hoped. .... say euphoniously that Albers and I became acquainted, and I may, I hope, say friends. We had considerable respect for each other. When I was already getting elderly, Albers was old. When I was young, I did only what I wanted to do. And since the Bauhaus was very little coercive -- in fact, was not coercive -- one sort of simply did the best one could. This model boat here -- not the sails, which were made later -- is something I made in l926 and exhibited, as every student had to exhibit his course work, as my main piece. It didn't actually sail but the faculty -- I couldn't stear the boat -- said it mightn't be a bad idea to pay a little more attention to what was going on.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, this was a little too on the fringe for them, is that right?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, as a piece, one of exhibits, to justify or not justify admission into the chosen workshop. I have analyzed it as being wrong in this, that it's too much design and not enough construction. Albers wanted construction. He wanted people to develop the faculty of creating something out of nothing. That's the very opposite of designing something like this boat was designed -- first, a drawing was made and dimensions settled, then from the drawing you buy yourself a block of wood and you proceed to whittle it this particular way and put that much lead on it so it'll float. That's all very well but it's really skilled work, and Albers wanted unskilled

work. This took me half a lifetime to realize. By that time the fore course was over.

ROBERT BROWN: He did not make that clear --

LUX FEININGER: At the time he had better things to do. It was a big class, I was only one of 20 and if I didn't do anything, he wouldn't wish to with me. But he never showed any hostility, far from it. It simply was my loss.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he one of these who rather "subterraneously" led people along, as you said Hans Schlemmer did?

LUX FEININGER: Of Albers I have written in my criticism, Albers and Schlemmer are the only two people that I've really singled out in these writings on the Bauhaus for having had a direct influence on me, even though it took me a long time to realize what the influence was. And it came clear only when I began teaching, myself, at the age of 40 at college level. I then found that I'd learned teaching from them -- not immediately but they came back to my memory. What I learned from them I was able to apply in the classroom at Sarah Lawrence College, and henceforth afterwards elsewhere. Here at Harvard --

ROBERT BROWN: What would you say in general were the basic things you learned to be a teacher?

LUX FEININGER: To look at the individuals that you are dealing with and forget something about lofty principles that may or may not be valuable to you, but try to get through to something essential that can be agreed upon and is not part of personal preference, taste, or experience, but treat the people as people, as human beings, and see what there is in that intercourse. This worked well.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, there's obviously behind, the ability to have men like that on the faculty at the Bauhaus -- I would say Gropius chiefly, who was able to perceive this. Was your father in on some of these decisions with Gropius?

LUX FEININGER: In the first years, yes, very much so.

ROBERT BROWN: So they would discuss this and --

LUX FEININGER: Gropius, in those years when my father was active in the so-called "council of the masters", fed them a multiple job to get his enterprise started, and keeping it directed was only part of the work. The rest of the work dealt with the state government, who were never too happy about the Bauhaus in the first place, had to be convinced that all was well, that funds could still be voted for. There was the beastly inflation, which people don't sufficiently take into account -- the runaway inflation of the 20s, which made it -- I don't see how an administrator can work when the money becomes worthless overnight, you know.

Nevertheless the whole damn thing went on as best it could. But Gropius had really like a triangular battle there. It's all very well to be creative, and there wasn't an un-creative person at the Bauhaus, but what does that mean, really? [he laughs] I mean, here is the job that you were meant to do in your life, at least for the time being. My father had never dreamed of being a teacher, and yet he found himself being a teacher. And a very successful one, although totally unorthodox. But again, I say, what is orthodoxy? [laughing] The Bauhaus was itself not too orthodox.

This is where I made a point in my essay that in this country, we have had a revolution of l775. The Germans had a revolution of l9l8 but the American Revolution set something going that hardly existed before and did not build on ruins. Whereas Germany was a country that was smashed in every respect and had to, if it could, re-create itself out of nothing, so to speak. It was impoverished and had nothing. This foolish Dearstein writing page after page about the role of handicraft versus technology and whether that wasn't a "betrayal" of the early Bauhaus that Gropius turned to machinework. He is missing the point. They had to have handicraft because there were no machines around, they were all either destroyed or given to the French and English as war reparations. People had to learn how to saw with the hand because they didn't have a power saw. It didn't mean the Germans didn't love power saws. You understand. [Brown says yes.]

And the same with everything else. My father before long found himself stranded, I would say, except that it didn't bother him. My father was a marvelous graphic artist and he made blockprints with his two hands. Well, in Dessau they had a typography shop bute my father didn't want that. [he laughs] You know, Herbert Bayer became the leader of the former Graphics Workshop and it ceased to be a graphics workshop. That's all right, there's nothing wrong in that. There's no betrayal there.

ROBERT BROWN: No. And your father could put up with that?

LUX FEININGER: Well, not only -- he chose it, he said, "I will come to Dessau if I don't have to teach. And of course I don't want a salary. But I will remain with the Bauhaus as the resident artist." And that's what was done.

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ROBERT BROWN: Your father came into residence in such a way that he was available to consult, or to teach formally?

LUX FEININGER: Not to teach, not to teach. To consult if wanted but chiefly as a name on the roster. He had his choice of either coming to Dessau in l925 when the decision was made and in l926 he went -- the choice of either coming, he said yes on the condition that he would not have to teach, he didn't want to have a salary but he would accept a part of one of the so-called "master houses" for himself. They were to be built during that year and they were built. And that was really his compensation for being in Dessau. And he remained in Dessau until the end, and came out on public occasions, says one picture in this archive, where [laughing] he's even to be seen in a tuxedo leading a group of South African students through the Bauhaus because he was the only one who spoke English.

He is together with Hannes Meier, the then director, and with the famous Professor Junkers, the older of the Junkers works, aviation people, an influential man who held the Bauhaus in Dessau when it was already tottering -- supported it financially. I don't quite know what his exact official position was but with his support it was hard to get rid of the Bauhaus. And when I say that I mean to imply that by the early 30s the trend in Germany was turning against the left everywhere. And the land of Anhalt, which had harbored the Bauhaus, although it was a municipal institution -- in Weimar it had been a state-funded institution. The state of Thuringia was the second of the German countries to turn Nazi. In l923 it voted itself a right-wing coalition which had nothing better to do [laughing] than to get rid of the Bauhaus as soon as they could. The coalition was between the Monarchists and the National Socialists. Anhalt was at that time solidly Social Democratic and remained so until the last years of the 20s, when it became conservative -- not yet Nazi but conservative.

ROBERT BROWN: You were glad to go to Dessau yourself, weren't you? In comparison with Weimar.

LUX FEININGER: Oh yes indeed. It seemed exceedingly hopeful. The whole thing was constructed for the Bauhaus. In Weimar, it occupied something that already existed, quite unsuitable as a school. The city of Dessau built the world-famous building complex of the workshops, classroom, administrative offices, master houses and a little cinema nearby. It was too good to be true. It was really a wonderful creation. And for a few years all went well. But not for long.

The Depression, with the American crash and the German depression, are historical factors. They caused unemployment and shortages here and there, and discontent with the Versailles Treaty was hewed to the anti-democratic elements of Germany, rabble-rousers, you know. People didn't see why there should be an expensive art school when nobody had a job and lived off welfare, and so on. All that's frightfully well-known. So again there began to be an atmosphere of some considerable hostility.

ROBERT BROWN: But when you first went there, you were very optim

LUX FEININGER: For two or three years all was beautiful.

ROBERT BROWN: And you lived with your parents, then, in their master house.

LUX FEININGER: That's right. I had my own room.

ROBERT BROWN: And did you spend much of your time on your photography, on your painting, on your stage design, masks, or -- ?

LUX FEININGER: Four things I ended up with. To begin with, I was of course a regular student in Schlemmer's class and we had many nights of rehearsals, not only in the workshop during the day but had night work. So I got used to quite late hours, not every night but many nights. That was number one. Secondly, I did my photography, which never was more than a pleasure to me, although I worked hard. Third, from l929 on, I did indeed paint. And fourth, I was [he laughs] in the band. The dance band, and that caused me some little labor because originally they didn't want me because I didn't have a proper instrument. But I got myself a proper instrument. As long as I had only a banjo, they didn't really -- they had a banjo already, so they didn't need two banjos. It was a jazz band, or it tried to be.

Then they said if I could learn the clarinet, that might be a different matter. But where was I to find a clarinet? I had to get it myself. Well, my father generously bought a clarinet for me and I learned it. So after that I came into the band. I was welcome to bring the banjo too, you know, but mostly I tootled. [he laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: There were frequent parties, weren't there.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Impromptu parties were very frequent, and also on major occasions, and once, twice or three times the band even traveled and was hired to play somewhere else; maybe even more than three times. That was a year or two of some guest engagements, which were paid. So the band also needed rehearsals, of course. So I was fairly busy with these four things -- photography, the painting, the stage, and the band. And I enjoyed it very much. Very much indeed. It didn't seem to exhaust me or anything like that.

But as to staying in Germany, that became very unattractive to me. From the summer of l932 on, when I was 22, I saw clearly -- thought I saw clearly -- which way the wind was going to blow and I said, "I'm getting out."

ROBERT BROWN: Even though you were having exhibitions of your photographs and of your paintings.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, yes; I did. In fact, I had already had a one-man show by that time, which was quite successful. In Erfurt; very good.

ROBERT BROWN: With that, you told me, you made some money, you sold some --

LUX FEININGER: Yes. I made a little excursion to Paris in the spring of l93l. That was strictly to do something else -- to visit some friends and whatnot. I spent a month in Paris and all the money that I'd taken was gone. In the meantime there had been certain developments in Germany that were not noted at once to be dangerous, although later that year they turned out to be. They had a bank crash and foreign funds became limited -- you couldn't take money abroad any more, but I got out in time for my project.

My parents had agreed to partly finance this. If I wanted to go to Paris it was fine with them because I had there my godfather [I call him that although I'm not really baptized but he is still my godfather] -- Theodore Spicer Simpson, a sculptor, who had a studio in Montparnasse which became a little burdensome for him to keep. He lived in his house in the country. He wanted to keep hold of the studio and I was to be a subtenant, serving him well and suiting me because I had a place. So I thought I was all set, and I was all set except that my brother Andreas also wanted to go at the last minute, sort of a hasty decision. Well, it didn't ditch the plan, although it was against my then preference. But we managed very well. Again, in the biography there's something about that. And I was in Paris.

And I was in Paris when Theodore, my godfather, asked me one day -- I was staying in his house for the weekend -- whether I thought Hitler would ever become Chancellor. I said no, I didn't think that could be; he was underground, chiefly, and the President von Hindenburg had give his word [spoken with heavy irony] that he would not make Hitler chancellor in his lifetime. [he laughs] And Theodore said, "Well, he just did." And he showed me the newspaper. This was really a rather good test, I must say, of my ignorance. When I thought I was so well-informed, it was a little painful to recall, you know, expert on German affairs. On the one hand, I left because I didn't like the rise of Nazism; on the other hand, I was so misinformed. However --

ROBERT BROWN: You said before -- I don't know if it applies so much to you -- that your parents, for example, were fairly if not uninformed, fairly indifferent to political things.

LUX FEININGER: They were strangely so. Well, my mother was at least aware of the anti-Semitism because being Jewish herself, it hurt her right and left. My father is the one who was curiously insen --he said it would blow over. He said, "It can't last, it's too grotesque."

ROBERT BROWN: But you went to Paris also with a particular program, or things you wished to see, or artists you wished to work with?

LUX FEININGER: Not artists. I simply wanted to -- but Paris is a good place to be in, for an artist, but I had no arrangements to go to any school or anything. I simply had fairly inexpensive quarters and a mini-allowance.

ROBERT BROWN: These are some excerpts from your memoirs.

LUX FEININGER: In Paris, I used to read "Housekeeping." I learned how to manage a budget, how to cook, what to cook, what to buy, how to ask for it, where to go for it, how much to spend on it, how to keep the pursestrings tight, how to use the subway, how to use the bus system; how to smoke French cigarettes, and how to tolerate -- then it was better than nothing -- I also used something about the range of exchange of [a] the Reichsmark and [b] the dollar.

I also learned when the U. S. Consulate was likely to be closed -- on February 22nd -- and why this would be so again next year, having found this year that it was closed -- having made a trip halfway through the town to find a locked door to get my passport extended.

ROBERT BROWN: Washington's Birthday.

LUX FEININGER: I learned, but never got really good at it, to look the other way when dusky West Indian beauties

came waltzing along, which was all the time. A day finally came when I had to ask myself, "What am I doing all this for??" I had become so absorbed in the accomplishing these domestic duties that I had quite literally forgotten that I had come to Paris to paint, to do my work, my own work. Evidently now was the time to begin and I set up my watercolor apparatus for the first time since I packed it up in Germany last summer. It was always difficult for me to begin working in new surroundings. I fussed endlessly before settling in a place with the best light and at the same time disturbing the sacred household routine as little as possible. I made some charcoal drawings and put watercolors on them, and I wished that I liked them better -- when I had a few to look at -- that the glow of creation was dimmed out, the inner light was not shining. [END OF QUOTATION]

I'll now go into a psychological self-examination and end up with the conclusion that it wasn't so much that the arrangement in Paris was wrong as that there was something wrong in my own being. And I worked that out in the next year or so, and in the process I got into painting.

ROBERT BROWN: It took you a good while to --

LUX FEININGER: It took me a good while and it took the form of endless fights with my brother. And through that I found out that there was something wrong that wasn't man-made -- in other words, that Nature made and had to be dealt with along those lines. Yes. But that could hardly be read out as a page. But this thing about [laughing] domestic arrangements and learning French and learning the runways, you know -- but I learned there about keeping body and soul together on very little money. It has been of the greatest advantage to me, especially when I came to this country. I was literally penniless when I stepped foot in New York. I had a passport and I knew the language. These were the only two things that I had.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned the passport. Did you always have a U.S. passport?

LUX FEININGER: Since I was 20 years old I had a U.S. passport. I got that to go to Paris with. Yes, I was never a German. I was simply -- I inherited my citizenship from my father and it was so long it was since repealed but it was still in existence then. And the whole family was American.

ROBERT BROWN: You'd been in the bosom of your family until you went to Paris.

LUX FEININGER: I wouldn't have needed the passport --

ROBERT BROWN: No, but I mean, taking care of yourself, if you'd wished, your mother and your father were "there," right? When you were in Germany.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. I was welcome to be there. There was one big exception. This I've learned chiefly from being a parent myself. It's not the best thing in the world for a young man of 20 to be still taken care of at home, you know. And I too felt that and made a fairly successful attempt to burst out while I was still located in Germany -- in fact, still at the Bauhaus I left for some sub-standard place and lived there. But I consented, at the pleading of my mother especially, to come home for one meal a day, on the bicycle. But I had moved out. Not that they kicked me out, quite the contrary they tried to keep me there. My father, however, did not. He said, "Let him go for goodness sakes if he wants to go. Of course." My mother was the one -- she was always trying to run me a little bit more than necessary but she lost out.

So that was the year before I went to Paris. So the instinct was not totally dead. I knew that something was not right at home.

ROBERT BROWN: And you, sometime before, had left Schlemmer's stage workshop -- you no longer formally did anything --

ROBERT BROWN: Schlemmer left in the Bauhaus and I lost interest in the stage class. Hannes Meyer put the stage workshop under a student committee and those political guys that wanted to make a political theater out of it. That didn't suit me at all. Before long I quit. Just quit.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, your father would say "let him do what he wants to do." Was Gropius -- did he ever function as someone to whom you could go and talk?

LUX FEININGER: No. No. Gropius and I became, later, very good friends. Again, we were already friends, but he really know my work. Wait: I shouldn't say that, that is not right. Gropius was not much interested in painting. Certainly not at the Bauhaus. And yet, he's done a great thing for me. I should mention it here now. When Gropius came to Harvard, he was going to start in the fall of l938 but in the spring he was already in the country -- in fact the preceding autumn I think he was in New York -- and when he looked around Cambridge in Boston he found out it would be a good thing for him to do something to get into the public awareness.

How it was done I do not know but I think my mother had something to do with it. She decided to invite me to

give an exhibition of my paintings at the Architectural Club in Boston; I think it was on Somerset Street, or was then. And I gladly accepted this and had my show there in April l938. It was sponsored by Gropius and was beautifully attended, very nicely received, and although at first no sales, for which I'd hoped, were realized, it began my American career as a painter, indirectly. Because I met people there who later came to see me and looked at my work, became my friends, bought my work, sent others and so on and so forth.

ROBERT BROWN: Back in Germany he had not been one to -- What about Paul Klee, who was around?

LUX FEININGER: Very retiring. With his son Felix I became very great friends but only by letter in late years. As to Paul, I paid a call on him with my camera when I [or he ?] was 60 years old and said could I take his picture. He sat for me and I made a photograph in a very dim studio with a very slow camera and very slow plate, which I still have. It's not exactly a distinguished photograph but it's a distinguished man and quite a beautiful thing. But that's almost all that Paul Klee knew of me or I of him, except that in his letters to my parents he very kindly inquires from time to time as to what --

ROBERT BROWN: He was, with respect to almost every one, rather retiring.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, yes. He was very much that.

ROBERT BROWN: He was a teacher, though, wasn't he, from time to time?

LUX FEININGER: In Weimar he was a teacher, he was also a teacher in Dessau because Paul Klee had a course that was really required for students to take and I took it, since I was regularly enrolled. But I can tell you very little about it because, again, my own ideas got in the way all the time. I was a nonconformist if there ever was such a thing. Kandinsky also gave a course, and that I recall that with actual dis-like. And again, I have later admitted to myself and where possible put it in writing that again I was merely young and dumb and blind and that there was more to Kandinsky than I was able to understand at the time. That has come as hindsight 20 or 30 years afterwards, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he well-liked otherwise, do you recall? What was he like in personality?

LUX FEININGER: Klee was venerated. Kandinsky was very awesome, in a way. He would not brook any nonsense; he was much more professorial than anybody else. Well, he was really a [he laughs] Russian nobleman, you know. We were sort of peons or peasants, you know, as students. At least he emanated a little bit of that feeling. He was quite a lordly being, really. But he did not really engender love, which Klee did. I mean, you couldn't help loving the man even though you couldn't say that you knew him. But Kandinsky was if anything a little fearsome.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you have some cronies among the students before you left for Paris.?

LUX FEININGER: Klemenz Roesler was my best friend. He was the banjoist of the band before I joined it, and I admired that very much and I sought his acquaintance because I wanted to take lessons from him. And he was very poor and gladly or not too unwillingly accepted that. And we became friends almost at once. He was a couple of years older than myself. He was a great friend, but he died very, very young.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he have some successes in exhibitions?

LUX FEININGER: He was just beginning to have successes, although he was still extremely poor. But I don't know what the Nazis would have done with him. He died in early l934 from tuberculosis. Whether the Nazis -- he would have gotten into trouble. He was a very libertarian and democratic being, he would not have succumbed to Nazi doctrines. It would have been misery for him. As it was, he was spared that. But still he was well under 30 when he died. I think from poverty, from neglect. His T.B. could have been cured. Well, that goes too far, perhaps.

Relatively few others were friends, and I think they're all dead.

ROBERT BROWN: You went with your brother Andreas. He came down to Paris with you. What was he doing at that point?

LUX FEININGER: Well, after a few weeks of getting nowhere did a very constructive thing. He sought an introduction to Le Corbusier. He got it and he was accepted as an unpaid volunteer draftsman in Le Corbusier's office. And then again, it was rather nearby, it was an easy walk from where we lived to where the office was. And Andreas was a changed being. He suddenly had a sense of direction. He never learned French although [laughing] he was born in Paris. He was not a very good linguist, so he was very dependent on me for the housekeeping and so on but he washed the dishes because you don't need a language for that.

So that was the agreement we had, but he didn't remain very long in Paris. He went to Sweden, whom he very soon afterwards married, a Swedish girl who had been a Bauhaus student, [her name] my sister-in-law. She had come to Paris to study china-painting at the state manufactory because her uncle in Sweden had a ceramics

factory and was going to employ her as a designer, and did; and she was working towards a career when she decided to marry, instead. She kept the career for a while but in the end a child, my one and only nephew, Thomas, now well over 50. She, I think correctly, business and has got very much into photography in Stockholm. But he was in Paris less than a year.

ROBERT BROWN: At that time you were together there were lots of arguments, you have told me.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, especially at first.

ROBERT BROWN: His personality was quite different from your own?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, that is true. And yet I think the fault if any was more on my side than on his. But then also the merit of finding a solution is also mine. If I simply the greater guilt in being difficult to get along with, then the credit goes to me for seeking something that worked. And after that we were friends. And I will say -- and this again is in my biography -- that the influence, the almost wordless influence of my future sister-in-law had a world to do with it. She was simply a civilizing influence, you know, even though she was [he laughs] not yet my sister-in-law. And all this worked somehow to everybody's advantage, you know. That was another queer thing, psychological, I'm sure, but I'm glad it happened because it led to self-knowledge. And that's always useful.

ROBERT BROWN: By later l933 or '34 in Paris you were painting quite a lot.

LUX FEININGER: I was painting from, let's say, January l933 -- I arrived the preceding October, and from October to January I did little if anything. After that production began very nicely. I painted, and didn't exhibit, but I did after I came out of Paris, a show was already arranged for but not in Germany. Originally it was to take place in '34. Due to the illness of the dealer-gallery man it was postponed for a year but it came off.

In the meantime in Paris my fortunes had really turned pretty low and I was riddled with debts. I left Paris having paid my debts and bought myself a suit -- I was in rags --because a painting was sold in Pittsburgh at the Carnegie International. That was a real deus ex machina and came at the last moment, I may say, [laughing] this I cannot easily forget. That was at the very end of l934. I packed my bags, paid my debts, cleared myself with the police -- as a foreigner you do well to do that, because if you don't, you can never come back. And I attached some importance to that but I didn't just "beat it out," you know.

In Berlin I landed amongst the new Nazi generation and with a howling success of a one-man show in the heart of Berlin. [laughing] That was in the first days of March. At Nierendorf [phon.sp.] Gallery. A year later, Nierendorf himself, on his way to the United States never, never to set foot in Germany again, had received word that he had better stop exhibiting this guy if he wanted to keep his gallery.

ROBERT BROWN: Why was it even allowed -- oh, he just slipped it in before the Nazis knew?

LUX FEININGER: The Nazis had not made their famous laws yet, the art and race laws. They made them during l935 at the Party convention at Nuremberg. It was then that the Chamber of Culture was created and nobody who was not a member of that could exhibit. And to be a member you had to prove [speaking with heavy emphasis] l6 quarters of non-Jewish descent. Which I would not do. I couldn't do it, and I would not submit to that. Therefore, I was not licensed to exhibit.

Nevertheless I continued to exhibit until he was told to stop doing that. But it didn't bother him any more, he had already left with his brother. The brother was quite a different sort of being; he got along with everybody. I was myself on the way to the United States in l936 --

ROBERT BROWN: How did it hit you when you came back to -- your parents were living then, in Berlin -- you're contemporaries, now, --

LUX FEININGER: For the second time I found that they were living like in an enchanted castle. They didn't know what was going on.

ROBERT BROWN: Despite the fact that their house had been raided before they moved out of Dessau, in '33.

LUX FEININGER: Well, I shouldn't say raided; it was searched late at night, without warning. Somebody beat at the door and there was a gang of Stormtroopers. But they had a Warrant of Domiciliary Search, is that what it's called? They found nothing, although they could have found something. Alfred Barr, who was my friend then -- later we drifted apart -- had been to Russia traveling, in l929, I believe. En route to Russia he came through Dessau and we became acquainted. He also called on my father, of course, but he also liked me. He went to Russia and came back and went to America. He sent me some souvenirs from Russia, a beautiful map, in Russian, this big, a poster really, a wall map. Well, I kept it folded in one of my drawers and [he laughs] the Nazis didn't find it. If they had found it, I wonder what they would have done with it. I don't think it would have

been very healthy for my parents.

ROBERT BROWN: When you went back to Berlin in '35, did you find that a good many of your contemporaries were changed? They were Nazi, or --

LUX FEININGER: My contemporaries were unfindable. There weren't any that I knew. I was like a newcomer although it was my native town. I enjoyed a show -- Nierendorf's gallery was a dream of a place. It was beautifully located. If we had a week instead of a morning, I'd fish out another page which would describe the whole thing of my arrival.

I describe my first junket into town with my father by way of the trolley. He was living in Siemenstadt, which hadn't existed when I was a boy, and I got lost. So I had to go into town --

ROBERT BROWN: That was a new section that Gropius and others had designed in the 20s, wasn't it?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, quite right. A big industrial suburb, quite technological really. Well, we went into town; I describe the early fall, beautiful weather. In Germany you get nice late winter days -- snow melting, the yellow trolley cars and the blue sky. And I said, "What are those red things?" They were stuermerkaessen, do you know what a stuermerkassen is? Those were bulletin boards erected by the Nazis, glazed bulletin boards, locked with a padlock in which were exhibited every week the publications of Herr Julius Streicher; you've heard of him. He was one of the criminals hanged in Nueremburg at the end of the war. A scurrilous, vile, pornographic shit paper, full of anti-Semitism and slander and the most really disgusting displays. By order of the Party, there were displayed everywhere and the people were invited to read it. To damage one of them was like Guessler's hat in "William Tell" -- you hit one of those things, you've hit the Fuehrer himself. People looked the other way, they tolerated it. There were these things everywhere in Berlin and in all other towns.

To give you one idea of the thing I saw that morning, I had a photograph of wretched girl in a village, pilloried, if you please, with a sign hanging around her neck saying, to translate, "In this village I am the greatest whore because I go to bed only with Jews." And there she stood. That was in l935, and made perhaps a too great impression. But there it is.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you continue painting when you got back to Berlin?

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, I painted.

ROBERT BROWN: What, roughly speaking, were you painting at that time? What kinds of things?

LUX FEININGER: The same thing that I was painting before -- my [he laughs] my dream pictures of sailing ships and literary scenes poetically translated into my own language. I did not experience any change in approach to painting until very very much later. I took in life as much as I could absorb. The rest I built into a store of resentment and anger, which I knew eventually would culminate in war. I saw that coming and was full of it.

ROBERT BROWN: You felt this yourself, that war was coming.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. It was then that I began inwardly to stress more and more the fact that thank heaven for one small favor: I was never politically a German, I was never a German citizen. And to sum up this conflict for me, I began to long for America, which was my country, although I knew well that I knew nothing about it in but I knew I would go there eventually. And by God, a year later I went there. It was excessively easy to be here, although I had absolutely no money. But the air was clean, the spiritual air was clean, or it seemed so to me.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned earlier you had seen Alfred Barr during those years.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, yes, he was quite young and I was even younger.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he just coming around looking at --

LUX FEININGER: He was getting ready to open the Museum of Modern Art. And I think he was making a trip through Europe simply to broaden his views. I don't even if it was his first. He was quite young then. This was while I was still in Dessau.

ROBERT BROWN: How did he strike you? What was he like?

LUX FEININGER: I admired him at once. I said, well, that's my ideal of America. But I was not really a penetrating observer at that time. I was very flattered at the attention that he paid to my photography especially. He later sent Philip Johnson to our address, who was then, I believe, building up a photo collection for the Museum -- Johnson bought quite a few of my photographs, which are in the Museum of Modern Art now, unless they've sold them, which I doubt. So that was very positive.

Also, he was impressed with my love for jazz. I had records, which I fondly played him and wanted him to admire. He admitted they were good and he sent me a batch of records when he got back to the United States. They were all 78 rpm, of course, in those days.

ROBERT BROWN: Your parents in all this time once you came back to Berlin were still, as you've said, somewhat oblivious. They weren't feeling this tension so much. Your mother may have felt it?

LUX FEININGER: My mother felt it very much. My father wouldn't look right or left. He said, [speaking in dark tone of voice] "The hell with it."

ROBERT BROWN: Why did they live in an industrial suburb, Siemenstadt?

LUX FEININGER: Because they found a decent apartment. I mean "industrial" is a white-collar sort of industry, you know, sort of high-tech. Electrical and -- electronic was not invented but was going to be. It was clean, relatively inexpensive, good light -- you know, my father needed room to paint and had given up a studio outside the house by then. So it was a suitable place for them to be in if they had to be somewhere, but they END OF THIS SIDE, B of TAPE l

BEGINNING SIDE A, TAPE 2
May 27, l987

LUX FEININGER: I think I mentioned last time that I was not unprepared inasmuch as I knew people, I had a friend in New York who was looking forward to having me come. Materially I had no means at all, so to speak, but I had the world open before me.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you mean by that?

LUX FEININGER: Well, I felt a new confidence. You asked about seeing people and connections and about friends in Germany. When I left I had hardly anybody left that was in any kind of contact with. And when to New York in the fall of l936, it was really quite different. I had friends, mostly from the last years at the Bauhaus. In l930 and l93l a whole troupe of American students came to study under Mies van der Rohe, and with many of them I became friends.

ROBERT BROWN: Had they come mainly because of his architecture and --

LUX FEININGER: Totally because of that, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: I know there were a good many American and some British students in the early 30s, in that last period.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. British: only two, actually. One was an Englishman, the other was a Scotsman. The Scotsman I liked particularly but among the Americans he was a bete noir because he was a very leftish man. I liked him both for his own qualities and because he had been a seaman. Believe it or not, he had sailed in no fewer than three square-rigged ships; unpaid but as a fully occupied seaman. And he had a wonderful nautical outfit that he bought in Finland, because these ships were all based in Finland. And I painted him, a full-length portrait. I gave him the portrait, so I don't even have a photograph. It's the only painting of mine just about that never got photographed.

His name was John Duguid, a Scottish name. I don't know what became of him. But as I say, the others, the Americans --

ROBERT BROWN: When you got to New York, then, who were some of those that you looked up or were in touch with?

LUX FEININGER: Well, apart from -- the chief person there would be Bill Priestly, now still in Chicago. He put me up when I came to New York. He was kind enough to offer a couch in his apartment until I could find a place of my own and his partner, Jack Rogers, another late Bauhaus student -- these two were in New York. Then my friend, Michael Van Buren, who was in New York but not for long because he was headed for Mexico very soon after that, he actually met me at the pier. Michael knew his way around beautifully and was very helpful. Several others, perhaps, that I don't remember. I also met people, through Priestly especially. So I didn't feel at all lonely.

ROBERT BROWN: Did these young men have careers beginning in New York?

LUX FEININGER: Very much so. Jack Rogers was already married. Bill Priestly married a few years later then moved on to Chicago, but at first he maintained an architectural office in Manhattan. Mike went to Mexico City where before long he started a factory of his own making doors and window for builders. That apparently was a

howling success, although I know very little about it, because we did lose touch a little bit.

ROBERT BROWN: Did Rogers and Priestly have pretty good business?

LUX FEININGER: Just forming, just beginning. But I think . Later they became more successful.
ROBERT BROWN: Did they find the public or their clients accepting of Modernism? Was this a problem or not?

LUX FEININGER: Yes and no. [laughing] I have an amusing story to tell, I don't know if it's going to be too lengthy. Around l938, Bill Priestly got a job to redesign the cocktail lounge of the Forest Hills Inn. They were just here in this country, of course, as you know. And he contracted for me to paint a mural, on canvas, quite a long thing. I was to submit designs, which I did, and apparently they got passed. Now came the question of putting it together in a hurry, for which he lent me the attic of his house. By that time he was newly married and lived with his wife in Syosset, Long Island.

I got my stuff together and moved out to Syosset. There I rigged up an enormous easel on which to stretch my canvas, which was, I think, quite 30 feet long. It was a monster roll, very heavy stuff. I think [laughing] I was pretty good at it. I got it together. It was April, cool weather, and one of the problems was to have the paint dry. It was done with oil paint. Well, we rigged up three different kerosene stoves, which I carried from place to place. Wherever there was new paint that had to dry, the stove was put and things dried. And it came out, I think, very handsomely.

Then came the big job of installing it, which was done. A very interesting paperhanger was hired of many paperhangers, I have heard. He was quite drunk when he appeared on the scene and he reeled about, but he did a fantastic job of mounting that thing while the waiters were already setting tables and bringing drinks to the first guests, because that was the opening day when they were mounting this thing in wet lead paste on the wall. You know that the canvas is pressed into the lead paste and then overnight it settles. And then it's set.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the theme of the mural?

LUX FEININGER: The theme was "the glories of Long Island life." It was a good design. It was necessarily very abstract because the 30 feet long and six feet high canvas was like a strip, you know. But I had a large shape of a map of Long Island, white shape and dark blue for the ocean. Then superimposed over that several Long Island activities. Apart from sailing, which was of course my main interest, there was polo and tennis. The polo was largely on a green ground, with very active horses and so on. The red tennis courts --I don't know if they actually had clay courts but I had seen one, and the brick red was just what I could use. And the dark ultramarine blue for the sailing. So the main color scheme was white, blue, red and green. And I think that was a very good mural. I was to get all expenses, which I kept down, making it possible to have $l20 for me.

This was satisfactorily installed, Bill and I watching this paperhanger, and then we went home happily to Manhattan, with an appointment to come out again next day to meet the hotel manager, who had just returned from his travels, and to see the mural now dried and settled in place and -- it wasn't there! When we came to the Inn, it wasn't there. There was a bare, naked and bleeding wall. We were very appalled and wanted to know where the mural was. Some waiter finally said it was in the furnace room. So we went to the furnace room and there on the floor was an ugly heap of squashed and mangled canvas with red-white lead paste dripping from it.

What had been going on here was as follows: The manager had okayed the mural but he had acted without the authority of a Mr. Eller [phon.ap.] who was the chairman of a board who had dictatorial powers over all hotels, not just the Forest Hills Inn but over others. And he had not been consulted and had said to tear it up. Not only did he say that but he said I wasn't to be paid anything. This made Bill exceedingly mad. Bill, by the way, was a southerner, from Alabama, and had a temperament [laughing] and he felt really hurt for his friend being treated in this summary way and himself as well. I heard him talk to Mr. Eller on the phone and he was very excited indeed. He got nowhere with him. I never laid eyes on this man but I conceived of him as some sort of monster.

On the sly, I was paid my expenses. But the mural was gone, never to be seen. It was worthless, useless. Now that was a big blow. And to make it worse, [laughing] it was the same week that Mussolini invaded Albania. That was when the war was really cooking up, you know. This was l938, the famous "Easter invasion" of Albania, Italy overruning it. That remains fixed in my mind. But I recovered. I thereafter.

ROBERT BROWN: Would that be about the only large project that you had?

LUX FEININGER: I had done one other mural even larger. That also doesn't exist any more but it was at least not torn down by the person that commissioned it. That was John Van Buren, Michael's brother. He was living then in Morristown, New Jersey, where his parents had been living, he had a house there; a Bauhaus built for him by an ex-Bauhaus student. And he wanted an even bigger mural, which I painted for him -- 60 feet long! And as long as he lived there, he loved the mural. His wife didn't like it but she kept quiet about it. But the marriage didn't last. They fell apart, the house was sold, John moved to New Orleans, and the new owner speedily put a gold

wallpaper over it -- [laughing] but of that mural I have many photographs, which I took myself and that even got published, in part, in a book on art and architecture by Elena Bitterman [phon.sp.]. That's part of my bibliography.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the theme of that large mural in Morristown?

LUX FEININGER: That was very imaginative. That was the mythos of the goat, which John, myself and a few other friends had elaborated through the years. The goat is some sort of mythical creature that inspires everybody with vitality and a longing a better life, you might say. And the adventures of the goat were portrayed on several beaches and in harbors and so on and so forth. I could show you photographs but it's beside the point this morning. It was very imaginative, I think. And that again was divided into three main color areas of yellow, Indian red, and a sort of caerulean blue. That was real figures -- and hundreds of figures, I might say -- there were all sorts of detectives and baseball heroes and heavy industry workers and news photographers and God knows what; sailors on shore leave, and it was I think really -- a motorcycle cop giving a truck taker, the truckman had a goat on his truck carting him off to somewhere. The goat escapes all hazards, you know; everyone is down on him and wants to but it always pops back up again and is as much a goat as ever.

ROBERT BROWN: It was rambunctious --

LUX FEININGER: It was rambunctious but it was designed -- it was a big job, you know. Again, I did the whole thing perfectly solo. This was not painted on canvas but on a cinderblock wall. This had to be treated with a proper moisture protection, a concoction which I got from Ralplh Mayer. He's the author of "The Artist's Book" and is the American authority on techniques, and he was very kind and he admitted it was a new technique and he thought it could do. The question was could you paint with oil color on a cinderblock wall? Yes, if you do it right. So we treated it --

ROBERT BROWN: And you were able to solve the problem.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Of course, we don't know how it would have lasted through a century because it was only about, less than ten years, I think, that the thing was on the wall before the new guy gilded it over.

So those were my only two murals and I was singularly unlucky with both of them, as you can --

ROBERT BROWN: In the 30s in New York, did you ever work on any of the government projects?

LUX FEININGER: I did not. People told me about it and said why didn't I. And at first I said because I didn't know about then. And when I did hear about them, I noticed chiefly that people didn't like it and that right and left whenever a post office was decorated, then somebody came and said "it has to go." And I wasn't going to expose myself to that. I'm sure I was wrong to not interest myself more in it, but I didn't, to make it short.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you having some exhibitions in New York fairly quickly?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Well, I had one almost right away because my German dealer, Karl Nierendorf, had actually preceded me to the United States and after being on the West Coast for a bit, he decided to come to New York and open a gallery there. One of the first shows he gave was of my works. But it didn't attract very much attention, I must say. I later got to a better gallery -- I would say "better" because we worked better and it was a better show: Julien Levy.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like to work for?

LUX FEININGER: Well, he was fine and the show was very impressive. It was a two-man show. I shared honors with Ben Shahn, so we had half-and-half. I'm not sure it was very properly reviewed and received and I'm sorry to say it was not successful to say as far as sales went. Again, some very queer things happened. At one time it looked as though both New York museums were going to buy a painting and then neither one of them did. Which Levy never explained to me. I have put that in my biography. He said he would take it as a personal favor if I didn't ask for an explanation, it shouldn't be my loss. [he laughs] However, that show I like to think of because it was good.

ROBERT BROWN: Levy had a rather interesting gallery, didn't he? One that was nicely designed inside, with curving walls and --

LUX FEININGER: He had several. He had at least two that I exhibited in. I dare say that when I first came to New York, before I knew him personally, he was in another place -- 57th Street was then the center for art galleries. And so Max Ernst showed there. I think that's the one you're thinking about.

ROBERT BROWN: What kinds of paintings did you show at Levy's?

LUX FEININGER: That was what I call my "steamer period." I had just discovered the beauty of steamers and especially of the river steamers, which were still very numerous in New York at that time -- the Hudson River boats and also the coastal sidewheelers. So there were a lot of those in there. And of course ships, I was at that time a real "magic realist," as it was called. Two years later I figured in the Magic Realist show of the Museum of Modern Art with similar paintings. A style I later abandoned for quite other things.

ROBERT BROWN: How would you characterize your Magic Realist style?

LUX FEININGER: Well, simply that through every art known to the artist you make an imaginary scene, which you have not seen, look as if it had been seen; as if it were real. That is to say, if I saw a steamer in the year l939, which I did -- let's say the Robert Fulton, a famous Hudson River dayliner -- an idea that inspired me first, that was what got me going on the steamers. I was free to transpose that Robert Fulton steamer of l939 into, let's say, the Mary Powell of l899, with huge wheels instead of little ones. And the "realism" comes from knowing how to draw and model and modify the light -- especially that. The same with any other scene that might strike you as desirable.

The question would soon come, "Why do you do that? " And that is because of a great longing for bygone times, obviously, plus a considerable degree of knowledge which can be acquired through studying these things. If you care to see them, you can their old images in pictures, photographs, whatever, and that helps too. Then I got into trains for a short time, railroad paintings. And then the Museum of Modern Art did buy the one and only painting they ever bought of mine for the collection, an old engine picture -- I called it "Ghosts of Engines." It's very imaginative and the engines I've never seen. But I have imagined them. And apparently not unsuccessfully.

ROBERT BROWN: Your paintings, though -- after you'd looked at older images and looked at, say, present boats or trains, did you then concoct these, though, from the imagination?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Pure invention. But as I say, based on knowledge. I drew whenever I could. When I got into the steamer and railroad phase, I studied the old pictures and re-drew them -- freehand but with the utmost accuracy. I even measured things with dividers and so on. Later I did the same with the animals when I got into a tremendous animal phase. Much, much later I again filled portfolios full of studies, you know, of , studies in any medium that you can think of that would be useful: pencil, pen and ink or watercolor, to get into the subject. I had done the same as a boy already with the rigging of sailing ships. When I was l2 years old, I re-drew completely the sail plan of a fullrigged ship that was published in a book I had, and learned the name of every rope in that ship, and there are a good many in that. Before long I knew the names of the ropes in two languages, English and German.

I mean, this is the way I acquired knowledge. As to the human figure, I've always drawn it from observation, hasty sketches. I learned that from my father -- snatch the pad and draw it at once. Then very much later, when I got into teaching, I also drew from the nude, that is to say, my students were made to do it and I drew with them instead of [he laughs] just messing up their drawings, I made my own, as I felt that was the only way to learn something about life drawing. But I can't really say that the life study in the nude did much for my figure drawing, because it was really costume and gesture that interests me more than the anatomy of the human frame. Let alone the portrait -- although I have done some portraits too, some heads I would say. Whenever I had somebody sit for me, to paint from life, it was not a success. But when I could do it my own way, either from purely imaginary or from even photographs, because later on I used photographs a lot, it was a different matter. It could be translated into something that held up as a picture.

ROBERT BROWN: After you'd made studies, say, measuring from old photographs of trains or sidewheeler steamboats, would you then put those aside and then go to your painting?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, absolutely.

ROBERT BROWN: And that's where your kind of "magic" came in.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. This term "magic", by the way, is of course not my invention. It may have been in use before the show of l943. The full title of that show was "American Realists and Magic Realists" and I was already in the Army when this took place. My friend Lincoln Kirstein, who had bought a few paintings of mine before I was drafted, had arranged for me to be represented in that show. And I had I think l2 or l3 paintings in it. But I heard the term "magic realism" as a corporal in the Army. I said, "THAT'S IT! That's what I'm after." But I'd never heard the term before. But I later on found that it had been used for some time. I was pretty much cut off from these broad trends of criticism but I accepted it at once because that's really what it was about. "Magic" to the extend that one tried, rightly or wrongly, to evoke a bygone period. For whatever reasons but with all your heart and soul, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: And you had also a chance to see contemporary European Surrealism --

LUX FEININGER: Yes, and I rather detested that. Surrealism is possibly related to Magic Realism but I rather despised it, frankly. That's not much to my credit. But I still have no use for it. I exempt such things as Max Ernst; I think he's a true artist. But already the Delvaux [phon.sp.], who is -- by the way, it's rather interesting, the last show I had at Julien Levy's was succeeded by a Delvaux show and I think that's the last show Levy ever made, because he then closed his shop. That was l947. Well, I had heard of the famous Delvaux, "Well, all right, yes, but -- it's all the same. One picture looks like another." At least that's what it seemed like to me. As for Salvador Dali, I have no use for him.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you meet him at all in New York?

LUX FEININGER: Dali, no I didn't. Although he was there when I was there. He got into [laugh] the press by his antics on Fifth Avenue -- made a shop window, Tiffany's, I think. And [laughing again] The New Yorker published a very little piece on Dali's encounter with a policeman. Dali worked late at night and he wanted a live lobster walking around the jewelry and a lady came and complained about cruelty to animals. Dali paid no attention to her -- this was The New Yorker story, I don't know if it's true -- and she called a cop. The cop says, "Lady, I can't do anything" and she said, "Aren't you supposed to look after cruelty to animals?" "This is not in my book," he said, "dogs, cats, whatever, lobsters hate animals." [both laugh

ROBERT BROWN: What about Max Ernst? Did you know him a bit?

LUX FEININGER: Never; never met him. But I do admire him. And my attention was drawn to him before I ever came to New York by my father, who saw reproductions of "La Femme Sans Tete", his woodcut collages and he thought they were absolutely fabulous. And I thought so too. I was a young painter when that happened.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned that before the War you got to know Lincoln Kirstein. How did that come about?

LUX FEININGER: Through my friend Eric Schroeder here in Cambridge. How did I get to know Eric Schroeder? Through my show at the Boston Architectural Club in l938. I told you last time that Gropius, in order to make an appearance on the Boston in scene, had to sponsor something and he sponsored an exhibition of my paintings at the Architectural Club in Boston. And at that appeared many people from Boston and Cambridge who wanted to show attention to Gropius and to the project, and among them was Eric Schroeder, who despite his German-sounding name was a very English Englishman, married to a very American lady who's still alive although Eric, I'm sorry to say, died perhaps l5 years ago.

But Eric responded to a painting very quickly. I met him briefly at the show. Later the same year he called on me in New York and wanted to see what I'd been painting and said he would send a friend. That friend appeared and it turned out to be Lincoln Kirstein. Lincoln got me into the Julien Levy Gallery, for instance. Lincoln Kirstein at once responded to what he saw and after Levy -- I don't know if you know, he has very queer mannerisms; very abrupt, he comes and goes sort of under great tension and pressure. A week later he rang my bell -- I had no phone of any kind -- I opened the door and he burst in, sorry to disturb me but he wanted to buy a painting. Just like that. So I said [himself sounding breathless] "It's all right with me, very much so." And he bought a painting. That was the beginning of an acquaintance which lasted while I was in New York before I was drafted. When I came out of the Army, I found a different man, he had no feelings --

ROBERT BROWN: And before the War, were you able to talk with him at all?

LUX FEININGER: Oh yes. We talked a good bit, I went to his house, I met some of his friends, not many. There was at least one evening party, I remember, where we talked about the Nazis. And I told him what I thought would happen and everybody threw up their hands and said it couldn't be, it was nonsense. I said it was going to end in a bloodbath all around. I said that if the Nazis had nobody else to kill they would kill themselves. This I remember now as a prophecy which was, as you know, borne out, but at that time it seemed very --

ROBERT BROWN: It was met with disbelief.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, disbelief and even disdain. Because of these people thought maybe there was some good to the National Socialist movement. I did not, of course. I wouldn't be too certain about whether or not they did think so. But to that extent I was acquainted with him. I also knew, at least met and once or twice saw his wife, the sister of Paul Cadmus, a painter whom he much favored; a personal friend of his, Cadmus. In fact, he told me when we first became acquainted that my way of painting was what he would like to encourage and was similar to Cadmus's and one or two others' trying to reintroduce something into contemporary painting that was gone at that time. He was very anti-Abstractionist and he seemed to think that there was a good deal of craft, craftsmanship, in what I was doing and I was in no position to deny that. And personally I -- I met Cadmus only once. I didn't think we were all that close in aims. Perhaps what I mean by that is that I felt in me the potential of quite different ways of painting than what I was then doing; whereas Cadmus, I think, stuck with what he was doing and kept getting tighter and tighter all the time. Whereas I loosened up repeatedly in my long painting

life.

ROBERT BROWN: That was an intention of yours all along, wasn't it? Whether conscious or not.

LUX FEININGER: It was in a way, and some sort of dim awareness that this was not the end of my potential: yes. And I did not really feel like being categorized. But in the meantime it was just too damn nice to have somebody who thought I was the cat's pajamas and actually bought three paintings of mine -- one for himself and two for other people, one for his brother for a wedding present. And so on. So, you know, it helped me enormously because I was living there on a shoestring.

ROBERT BROWN: Kirstein had very decided tastes then, did he?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. [emphatic tone or voice] "I like it!" Or "I don't like it." There were almost instant reactions to his seeing something new. "Oh I like that!" Or he would just as readily say, "Oh I don't like that." And [he laughs] you might as well take it away.

ROBERT BROWN: What was Eric Schroeder doing at that time?

LUX FEININGER: Eric was doing then what he did until he died. He was especially an Arabic scholar. He knew Arabian [sic] and was fascinated by the Muslim culture. He was published in an enormous book on Muslim life called "Mohammed's People," which you may have seen. He was also very much an appreciator. He had an Oxford Master's, I think, but he was an expert on Iranian art especially. And while he was alive his title was Honorary Chief of Iranian Art at the Fogg, an unpaid job but still a very respectable and to him very important job.

He also got into painting, himself, during World War II especially. And when I came out of the Army I found to my great surprise that Eric had worked his way enormously into painting, although he never really wanted to think of himself as a painter. He had studied Ruskin --Ruskin was one of his great admirations and he followed his advice in self-education as a painter and painted essentially in an l8th century technique and style but very imaginative things; somewhat surrealistic, I would say.

ROBERT BROWN: You met first in the 30s?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, in the late 30s, and were friends till he died. I'm still friends with his widow. She was Margaret Forbes, one of the women, that's how I got to know the son. Eric loved the son dearly and had invited me many times before I was finally able to go. The first time I went was actually only l95l, but from that time on I was there repeatedly.

ROBERT BROWN: In '38, is that when you first came up here [Cambridge, Mass.] for the exhibition?

LUX FEININGER: I came, spent a week here. In fact I was Gropius's houseguest. He had then a rented house in Lincoln because his own building, which is now a National Monument, was just rising from the ground. I saw the foundations of it being laid.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he very hospitable, or -- ?

LUX FEININGER: He was extremely so, yes, he was very kind. Because he was also very busy. He went early into Boston every morning and one didn't see him until evening. I usually or very often went with him to get my show together and also to look around and survey . I remember that happily. Gropius of course at that time you know was pretty much of a stranger himself here. I think he'd been only a year in this country, he was in England before. So I think, as being the son of one of his oldest friends, he showed me more attention than he would perhaps do to some other person because of the knowledge --

ROBERT BROWN: How about Mrs. Gropius? Was she mothering or --?

LUX FEININGER: Well, [laughing] no, she was too youthful to be mothering. Did you know her at all, in later life? She was actually I would say somewhat dashing, really. I didn't drive a car myself then, it was years before I even thought of driving a car. But her driving was somewhat dashing [laughing] and the same with her horsemanship, which I never saw, only heard about. But she was thrown more times than anybody could count but she'd always come back for more. She got herself pretty badly smashed up too, you know, she was I think for a whole year in a cast, then on crutches, but she recovered and went right on. So, that's not very mothering, I would say. [both laugh]

ROBERT BROWN: Did you think ever of or were your ever asked to come up here, or did you ever think it would pay you if you were to stay in New York?

LUX FEININGER: I was asked by Eric to come visit him in l940 during Christmas week, during Christmas vacation.

I was his houseguest and there painted actually in his attic, which was a queer place even compared to this room. I painted my first railroad painting, to his great delight, and I gave it to the family as a house present. It was a picture of the engine Brutus. It was named Brutus at Eric's suggestion, it was just an old American engine and had to have a name; they always had names painted on the tender of the cab. We debated what would be a good name and Eric came up with Brutus, so Brutus it became.

Then exactly a year later I was back here because Eric had gotten me permission to paint a portrait of a yacht of a friend of his, Mr. Donald Starr, a Boston lawyer, who had a yawl, The Milky Way, of which he was very proud. It was a beautiful boat and had a carved figurehead made by his wife, Mrs. Polly Starr. And I was commissioned to do the portrait. Again, at Eric's house. I went to see the yacht, which was hauled out at yacht at Sabin [?] Hill, I think, in Dorchester area. I still have sketches I made, especially of the figurehead because that was very much wanted, and drawings I made of the hull, the bow, the deck arrangement, the teak rail around the quarterdeck, and so on. I also got a sail plan given to me by Mr. Starr, a blueprint copy from the designer's office --

ROBERT BROWN: This would be very detailed.

LUX FEININGER: Very detailed. I did the portrait, again in Eric's house as I said. It wasn't very big, about 30" long, maximum. I wrapped it up when it was finished and dried and took it to Boston to deliver it to Mr. Starr's office. I should say that this was on December 8, l94l. The day before, Eric, who was a great friend of "the Gropii," as he called them, and I had been going to Lincoln to spend an evening with the Gropius's. We left Cambridge in peace, arrived in Lincoln at war. We were met at the door by the news that Pearl Harbor was being bombed. This was rather weird.

Then, the next day, the painting was ready for delivery and I delivered it by subway. I went to Harvard Square and the papers were all yelling about the Nazi squadrons approaching the American coast and schools being evacuated. Were you alive then? [Brown says no.] I delivered my painting -- I had not met Mr. Starr before. A very awesome man he was too; this was in a State Street building. He was a big lawyer. He was very nice. He liked the painting, wrote me my check, and then after that was done I said wasn't it awful that a Nazi squadron was coming up the coast. [laughing] He said it was quite shocking. Then I left. When I came out into the street again I found a new edition of the newspapers and they said it was all a mistake, it was a hoax, no squadron was approaching.

I shortened my stay a little bit and went back to New York and became an area warden, an idea which I got from Eric because I saw he was already an air raid warden here in Cambridge. So that was in December l94l. The next April I was already in the Army.

ROBERT BROWN: But you took this very seriously, this first news of Pearl Harbor.

LUX FEININGER: You bet.

ROBERT BROWN: And Gropius did too.

LUX FEININGER: Oh heavens yes. But as to me I can't describe it. I mean, it was really a [inaudible phrase].

ROBERT BROWN: Some Americans didn't -- after Pearl Harbor they thought perhaps, well, it was a hoax, the Nazi squadron, and they thought it would settle down after that or something?

LUX FEININGER: I daren't say yes to that, Mr. Brown. No, I think the country -- good Lord, I was for a few weeks an air ward warden. I lived in the Village, on West l0th Street, and Charles Street was one block north of me and my windows looked over the low houses towards the harbor. And there I saw the Normandie burning, you know, which was set on fire by saboteurs, by Fascist sympathizers and burned and burned and burned and nobody could extinguish that fire. I can't forget that. No, these were weird times.

ROBERT BROWN: Your parents had come over by then.

LUX FEININGER: They got over here in l937. They were living in Manhattan.

ROBERT BROWN: How were they doing?

LUX FEININGER: Financially?

ROBERT BROWN: Well, financially and psychically.

LUX FEININGER: Well, they had great troubles until the year when my father won the second prize at the Artists for Victory exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum. From that time on, his professional or economic troubles were over. But up to that time it was misery. Lived again on a shoestring.

ROBERT BROWN: They had not been able to bring anything out of Germany?

LUX FEININGER: Oh, they had brought his paintings. Money could not be brought, nor was there any to bring. You had to spend in the country what you had and equip yourself as well as you could, which even I had done. And that again was a very curious discovery. For instance, I bought a lot of paints before I left in l936, since I knew I couldn't take any money. These paints should have lasted me for years, but they were shoddy paints. The Nazis had already been producing and had put inferior oils into the paint and it dried up in the tube. I had to throw half of them away. Previously German paints were the best you could get.

ROBERT BROWN: They were drawing out good materials for the war.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, exactly.

ROBERT BROWN: So your father and mother then had a very hard, narrow circumstances. Would you see them quite a lot? I suppose you did once you got to New York.

LUX FEININGER: I saw them quite a bit, yes; irregularly but I would say we were in good and almost constant contact.

ROBERT BROWN: And your father by then did realize that things were rather serious and wrong in Europe.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. By that time he did realize it. The next one not to [he laughs] realize much or not to care much would be my brother Lawrence, my second brother; I'm the youngest, Lawrence is the middle one, Andreas the oldest. Lawrence came from Italy on a visit in l939. He arrived in March and was to spend and did spend three months with us in, first, New York, later in Falls Village in Connecticut where my parents went for the summer.

Lawrence went back to Italy in July l939. Although he was told that war was imminent he didn't want to believe it. And besides, he said, if it was really so, Italy wasn't going to be fool enough to be drawn into it. And anyhow he wanted to go back. And back he did.

ROBERT BROWN: He had a career in mind.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, yes, absolutely.

ROBERT BROWN: In what, musicology mainly?

LUX FEININGER: Musicology mainly. And also theology, because he had already, although we didn't really know this -- at least I didn't realize it clearly -- he had begun theological studies after having graduated years earlier in Heidelberg as a musicologist, or rather as a Ph.D. in philosophy and musicology. So there again he went right into the lion's jaw, you might say, although until the invasion of Italy he was not molested, as an American citizen. But then he was, he was interned first by the Italians, and when they quit the war, the Germans took over and kept him a prisoner in a variety of mountain camps with civilian prisoners until l945, when he was let go when the war was over.

ROBERT BROWN: So it had been a serious experience.

LUX FEININGER: It had been a serious experience. And . . .
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LUX FEININGER: And that must have been pretty awesome, but close to, you know, and rather exposed, I suppose.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your brother Lawrence not given to -- the fact that there was war, that it was horrible, that it would pass, that there were more important things that -- he lived a bit in abstractions?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, that was Lawrence. Very much so. He lived for music, in whatever form. He was a composer himself, by the way, and not a bad one. He was also not a bad instrumentalist, although not of first rank or quality but very excellent second rank. Then his musicology took the form of wanting to revitalize the music, first, of the late Middle Ages but much more importantly later of the period of the Counter Reformation, the l7th century -- as he called it the "poly-choral music." And he devoted all his energies to that and that's where his famous choir began which he founded and kept going. Based in Trent, Italy, but traveling here and there.

In fact, during the first year of their being together as a choir, whom he had trained, they sang in Rome at St. Peter's for the Holy Year, l95l. The Pope was within ten feet of where they sang and was extremely

congratulatory and kind. Which I think made a considerable impression not only on Lawrence but much more so on his boys, who were all, of course, sort of Catholic peasant lads and they thought this was a terrific ploy. This sufficed to get him new applicants for his choir all the time. As the older ones grew up and their voices got lost, you know, because they sang the soprano parts too, he got new talent. And he kept the choir going for something like 20 years all told -- not quite 20 but l5 anyway.

But a great change did take place even in Italy during that time. And these motivations were not compelling to his boys in the late 60s, let's say, as they had been in the early 50s. They were volunteers, he didn't pay them, they did this for the greater glory of God and the Church. And the Church lost much of its appeal in Italy, and I think other ideals gained.

ROBERT BROWN: He was quite religious? Was he fairly militant about his -- he converted to Catholicism?

LUX FEININGER: He was converted, yes, when he was still at Heidelberg in l934. If you read his letters and his statements about the meaning of church music, you would think he was excessively militant. He was actually not. He was very mild-mannered, a very civilized being, but his views on ethical ideals of our time were quite pronounced. He thought it was a little weird what anybody was doing nowadays [laughing] and that the only thing was to return to a religious way of education. Not tenable, I think, but you had to let it go. I respected him but he knew my views and I knew his views and he still produced an awful lot of good. And even though it was confined mostly to the professional field, because his militant attitude, as you know, was dealt a tremendous blow by the secularization of the Mass -- that was one of the worst things that could have happened and he thought it was very bad. Vatican Two.

He then [laughing heartily] as a Catholic he went underground. He defied the Papal Decree and continued to celebrate the Mass in Latin, which was "agin the rules." But he would not do it in English. If he ever heard that in this country rock music was admitted into some churches, I think he would have fainted. I'm not sure that he never did hear it, although he was still alive when I got wind of such things. He made occasional visits here, so we did see one another. But this I kept from him [both laughing] -- that would have been too much. He may have heard it from somewhere else but he didn't choose to talk about it.

ROBERT BROWN: Your eldest brother Andreas was also in New York by the late 30s?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. He had lived in Sweden and in December of l939 he, his wife and their young son of a little more than four years age, packed up and left. They didn't want to wait for Sweden to be overrun the way Denmark and Norway had been overrun. And they arrived here at relatively short notice but not totally unprepared. And Andreas got a foothold almost at once as a photographer. First, he already had a company waiting for him, Black-Starr, which was then a very new agency. He very soon quit that to join Life Magazine. And from that time on his career is well documented.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he mean to be a photojournalist? Was that what he had been in Sweden?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. On a fairly elevated level. In Sweden his photography had taken the shape of working for and with architects and city planners, and was architectural photography to begin with. That was a very active time in Sweden [for such work]. And beside that, his scientific interest was also very keen, and since he had decided that building wasn't going to be for him, he threw it all into photography. And he became fascinated by writing on photography, so before he came to this country he had already published several handbooks on amateur photography and what they ought to do. They were translated into a good many different languages. There wasn't very much money in it but there was a certain amount of professional prestige. Then the step to real photojournalism was very easy for him to take, I think. At first it may have been necessity but at once he woke up to many possibilities and became very well known and liked. He had quite a unique way of going about it --

ROBERT BROWN: What was that "unique way" that you --

LUX FEININGER: Especially his work with tele-lenses -- telephoto photography was not then as accessible in l940 as it is now. He designed and constructed several long-range cameras of his own before such things could be bought, to make really extremely long shots. There was this fascination with space. And of course with what we'd have to call the works of man. With man himself, he had little to do. He didn't do people. He did them occasionally but they're not amongst his best work. His best work is landscape, nature, cityscape and that sort of thing. And he admits it by now. In one of his last publications, in the foreword, he states it very plainly, as his concern, and he somewhat excludes man from that.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Life Magazine a good group to work for?

LUX FEININGER: On the whole, yes, I think so.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to see him as well as your parents quite a lot before you went into the Army?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Except that I was gone for a long time, and while I was out of circulation more than three years, I saw relatively little.

ROBERT BROWN: And before that had you seen quite a bit of your brother?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. He was traveling a lot, though. I saw much more of my sister-in-law and my nephew Thomas, who became a great friend of mine, and I of his, or both. Andreas only appeared occasionally. He was constantly traveling for the magazine, you know, going here and there. He liked travel.

ROBERT BROWN: Another thing to ask: before World War II, in New York, did you become acquainted with some of the younger American artists, painters? Are there some that --

LUX FEININGER: Very few really, actually, I'm sorry to say. I never sought much professional company until I got into teaching. That was well after the war. No, I was still pretty much of a -- I had friends but few painters amongst them; very few. Not any that I could name, really, offhand at least.

ROBERT BROWN: Something like the New York World's Fair in l939, did that make any kind of impression on you?

LUX FEININGER: It did indeed, yes. In fact, I painted a picture especially for submission to the jury for Contemporary American Art. There were two jurists to choose from, for artists. There was A Jury, which was traditional painting, and B Jury, which was modern painting. And I foolishly chose the A Jury and I was turned down. I could show you the painting now, I have it here. I dare say I would have made it with the B Jury but -- error of judgment. So I didn't get in. But I did see the show.

My father had several things in there. In l939 he had a huge outdoor mural for the Marine Transportation pavilion. And then for the second year he had a big commission to design the inner court of the Masterpieces of Art exhibition. That was an interior court around a lengthy ornamental pool with fountains and so on. That was really a very foresighted mural, clear around the pool, broken only by certain doorways and such. So I went repeatedly to the Fair with my father and we saw all that and we enjoyed it very much.

ROBERT BROWN: As people who'd been in Germany, in Modernist circles for many years, what did you think of it? Did it seem provincial, or what was your reaction to the World's Fair in New York?

LUX FEININGER: Provincial I would never say. I was at that time still very dewy-eyed about being in this country [he laughs] and I thought that everything was just delightful. For instance, a ridiculous detail: At the sky-writing plane, advertising Coca-Cola or something, a lady stopped us and said what was it doing? And we explained to her what the plane was doing, and she said she'd come from the South, this was the time she'd seen a sky-writing airplane. She'd never heard of it, even. To me it was quite fascinating that one could be amongst such a new people, you see?? It's not important but I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed daily life -- life in the streets and so on. I had no money but I didn't lack for amusement.

I took enormous walks through Manhattan, at night mostly. I went to all sorts of places where people might have told me not to go. Being innocent and harmless I never had any trouble. I consider Paris, where I lived for more than two years, a vastly more dangerous city for night prowlers than Manhattan. I came out of Central Park one night from a west side party and I was really too tired to walk home to the East River, where I lived, so I took a cab. The cab man said, "You came out of there?" I said, "Yes." "You couldn't get me to go in there after dark," he said. This was in l938. I had no idea it had that bad a reputation.

The same with Harlem. I loved Harlem. I cruised around on nights -- without spending a penny, mind you, I had nothing to "throw away" but I enjoyed the life.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your parents adjust similarly? Or did they have the same kind of wonder and --

LUX FEININGER: I wouldn't quite say that. I've included a letter of my father's in the book I wrote on his toy-making, which is largely built around letters of his in which he writes to me, as a matter of fact, how long it took him to get over the fact that the America and New York of his youth was gone when he finally came back to it after long years. He especially mentions the fact that nobody that he met seems to have known the old New York. He says they're all new people. And then he had, gradually -- and it took a long time -- to reconcile himself to the idea that the New York he knew was living in him but that had never existed anywhere else, you know. It was just really a fairly cosmic sort of a discovery.

He expressed that too in one of his last letters that he wrote to me, that "that's where it really is." And then he was reconciled. And he painted some very beautiful paintings of Manhattan. But at first he wouldn't think of it. All

he could think of was the past, which was at that time in Germany -- the peasant villages, the Baltic seacoast and so on. A very queer intermingling, a backward-forward trend of memory, and you would say almost -- not quite but almost -- a blindness toward what was plainly around one's eye, one's being.

ROBERT BROWN: How about your mother? What was her feeling about New York and the United States?

LUX FEININGER: Well, she even liked life in the United States because there was not much in Germany. But I daren't say she was truly happy. The climate played the deuce with her in summers, she dreaded, it was very hot. The relative lack of acclaim or financial success that my father had for several years depressed her very much. She had been accustomed to think of him as a great man, and here he was not being treated as a great man. This is perhaps a little unkind of me to say but she did suffer from it, so she was always straining for something better, which perhaps never quite took place.

She was very courageous. And after his death she was able to pull herself tremendously into focus with the project of the monographs that Hans , the writer, was preparing and for which she worked and did do the catalogue. That was a tremendous job, took her years to do, and she did it very well and it gave her a real goal in life. Although, in the long run, again it wasn't right; the book, although it's a standard work, didn't come up to her expectations, and so on -- the reproductions weren't good enough, this and that.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, perhaps they both found that "culture" at that time didn't quite have the status that it had in Europe, either, did it?

LUX FEININGER: Well, had suffered a complete shipwreck in Germany. And here, in New York particularly, it was very promising.

ROBERT BROWN: Promising but had not arrived -- it was not the way it had been before the Nazis in Europe.

LUX FEININGER: Quite right, no. But it could be felt to be coming, and it was coming. And also the few contacts that she, in the earlier times, had with Boston impressed her very much. She thought that Boston possibly more than New York would be the place, although I think it would not have been, once she'd gotten into it a little bit. But people of that generation -- my father had unusual vigor and optimism despite all his melancholia. My mother, however, was somewhat -- I think she was the victim of that generation, you know? She couldn't quite get over that. I would say she was happy enough but not totally so.

ROBERT BROWN: You were drafted into the Army?

LUX FEININGER: I was drafted. My number came up very early in l942. [he laughs] I meant to be in that war, you know, I meant to take a crack at the Nazis. That may sound crazy to you but I swear it's true. In the late summer of '4l my affairs reached the absolute rock bottom of nothing. And I went to Whitehall to see whether I should enlist. I was that down and out! I went to Whitehall -- that's where the recruiting office was -- and went into a place where a few people were sitting and was told to wait because the sergeant was gone right now. So I sat down and waited, and I looked around and saw these wrecks sitting there on the chairs, you know. Once in a while someone shuffled through there in a listless way; it was a hot August day in New York. Outside it was the street, you know -- cars busy and the banging of the El going this way, that way. "What am I doing here??" [laughing] I left, I left.

I had already registered for the draft, of course, in October l940. So I knew that before long they would probably get to me, you know. And then Pearl Harbor speeded that up very much. So I was quite prepared. I was drafted. Then came the question of Governors Island whether my eyes would keep me out of the service. Right ahead of me in line was a big hulking guy who was refused because his medical record showed rheumatic fever would have burst into tears. And that showed me that I was next. He was rejected and I asked myself how would I feel if they kicked me out. I didn't like it at all, I wanted to be taken. So I was taken. I just squeaked by, I was in. And that suited me to the ground, believe it or not.

ROBERT BROWN: And you were determined, and they knew that --

LUX FEININGER: Well, that had nothing to do with it. I could tell you silly stories about the interviews; I had no respect for them but I wanted to get in, not out. And any pleading I might have done with them would not have done any good. So they simply said I was all right for non-combatant duty. Later that was changed, I was suddenly for combatant duty [laughing] although I didn't actually get into action.

ROBERT BROWN: Where were you shipped off to -- a training camp?

LUX FEININGER: Well, first we were at Fort Dix [NJ] for quite a long time, to be sorted out properly. And then a secret train without being told where we were all going. I was three weeks at Fort Dix. Then we chugged south without knowing where we were going. We finally ended up in Camp Lee in Virginia, a medical training center.

The first time I was ever in the South.

There I went to basic training. Then I conceived the idea that I would do better in military intelligence, and I strained every fiber to get into that. After a lengthy and idiotic series of misadventures, to call them that, I found myself transferred to military intelligence. It was difficult to get in, especially for an enlisted man. But it was made more so by the absolute shenanigans of my company commander, who was a bastard and said he had applied for me when he had not done so and had no intention of doing so, in order to keep me there.

This took me several months to find out, I found out from the company clerk. Then this man was relieved of his post, he went somewhere else, and we got a new company commander. This one really took the well-being of his trainees -- I was no longer a trainee, I was by now part of the cadre, a corporal -- he took a great interest and said he would further it. This time something really did happen. After endless backing and forthing, I found myself transferred. And then I had my heart's desire.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you have to do a good deal of training in intelligence?

LUX FEININGER: We went through a training course, yes. Interrogating prisoners of war was what I was training for. My major asset was that I spoke German. I was especially concerned with the possibilities of sabotage and that sort of thing, knowing the Germans you know [laughing]. I thought I could be helpful in uncovering plots and so on. It didn't turn out that way, but still there was a great and growing need for linguists to act as interrogators. And for that you had to study a lot of enemy matters -- organization and so on and so forth; all kinds of related subjects. It was a very intensive training course, which I passed with considerable success.

Then, instead of being assigned somewhere else I was made part of a research group to do work, especially also illustrating handouts on material training which dragged on. Then after the Germans began to waver, I was reassigned to the Japanese theater and did the whole -- I didn't learn Japanese, mind you, didn't have a word of it. But visually, again, had to work at illustration material and so on, and also study their organization and their methods and philosophy and so on. I came upon some fairly interesting matters that were revealed by interrogations of Japanese prisoners which, it seems to me, lay close to information of our present CIA, which I think grew out of the Japanese war effort.

Whether we had something like that before I cannot say, but during the last year of my researches in Japanese information, I came upon the existence of an all-powerful civilian-military organization in Japan that had prepared the invasion of the Pacific area. It was called "the special service organization," and they did everything. So that troops only had to come in and blow up the bridges, etc. -- it was all done. Whether it was sabotage or alienation or native population or whatever it was, they had done it. It was all-pervasive. I got a perfectly gruesome impression. I spent a whole day turning over stacks of papers in the Pentagon, a special research project. I'd say, My God, it's no wonder -- you remember how they swept down the Malay Peninsula? Java, Sumatra, the whole thing, the Philippines. They all collapsed. That's what it was.

ROBERT BROWN: You were among the first to see these documents?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. I wrote a report on that for my training center at Camp Ritchie, which circulated widely in upper military circles. I was much complimented. And that was a secret report.

ROBERT BROWN: You had not discovered anything similar by way of preparation among the Germans?

LUX FEININGER: The German methods were rather widely know, although the American unawareness of them was grotesque. To show the inefficacy of our Secret Service, some people in the higher military made a plan -- two men were dressed in Nazi uniforms and were to parade through a major American city, I forget whether it was New York or Philadelphia, inquiring of people in the street the way to the harbor, [laughing] asking which way to go. And nobody spotted them as Nazis. You know, this showed the innocence of the public as such, which spread into really quite higher echelons in the military itself. They had much to learn.

And when they finally started to learn, they did it with a bang, that we know. But the work that I did at Camp Ritchie was regardless of rank. I mean, whatever your talents empowered you to do, you did, and your authority was what it could be. I was at one time assigned to give some beastly talks on Japanese army organization to a special class that consisted of only Majors and Colonels. They sat there like schoolboys in my classroom, with me, Staff Sergeant, [laughing] lecturing to them about the Japanese A-type Division and the B Division, and so on. Dreamland!

ROBERT BROWN: So it was excellent posting that you had, then, wasn't it. And you were mainly around Washington, DC then, throughout the whole war.

LUX FEININGER: Western Maryland, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You didn't interrogate prisoners, then. You received information that had been gotten from them by others.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, I never interrogated a soul. We had some prisoners in Camp Ritchie but they were Italians and they were really only introduced as domestic servants and they were treated better than the GIs. They had two bedsheets and we had only one, and when we ran out of bedsheets, they still kept two and we had mattress covers. [laughter] But that was the Geneva Convention, you know; had to be treated right. [pausing] Maybe I shouldn't waste so much time on this stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: Then did you get to Europe at all? You never went back to --

LUX FEININGER: I got into a so-called Alert but I was taken out of it. Suddenly, it later turned out, the invasion of Normandy was being prepared, in considerable silence. And together with more than a hundred, then, I found myself Alerted. A furlough that I had coming was cancelled, so was everyone else's furlough, and we were there under fairly exclusive circumstances -- we couldn't communicate with anybody, we were being -- I think it's called "staged". We had to learn how to shoot tommyguns and so on and a few other things -- get shots of this kind and that kind.

And then in the evening of that day, which was very busy, the sergeant came up to me and said, "I'm not supposed to tell you but I was told to scratch your name off the list." I said, "Okay, thank you." Next morning I was told to go back to my job. [he laughs] So ll4 guys went to Normandy and ll5th guy went back to his desk. I never learned whether it was for a good reason or a bad reason; I could not say. But this I do know: when I was discharged, in October l945, the man who studied my discharge, said, "What did YOU do in the Army??" He was reading some sort of code number, you know. I said, well, I did this and that. He said, "This is a very high category of special -- this-or-that." I said, "Not that I knew of." I mean, I played dumb a little bit. But this would seem that they had rather attached importance to it. Whereas for a long time I thought it was perhaps my being too much of an anti-Nazi that got me out of that. At any rate, I didn't have to lift a finger, it was all done from outside. You were a mere cog in the wheel.

It was fairly exciting, though, because I was just about to go on a furlough, which I got a little belatedly, and that changed my whole life very much. Because I met my first wife at that time. Later that same year we married, while still in the Army. She is no longer alive. But without that furlough it wouldn't have happened, it was very different.

ROBERT BROWN: In summary, were you rather pleased by your contribution to the War effort?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, yes. I would say that, although the disillusionment began very soon after. I confess to you that I didn't like Churchill's Iron Curtain and I didn't like the Liberty, Missouri speech by Truman, either. I knew, from what I knew about ..... that we couldn't have hoped to win against the Nazis and Japan without Russia. And to see the thing collapse at once was very hard for me.

In Cambridge there were a lot of Germans like myself but they were naturalized Americans -- as I told you earlier, through my father's papers I considered myself a real American, that's the only difference. On the way to discharge center I rode with an ex-German and new American, a man who was a stock broker in New York. And this son of a bitch told me on the way to Staunton, Virginia, that the next war we'd fight would be Russia. He wanted that. He thought it should be. I can't tell you what that did to me. It was very evil to me. We were not yet out of the Army and he was already talking about --

ROBERT BROWN: Ready for the next --

LUX FEININGER: Yes. I don't know if this belongs in our interview -- well, there it is. Then the coming home to New York of course was in some ways very glorious -- to be free again and all that sort of thing, because the restraint is really considerable. But right and left, things didn't seem to be right. New York had changed. The streets were full of all sorts of mad people, sick people, bums. I saw police brutality for the first time right after the war's end. I saw two shocking instances of it. I didn't recognize the town any more. Especially the begging and also the mad people that one saw there -- turned them out of Bellevue, you know; roaming the streets. I was rather close to Bellevue, as a matter of fact, where I lived.

So that again was a somewhat unhappy admixture. Then it was impossible to find an apartment. I had to move into a one-room apartment together with my wife -- I mean, she had the place anyway, I simply moved in on her. Nothing could be found. We were told the town was filled because of people coming for the Victory Parade and after that it would get better. Which was a lot of baloney, nothing ever got better.

ROBERT BROWN: A lot of people had just drifted in --

LUX FEININGER: During the War, New York had gained something like 2-l/2 million people, mostly from Puerto

Rico and the south, you know --that was the famous beginning of the Hispanic --

ROBERT BROWN: --who had come in for menial jobs.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Menial and war production jobs and wouldn't go back afterwards; sure.

ROBERT BROWN: And you brought up the Iron Curtain idea -- you felt that rather than continue as allies, you felt that we should, with the Russians -- cultivate and develop it beyond war.

LUX FEININGER: Yes; indeed. I was an out-and-out believer in Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And Truman's succession did not seem right to me. It seemed to me he was in an indecent hurry to undo the work of the New Deal, in order to "unify the country." As to his bipartisan policy, I didn't trust it!

ROBERT BROWN: What did you know of the Russians, however? From your military work, had you had any insight into what their plans had been?

LUX FEININGER: No. Frankly not to any degree more than any other halfway intelligent citizen might have known. We knew what was happening on the map. I know how far the Germans had penetrated towards the east, I had seen the movie of Stalingrad while I was in the Army. I knew what it meant to turn back a hundred-and-odd divisions of troops, you know, as the Russians did -- they had sort of been driving back inch by inch, faster and faster. How could we have done all that through Italy and Normandy? [he laughs] We could not have.

So, merely as an effort it existed and my conception -- I have never given up the idea that the Nazis were the real threat to mankind. Nowadays we all see some other things which I take the liberty of not buying. I have seen the Nazis come out of nowhere, as you might say, and foresaw that rise to power. I knew it would have to be stopped. It was finally stopped. I knew I wouldn't want to be out of it -- I wasn't going to tell other people they had to fight and not do it myself. I may be anti-war but the war against Germany was necessary. It could not be avoided. And without Russia, we couldn't have done it. That doesn't mean that I okay everything the Russians have done -- I mean, their famous horrible pact with the Nazis. Stalin to me is a monster, of course, but the Russian people are not. And as to the institutions, I say they obviously have the right to work out their destiny the way everybody else has the right to work it out, if they can.

ROBERT BROWN: When you got back to New York, was their much discussion of these things?

LUX FEININGER: Well, Marshal Zhukov was expected as a state guest. And then it came over the news that Marshal Zhukov had caught a cold and his arrival was somewhat delayed. [laughing] Well, I'm still waiting for him to come; he never came. He was a very spectacular -- sort of a Russian General Patton, you know; he was a cavalry general, a dashing man. And he was going to be guest of the City of New York and of the President of course, all that. But it was beginning then and there -- no Marshal Zhukov.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you discuss this with friends and all?

LUX FEININGER: Yes. The friends were very hard on me for having been what they called so "enthusiastic" a soldier. Which [laughing] I don't think I was. No: I frankly couldn't quite see it. And the friends were far more outspoken and leftish than I was. I was an emotional creature, put it that way. I mean, I had long looked forward to this day when the Nazis really were licked. The Times had a marvelous cartoon that expressed my feelings about the post-EE-day Nazis. It showed I think it was by the international [British] cartoonist Low. It showed an SS man jumping over a tennis net, his hand extended. "Kamerad!" it said. Well, that paints the attitude, you know, in '46 -- making friends with the ex-Nazis.

ROBERT BROWN: And you first-hand saw these attitudes among some people?

LUX FEININGER: Well, I seemed to see them and feel them. And this talk about the next war would be with Russia and so on -- sure.

ROBERT BROWN: So, for the average soldier you think it was simply a good fight. And now that it's over, we embrace --

LUX FEININGER: I say only for myself. I say I'm a sentimental being and an emotional being, I do not speak for others. The others were perhaps far less dewy-eyed and rosy-cheeked about it. When I came back from discharge center in New York, there was a strike of stevedores, the first that was possible since the state of war had ended, no one strikes during the war. The way people treated these strikers seemed to me quite wrong. They'd say "Our poor GIs ought to be unloaded, you know -- look how they're kept waiting for these people have to strike." It began at once, this business of patriotism versus labor rights and civil ordinary privileges such as demanding better working conditions after years of restraint. I wasn't a stevedore, I wasn't any kind of union person, I had nothing to say for others. I just felt that it still wasn't right, you know. It still wasn't right and

probably never would be.

ROBERT BROWN: And you, actually, I suppose, moving when newly married into one room, were you beginning to set up to go back to painting fairly soon?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, fairly soon. My biography has a good bit to say about it. It was a painful process, a very painful process. In fact, I couldn't "get back," I tried that and it was all nonsense. I had to get into something new and devil a bit did I know what the new was going to be. I had to grope around. So I turned to making an honest penny elsewhere. I sought part-time work as a translator. I worked at home, made a little bit of money. My wife was also working, she was an office worker. So from taking care of the daily needs, I gradually and slowly got into some form of work that seemed to be new enough to justify working at it.

It was an abortive, very short period. It was invaded by illness and early death and so on, a tremendous blackout of consciousness in me after that. And then the gradual regeneration beginning with the l950, I would say, when I was 40 years old. My wife was already dead. I then got into teaching and into new work, both more or less simultaneously. It was really a quite new thing. The old was then really truly dead. It had actually died before, I mean as to the art, the "magic realism" and so on; but it could not be revived but it could be reborn in other form. And that's what took place.
ROBERT BROWN: You had a period as you said of blacking out --

LUX FEININGER: Very much so. A year or more of blackout. END OF THIS SIDE, B of TAPE 2

BEGINNING SIDE A, TAPE 3 - on June 4, l987
ROBERT BROWN: You had your last exhibition at Julian Levy in February l947 and that summer he ended his gallery and offered to place you elsewhere, as you just said. What in fact happened then? Did you exhibit between then and the late 40s?

LUX FEININGER: What happened was that I tried, for a while, to get myself connected with another gallery but I found it very hard going. In '47 things were slow, and in the summer it's extra-slow in Manhattan in the art world and I gave it up. I said if it's going to be, it's going to be but I can't make it happen any faster. And I simply went on working. That means I was painting and working for a living as a part-time translator, I got myself translating work to do at home. And with my wife also working, she worked at some sort of radio company that had an office on East 24th Street, where we also lived. She had hoped to be done with office work -- she had been an office worker when I met her during the War, and then for a while was free. But then with the new pressure developing due to the closing of relations, she went to work and I went to work. And so we worked both --

ROBERT BROWN: Had she also been an artist or --?

LUX FEININGER: She wanted to become a singer, and she was a very fine vocalist and she did take and continued to take singing lessons and held hopes with the opera. I think they were very justified because she was a splendid musician. But she got sick and a year and a half later she was dead. Which of course wrecked everything. That would be late '47 and '48 and in May '49 she died. of course that needn't be described in detail. I artistically very little happened then. But in l950 I was very unexpectedly invited or even challenged to apply for a teaching position, which I did, to be brief --

ROBERT BROWN: Who asked you to or challenged you to?

LUX FEININGER: Well, the challenge came from my analyst. I was in some analysis and she through her connections had heard that a post could be applied for at Sarah Lawrence College. I had not given it a thought, I'd never dreamed of any such thing, and was particularly low and unenterprising but she literally challenged me into doing it -- "If you want to ever get well again you've got to do something. So get together with this man who has been asked to apply and who doesn't want to do it." That was Richard Lippard the sculptor. He didn't want to do it but he was also in touch with my analyst and she'd heard it from him.

So I called up Mr. Lippard and he said, "Fine, let's meet." And that same day, I believe, I called on him. I did fortunately know a little bit about what he'd been doing, I'd seen his splendid big wire sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art. So we weren't total strangers. He was very sympathetic and told me what I needed to know to apply at Sarah Lawrence. I got an appointment to meet with the president and dean of students and I think made a good impression, and was told that very soon I would hear what happened to my application. What I did hear was that I was appointed to teach for one year to replace Mr. Theodore Roczak who had been teaching Design and was on a sabbatical leave of absence. I was to take over his class and I could do what I liked with it.

I later found out that this was a difficult position that I had. There were 40 applicants for that job and I got it.

ROBERT BROWN: Jobs were quite hard to come by, weren't they, then?

LUX FEININGER: I think so, yes. I wouldn't know because I hadn't tried for any. The only thing I did was a little freelancing of commercial art in the hope of raising the rent. But when I got my appointment for the fall of l950 and started working towards teaching, I did begin to teach and I was successful at it. I was reappointed for another year, which was very nice because Roczak came back but he wanted to take Sculpture as a new subject, not Design as before. He had not taught Sculpture at Sarah Lawrence -- of course he is a sculptor. He was a designer during the war and worked for War Production. So as a teacher of Design he was very industry-minded and the Sarah Lawrence students had to learn industrial design from Theodore Roczak. From me they did not learn it but since I'd been busy in commercial art designing this and that, they learned a little about that from me. I got one more year of appointment, '5l and '52 --

ROBERT BROWN: And the students you liked working with?

LUX FEININGER: Very much so. Very much so. I began to learn almost immediately that's the point of it, which when I said this to President Taylor, he said I couldn't have said a better thing, that was what Sarah Lawrence was about. I didn't know it, I was very unsophisticated, in some ways; but pretty much in some others. That is to say, the class was very successful, no doubt about it.

In the winter of l95l I was hospitalized for TB but cured to a point where I was safe to be with in a relatively short time. I got a leave of absence from the college and on March l, I believe, of l952, was able to resume my teaching. And with a very severe regime of rest and p.s. and shots of streptomycin, my doctor got me into shape again. I taught for a second year but to hope for a third year was absurd and I found it out, it couldn't be done.

ROBERT BROWN: They couldn't reappoint you?

LUX FEININGER: They wouldn't, no. They needed a regular -- [tape momentarily blank]

ROBERT BROWN: [resuming mid-sentence] various colleagues there. You mentioned that Roczak taught Sculpture. Before him I think you indicated David Smith had been there for a while..

ROBERT BROWN: David Smith had been his predecessor, had been there for one year. That was during our first meeting, I believe. I never met David Smith personally, I knew of him of course, and my brother Andreas, who was newly back in New York, had interviewed him in a photo-story for Life Magazine. But that was all. So Roczak really took a non-existing Sculpture class because there had been a hiatus -- David Smith was gone when I came to the college. And he began the sculpture, and they appointed after my second year at Sarah Lawrence a young designer who worked in his own direction and I was without a job. That wasn't a great tragedy except that I knew by that time I was getting myself a little bit more in hand due to my analysis. I knew that I should go on earning a living.

ROBERT BROWN: Why did they keep people only from year to year? Was that the policy They wanted a turnover of teachers?

LUX FEININGER: In general I dare say there was some such principle but not as much as some other colleges and universities in the Art department who are much more interested in rotation. At Sarah Larence to the contrary a certain policy of keeping suitable people for as long as they wanted to could be done; they had a very particular way of granting tenure. If you could get yourself appointed in succession to a two-year and to a three-year appointment, you then were entitled to tenure. If they wanted to keep you without giving you tenure, they could give you a one-year appointment if you would take it -- most people would not, I being young and inexperienced saw no reason for not doing it -- but they could give you a two-year one. Then they'd say " and maybe you can come back a year after." And some people did that. Some people, especially in the Literature section, were there for a long time possibly without having tenure, while some others, the real old warhorses who couldn't be dislodged if you wanted to.

All this was a little beyond me and I didn't as yet think of myself as an educator primarily. In the year that followed ending my teaching, I did a certain amount of picture restoring, at which I was fairly good by following the book very closely and not taking on things beyond my competence, and also I translated some more stuff for a man I had met, a book which was never published, a French text into English -- that was my translating: German or French into English.

And then came a new lead from George Kuhn, whom I already slightly knew and whom my parents knew, they were even friends. And he said he had heard of my work at Sarah Lawrence, would I be interested in applying for a job at Harvard. I said I would be and he said could he come up and meet me, which he did, and I gave him lunch. We talked and he looked at my work and said he would let me know very soon when he got back to Cambridge. The upshot of that was I was appointed for the year l953.

ROBERT BROWN: Let me ask one more thing about Sarah Lawrence: You mentioned that Rudolf Arnheim was sort of your adviser at one point.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. They had the system of faculty advisers. New faculty were given an older hand to guide them through the --

ROBERT BROWN: How did you work with him?

LUX FEININGER: Well, I didn't really. I didn't have to, and he didn't have to, but we did meet once, because he said it would be a good idea and he had a few questions he would like to ask me, not about teaching but about art in general. And I found him extremely likable and pained [?] man and, frankly, incomprehensible to me. I tried to read his book, I couldn't. We parted if [he laughs] "parting" it was and with the agreement that we agreed to disagree in matters of psychology and art. So he didn't hurt me any and he didn't help me very much --

ROBERT BROWN: So he didn't affect you.

LUX FEININGER: No. And I retained a very pleasant sort of souvenir of him.

ROBERT BROWN: When Kuhn, then, got you to come to Harvard, you mentioned also that also involved with that was Wilhelm Keller [?] of the Fine Arts department.

LUX FEININGER: He was really the man who gave Kuhn and his colleagues the idea, because Wilhelm Koerner was retiring in '52 and he was asked at the faculty lunches whom he would suggest for a successor to Hyman Blum [phon.sp.] who was then teaching a Fine Arts course which the Fine Arts department had on its books called "Fine Arts l6." And Hyman Blum had expressed the intention of quitting, he'd been there for two years and didn't want to stay. Now, they needed a successor and Wilhelm Koerner said "I've heard good of one Lux Feininger." In fact, Wilhelm Koerner and my parents also knew each other from Weimar times. He was then the very young director of the Schloss Museum in Weimar, the state museum, formerly the Grand Ducal Palace, it had become a museum. And his wife Margaret Koerner was even for a while a student of my father's in Weimar and a tremendous admirer of his work and his ideas.

I had met him in '5l during my father's 80th birthday celebration, and I told him, because he asked me, what I was doing. I told him I was at Sarah Lawrence. At that time I still had the hope of getting a third year. But he wanted details. He said, "What do you do and how do you go about it and what are your ideas?" I gave him some ideas which had to do with geometrical problems in visual art, visual communication, and he was quite interested, although he was a very reserved man, really; but reservedly enthusiastic, if that's the word. [Brown laughs] And he had apparently spoken very highly to the department and they were very glad to have me come and accept. First they had to accept me and then I had to accept them.

This was done with a minimum of trouble, really. And this was done with a minimum of trouble, really. And I began teaching at Harvard, in l953. Fine Arts l6. I wrote a little description of what I was going to do and they liked it and it was published in the catalogue. This was for credit, you know; a regular course that was established many years ago, first by Denman Ross and then continued by Arthur Pope who was then still living and had been a real tradition. Secretly it was hoped that I would do my own "thing" and not continue Pope. Which is exactly what happened, although it happened in a discreet and gradual way. I mean, from Pope you could learn an awful lot. I read his book and it's full of wisdom, but it's also full of a certain defeatism because Pope, while understanding the past, has no use for the future. And what was not the case for me. But the knowledge that could be gathered from reading his one book -- I don't know whether he's written any other -- the language of drawing and painting and so on, that is inexhaustible to a painter, and was so to me.

Now, what I taught my students the first year was much more based on what I had assembled at Sarah Lawrence than anything I'd got from Pope. But it came in most handily and gradually, and already the second year at Harvard I had annual appointments. Because I have no academic degree, they could not give me a contract of any kind other than an annual corporation appointment. The second year I was not only continued but I was offered an advanced course which was to be a half-course two years, so I was teaching from that time on one and a half courses at Harvard. In Advanced Painting, I used Pope fully, and with excellent results, I would say, I consider because it wasn't a developed and creative course, it was a course designed for people who wanted to penetrate into techniques of others.

We began by copying some Fogg paintings. People chose the painting in order to copy it and I undertook to guide their attempts to do it right. And [he laughs] by God if I didn't! It went so well that the department asked me to make it a rule to change slightly the dimensions of the picture stretchers on which the copies were to be made because people wanted to get out with their copies and the guards were worried that they had taken the original. This is historical. I of course agreed and it was done. I didn't do that for many years, I mean I taught the Advanced course until I left Harvard. But the picture copying I did only for one year and it was as much to teach myself something as to teach them something but nobody was compelled to do something they didn't want to do. This was an asterisk course and people had to have consent of the instructor to enroll. The consent was based on their saying yes or no to the proposition that they would copy a painting, you see.

Well, eventually my three half-courses integrated themselves into a really, really something, if I say so myself; it is so. And I left Harvard after nine years only because of the situation of the Carpenter Art Center. They were going to take care of the visual arts and the Fine Arts department was supported by the Dean of the faculty of Arts and Sciences to stop teaching studio courses, because it was duplication. The famous "duplication." So where they had wanted to get me tenure, they were included in the same -- not only would I not get tenure but I would have to go when the Carpenter Arts Center started operating.

ROBERT BROWN: Because they had somebody else in mind?

LUX FEININGER: Under a different heading. It was to be under the school of Design, the school of Architecture, not under the Fine Arts department.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean the Carpenter Center was to be under the school of Design?

LUX FEININGER: That's right. That was an outcome of the famous Brown Report, which had been published several years before and made certain recommendations to Harvard, and this was one of them. I had two years of so-called grace when I got the signal that I was going to have, in two years, to get another job if I could. And the maintenance to teaching but knowing that one of these years, whenever the Center would get ready, would be my last.

ROBERT BROWN: Had the Brown Report made sense to you, or not?

LUX FEININGER: It had made enormous sense but the reaction that Harvard took to the Brown Report did not make sense, because Harvard fought the report all it could. And said they wouldn't do this and wouldn't do that and this other thing was ridiculous, but they might conceivably do that; and if they could get money together to build some sort of building, then they would do that. The fact that Le Corbusier was going to build it, was treated as a state secret similar to the Sultan of Brunei. [Brown laughs] I don't know -- it was "Sh-h-h! Don't talk about it!"

Meanwhile I was asked by my department what kind of recommendation I would like to have in the new building. Would I like to have doors to my classrooms? Would I prefer daylight to artificial light? So I wrote a long thing saying this is what I would like to have but I'm not particular, I'll take anything [he laughs]. But nobody had mentioned that I wasn't to be in it. In fact, I think my Fine Arts department didn't know it on their part until the end came. Then, suddenly, it was revealed. We already knew that Le Corbusier was the architect, the building was already growing out of the ground. But still nobody knew who was going to be in it. When it was revealed it was time to look for another job, because I had a family by that time.

ROBERT BROWN: You weren't carried on to the Carpenter Center. Finally, what about undergraduates? You mentioned Jose Luis Sert who was then Dean of GSC --

LUX FEININGER: That's right. I visited him, wrote him a long letter I wrote him offering my services to him in the year l960. I said I heard that the teaching of studio methods in art was going to be transferred to "your department and here's what I've been doing. I dare say you've heard of some of it." I went into considerable detail what I could do and so on. And I received no answer to that. Then I called up the department and was told that Mr. Sert had received my letter and was going to answer it very shortly. This has not taken place to this day. [he laughs] About 20 years later.

So that was a hope extinguished. But I must say it was all for the good. I did spend a year and a half of considerable anguish trying to get a job elsewhere and pursued all avenues. We had two young children at that time and had bought a little house which we had fortunately paid for -- even though we had a mortgage we'd managed to pay it off rather quickly.

But money was definitely needed. Then I went as far as Baltimore in my actual trips to be interviewed. I declined to, as it was called, "hop on a plane" and fly to Carbondale, Illinois where the Southern Illinois University thought they might have room for me. I'd read about tornadoes [laughing] and heard about the library which was kept blank, in order to save money, by the famous Mr. Schreiarchs [phon.sp.], president. What with one thing and another I did not hop on the plane, but I did go to New York once to meet with a man there who said "Consider yourself engaged." That would be for Western Reserve University. Nothing came of that. I don't know why, yet we were sitting together and he said, "Consider yourself hired." Okay.

Finally the Museum School to whom I had also applied, in fact by whom I was interviewed, in my classroom, by young Cox, who was then -- they still had "departments" in those years -- head of department of Painting. He came to my class, Fine Arts l6B in the geometrical class, and expressed considerable approval of it --

ROBERT BROWN: This was while you were still at Harvard.

LUX FEININGER: Yes but these were my last days there, in the spring of '62. He said I would hear from Mr. Russell T. Smith, the head of the school. I had never heard of Mr. Smith until I called up a young lady that I knew who was a cousin of a young lady I knew at Sarah Lawrence College. She was Jean and the other one was Joan, also with the same last name. And Joan had come to see me while I was still teaching at Harvard to consult about a point of picture conservation because she had a junior appointment at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. We talked, she was very very nice to me. I'd met her before, although she didn't go to Sarah Lawrence, but an intense, nice girl and altogether on the right track in art, and I called her up when I didn't hear from Smith. She said that was "ridiculous," she would go after Smith.

Which she did [laughing] with such effect that within three days I had a letter from Mr. Smith asking me to please come to his office and discuss a contract. This was in the summer of l962. Well, I did this and from that time on I was at the Museum School. I took on a job which nobody else wanted and which served me just fine. I was to be in charge of First-year Painting, which was then compulsory for all students. They had to have two semesters of First-Year Painting and everybody hated it, nobody wanted it, but I wanted it and I made something of it.

ROBERT BROWN: Could I go back a little bit? Your time at Harvard: what kind of courses did you develop? Could you describe a bit your teaching and the courses you developed.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Essentially, the way it came out was this: Fine Arts l6 A and B were done in one year. One was the Fall course, one was the Spring course. In the former I taught free-hand methods, both of drawing, sketching directly optically and manually, from models, still lifes, whatever. I made various assignments which were then newer than they are now, like going out in the streets, parks, subways and that sort of stuff -- quick sketches as well as more composed things. I set up considerable still lifes, big ones, for the whole class to draw, these were really enormous. For instance, the centerpiece of one of them was the plaster cast of Michelangelo's Night from the Medici tomb, with tremendous black velvet draperies which were rented, I believe, from a theater company. And those sorts of thing. So some 30 students could see and draw this from -- it was a big classroom. Very rotten light that we had.

Then later that same semester they were into free-hand painting. That is, I introduced them to paints that three together sitting in a room, each had an easel -- you have no idea how crowded it was, I could show you photographs that I took in these rooms -- and each had a little desk on which he could keep his paints, bottles, palette, brushes and so on. For those little tables I also designed little individual still lifes for each student. I gave them the materials, they could set them up themselves. If it was too awful I would help getting it better, but the purpose then was to learn something about color and light by observation, to try to match what you see. This was free-hand work, they didn't do canvases, they worked on bristolboard. I would have liked canvases but we didn't have the room for it.

We had also tried canvases. In fact, the first year this study of painting took the form of my giving them engravings after works of art from the picture library, which were black and white, of course, and they chose what they liked and tried to translate it into color of their own. This was not to be a copying job, this was to be a re-creation or transformation or interpretation job. I remember some highly successful work as well as very dull ones. One man chose a Henri Rousseau and did wonders with it. For instance, that was the Fall.

In the Spring, we went into geometry. I had developed at Sarah Lawrence a series of studies that I called "square anatomy," for which you would eventually get all the class notes that I made in I don't know how many years, watercolor studies for myself. What I meant by that, how would the simplest possible concept of a square that you divide, as I call it "anatomically," you get certain divisions and patterns which have a meaning both mathematically, which doesn't interest me, and visually, which does. The square I called the "matrix" and said out of comprehension of it everything else that you need to know to further your studies will grow. And so it does, I can prove that. Whether or not these things exist in print anywhere, I wouldn't know, because I never consulted any book, I devised this by myself based on my own previous experience. Before I had taught at Harvard I had already experienced the strength and power of illumination of geometrical research.

I told the class in the beginning that this would eventually, for those who cared to do so, end in understanding of perspective, of constructible and scientific perspective, but only if they wanted it. I said it was not necessary in terms of contemporary art to be a master of perspective but it might be still a very nice thing to know either to get a job or for furthering your researches if you became a painter. "Harvard is not an art school," I said. "You should, however, understand something on the intellectual side of the relationship between visual experiences, including expression, and a scientific understanding of existing laws which exist whether you like them or not. Such as human vision, and the action of light on colored pigment. "These things exist whether we like them or not. We don't use them if we don't feel like it, but if we want to we ought to know what it does."

And there you had the Spring work, that is to say the geometrical studies, with watercolor, was the drawing part of it. Here they went into mechanical drawing, of course. I warned them that anybody who doesn't like T-squares

and triangles had better not apply. Because at Sarah Lawrence I had already observed how some people, especially women, dread and tremble at the thought of a drawing board and a T-square. [he laughs] That isn't a good preparation for it.

ROBERT BROWN: But most of them took to it very well, didn't they.

LUX FEININGER: Increasingly so. I never had an empty classroom. I couldn't accommodate more than 30, I used to have up to 60 applicants year after year, perhaps more.

ROBERT BROWN: They didn't mind use of the T-square and all that.

LUX FEININGER: No sir, they liked it. [Brown laughs] And some of them that I have kept in touch with or who have kept in touch with me, got into it professionally. Which is much more than one had any reason to anticipate, because Harvard College [laughing] is not a trade school, you know. But, however, this is how it went. Then my great aim was to get a Life class together, which I succeeded. I was the first since the l9th century when men in swimming trunks were allowed to pose for an all-male class at Harvard, and then it had fallen into disuse -- I was the first guy who made this available. I was urged to be discreet, this and that [both laugh] but there were no pants, women were allowed, in which class was a condition of life by that time, a fact of life, it was not like the l9th century. You remember when Thomas Eakins said in Philadelphia -- well, you know what bluenoses are.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, mixed classes. That was the fourth thing, then --

LUX FEININGER: Yes, that was for the Advanced class. The Life drawing and Life painting was for my l8 HF, half-course through the year, for credit. The l6 A and B was introductory and could not be repeated for credit but l8 HF could be repeated for credit because it was never the same, it would go on and on. And some people were with me for three years.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, the geometric course, what was your aim in that to show, to bring out in the student?

LUX FEININGER: Yes! To bring out ideas, quite simply. I found out around the time that I ended at Harvard and was at the Museum School that Albers at Yale was doing identically the same thing. I had no idea of it, although I knew of Albers because Albers too had been asked to apply at Sarah Lawrence and I met Albers at that time --re-met him, having known him in Germany, I took the famous photograph of my father, Albers and Gerhard Marc/Marx sitting in my father's living room in New York. Albers said, "I know you're looking for a job, I've heard of something but it wouldn't be your line because it's Design." Well, [laughing] "Little do you know! That's exactly what I am applying for and what's more I already have it." He himself had left Black Mountain and was then about to be appointed at Yale, I think. I think he began at Yale the year I began at Sarah Lawrence. But this is very much what he was doing at Yale.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you ever later discuss that with him, the coincidence?

LUX FEININGER: We corresponded but not about. We corresponded about my essay on the Bauhaus education ideas on which Albers approached me because he said it was the only sensible thing that was ever written about his work at the Bauhaus. That was immensely gratifying to me and didn't at that time need much support from anybody in my ideas of teaching -- this may sound confused but I knew too darn well how well it worked with an everlastingly renewed classroom full of people. In other words, this was applicable to everybody who had an open mind. I will show you eventually, perhaps not today, some of the photographs that I took also of student work that were by my directions displayed on the studio wall continuously -- a continuous and changing exhibition. There were some quite magnificent things there.

ROBERT BROWN: It was very fruitful, then.

LUX FEININGER: It was very fruitful.

ROBERT BROWN: And a certain number of your students went on in design.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, here and there. Somebody went into architecture as a draftsman to keep the wolf from the door, mind you -- I didn't train architects but architects need draftsmen. Others became illustrators; especially medical illustration was very much mentioned, even as a motivation of students who I interviewed. I know of at least one landscape designer that credits her after-life to the years she took with me at the Fogg. She was a Westport, Massachusetts woman; she cruises all around southern Massachusetts to be consulted and do landscape work, but she originated, as she has told me, out of drawing mosses and stones and stuff like that.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think this basic learning how to look, forcing them to look and analyze accounts for, was a very fundamental process for many of them?

LUX FEININGER: I think so, yes, absolutely. Comparable to the way in which musical education is good for everybody, whether they want to be musicians or not. I mean, to know something about music, singing, or an instrument or the vocal music is just as important as to train the eye to some extent. And if the hand be clumsy, let it be clumsy, but find out that there is an interrelation between what you see and what you feel and what you do. These things can be and should be developed.

Very interesting anecdote of one student whose problem was tightness. He got so concerned with accuracy that he was, after a few weeks, he got so in despair. And suddenly I noticed that something had happened in his work. I said, "What did you do? This is what we've been talking about." He said, "Well, I did it with my left hand, I made myself do it with my left hand." I said, because it was clumsy and couldn't direct it, would be like if I was drawing with my right hand. That was a very intelligent reaction that didn't come from me, that was his own idea but he understood that this particular tightness was the obstacle.

ROBERT BROWN: This brings up a point: as a teacher, did you find that by students discovering more or less for themselves, more or less only, that was the best way of their learning?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, it is the best, and possibly the only way if one happens to be at Harvard, where you're plagued by very many former things that you must do and papers that you must write. And you come to that art class as something to feel like your own man for a while, although God knows there a grade awaits you too, you see. But it was in contrast to the regular college courses that people went to Harvard for. So I was, in a way, the minority opposition, although I remained on very good terms with my colleagues, whom I saw every week on the Friday faculty lunches. They said I was the only painter anybody ever got along with, in their department -- they had two of them before. They had Pat Morgan for two years, then they had Hyman Bloom/Blum for two years. Then they had Mr. Feininger for nine years! Of Mr. Bloom/Blum it was said by a very dear fellow, now dead, who was I'm afraid a bit of a reactionary but a very nice man, he said, "Bloom/Blum's worse than Morgan!" [he laughs]

Morgan was a youngish, tolerably Abstract painter. I never met him. His widow or ex-wife, Maud Morgan, is of course famous and I do know her and she knows me, we are friends in a somewhat remote way. She comes to my shows, I got to her shows. Pat Morgan, her husband, I never knew, but I suppose he was a little bit young and ardent and not diplomatically inclined --

ROBERT BROWN: Whereas you had good relations primarily with your primarily art historians?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, exclusively art historians.

ROBERT BROWN: Who were some that you got to know quite well?

LUX FEININGER: Oh yes. Like George Kuhn and Fred became real friends. Seymour Slive too, he came the year I came to Harvard, from the West. Those three especially. Koerner was of course retired but I continued to see him until he died and continued to be friends with Margaret Koerner until she died. Yes, I got along because my interests are more than purely, blindly studio-oriented, you know. [laughing] I like to read too.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you resume your friendship that you'd had before the War with Eric Schroeder?

LUX FEININGER: It never stopped of course, yes, Eric Schroeder and I became ever better friends until he died. He was on the faculty, unpaid -- Honorary Keeper of Iranian Art, Middle Eastern Art. But his great specialty was Indian painting especially of the Mogul or Mughal period. He was also an expert in Turkish art, which apparently is a very tricky business, and generally speaking a great student of Arabic culture, Muslim culture. That was his real passion. He's written a large book on "Mohammed's People," the book's title, and it consists essentially of translations that he made from Arabic texts. Yes, Eric and I were already friends when I went into the Army and when I came out we were the same kind of friends.

ROBERT BROWN: Were there certain people who were "powers" in the Fine Arts Department, or would you say that?

LUX FEININGER: I cannot particularly say that; no.

ROBERT BROWN: It was a fairly collegial department at that time?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, yes. At the lunch meetings altogether so. Possibly there were powers at work that were not so visible to the eye and of which I found little or nothing. We tried an inter-departmental thing with the School of Architecture. This was around the time the Brown Committee was meeting; it took a whole year to meet and interview people. I too was interviewed and entertained the Brown Committee at an evening in the classroom where we'd made a show of student work for them to be interviewed. They also came individually, some of them, by appointment to see me in my office. Now out of this came a mutual desire to form a better

understanding between the Fine Arts department and the school of Architecture. A little subcommittee was formed in which I was a member, a three-man committee. One man, Carlihan from the school of Architecture, and myself, and John Coolidge as committee chairman.

The hope as I later found out was [laughing] an unrighteous hope of neutralizing the probable and possible impact of the Brown report when it should be issued, by forestalling some of the expected directions which would be clarify the fields of interest. We thought, or they thought, my department, that by establishing of coordinating efforts of visual education in the two departments, one might retain a certain amount of jurisdiction over that. But it didn't turn out to be the case and --

ROBERT BROWN: The school of Design at that time had its own painters and sculptors?

LUX FEININGER: It had artists who taught drawing and so-called Design but were not permitted to even talk about painting. They had, at first, the well-known Constantino Nivola, who came to see me the first year I believe that I was teaching my thing. He was new then and we compared notes and so on and said what do you do here and what do you think, would this be a good idea there. He was interested in my brothers' background and so on. So I was aware of his activities quite well. Then later they got Merco [phon.sp.] --

ROBERT BROWN: Balsadella [phon.sp.] --

LUX FEININGER: Balsadella, the brother of Afro Balsadella. And Merco knew English better and whether if he had known better English he would have been more communicative, I don't know. He did quite marvelous things with his class as with his own art; he had an exhibition at the Fogg of his stuff when he was to be given a reception here, when he arrived from Italy. Which I admired prodigiously. But as to talking with him, it was out of the question. How he taught, nobody knows.
END OF THIS SIDE - A of TAPE 3

Beginning SIDE B, TAPE 3.
ROBERT BROWN: Nivola and Merco taught in a separate place, right, at the school of Architecture?

LUX FEININGER: Well, I rather think that Merco replaced Nivola. I can't imagine that they had the two of them. I'm only mentioning some names of people dealing with visual things before the Carpenter Center got going. Albert Alcoli [phon.sp.] was going to be next. He straddled the last days before the Carpenter Center and the first time after it began going. Alcoli, too, I met and knew. We met on a double basis because he had children in the same school as our children and Mrs. Alcoli consulted my wife Pat about schools, and so on; they lived in Brookline but sent their children to Cambridge.

So I got to know Alcoli a little bit. He was himself of course a good painter but he suffered from the prohibition of not being allowed to do anything with painting at the Carpenter Center. In fact, everything under Sert was really quite regimented, that was the impression I got.

ROBERT BROWN: Sert seems to have been a bit of a martinet about certain things.

LUX FEININGER: He was a martinet, yes. Like every architect I've ever known, when he's in charge of anything that comprises the visual arts, then he will try, as they did at the Bauhaus, you know, under all directors, try to channel it in the direction of architecture and dis-allow free expression or self-expression or what-have-you, you know?

ROBERT BROWN: And you've said that was particularly a problem under Meier and particularly under Mies, right?

LUX FEININGER: Particularly under all three. I would say it was different with different actions. Gropius was more of a gentleman about it but I have told you that despite the real friendship between the Gropius family and the Feininger family, I must say that he was indifferent to art. I think inwardly indifferent to it. Hannes Meier was more outspoken -- some art was good if it served the social purpose, and it was very bad if it was formalist [?], you know, and merely aesthetic or lyrical, he would have nothing to do with it.

ROBERT BROWN: "Art for art's sake."

LUX FEININGER: Yes. As to Mies, I have almost nothing to report of Mies. He was there too short a time and he didn't really do much in painting when he was there. They were packing their bags, you know [he laughs] except the architects, who were trying to absorb whatever they could to take back to America.

ROBERT BROWN: And Gropius, when he was at Harvard, was more or less the same thing applied?

LUX FEININGER: Gropius left Harvard to retire the year I began at Harvard. This is probably a little catty what I'm going to say but it's strictly historical. When Gropius had left and I was getting to know the colleagues in the

Fine Arts department, I detected that he had not been popular. There was Kenneth Conand [phon.sp.] who was an architectural historian. He was in our department but he also taught in the school of Architecture. He was asked by Coolidge how does it feel now at the school of Design. "Oh, it's wonderful!" he said. "Now you can say if you hate without being told at once that you're a liar."

ROBERT BROWN: Liar!

LUX FEININGER: Right! The abuse at architectural history deferred so greatly between Gropius [he breaks up laughing, obscuring rest of phrase]. This is a quote. I don't know how well-founded it is but I give it from what I retain.

Then came Edward Seckler whom I met before he was much of anything, I think he came under a year's grant of some kind from Austria. I liked him at once but had nothing to do with him professionally. He was given a room in the Fogg to work in, on the fourth floor. I visited him there and we found out that we both were interested in architectural geometry. We talked about this and that and Seckler said what I was doing reminded him of something that he once was doing and had to do with construction of a decagon based on the Golden proportion. And I said that was something I had not yet done and could he give me his method. Which he did. I made a [word sounds like "monocle", not like "model"] of that when I came home, I made a precise geometrical m..... which I have and which he will get eventually. And that's due to Edward Seckler. Then later he became quite a big shot but I was at the Museum School --

ROBERT BROWN: He became something of a friend at that time, wasn't he?

LUX FEININGER: Well, we had friendly relations, I can't call him a friend because we didn't keep it up, didn't keep seeing each other. But such as it was it was altogether friendly and very much like kindred spirits. I also think he felt very lonesome here, it was his first visit to this country and he was getting his English together. So I like to think it cheered him on a little bit.

ROBERT BROWN: He came on to teach Architectural History?

LUX FEININGER: No, he became the head of the school of Design, I believe, after Sert, didn't he? Or Sert went up and became dean of something and Seckler became head of the school -- that's I think, the school of Architecture.

ROBERT BROWN: What of John Coolidge? Did you see a lot of him. He was director of the Art Museum at that time, for a number of years.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. Well, yes, I saw him, we had very good relations but I don't really claim him as a friend. I think he doesn't recognize me. We meet frequently in the street, I see him, I recognize him, he doesn't [he laughs] look right or left. I think he's a disappointed man. But I knew him well.

ROBERT BROWN: Agnes Mongan you would have known.

LUX FEININGER: Oh yes! She and I, we're great pals, although she was much feared by some people. Agnes Mongan told me that I was different from the others because when the other faculty members came and said they wanted something for their courses, this and this and this and it was to be brought into this gallery, that gallery and on such-and-such a day, she had to round up somebody to do it for them. But I when I came I carried my own stuff. And she liked that.

ROBERT BROWN: She was a bit formidable for some people, was she?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, she was because she was an outspoken lady of the old school, you might say. There's a movie actress, I can't recall her name, she played in "Pride and Prejudice," whom Agnes reminds me of. The same sort of high on the sleeve and speaking her mind. At that time and even today there are few women anywhere at Harvard and any kind of position at Harvard is a bit anti-feminist. But Agnes Mongan, I think, she had force of character and established herself as a curator, the only female one.

ROBERT BROWN: She had a real eye for quality.

LUX FEININGER: Oh yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Were Paul Sachs and Edward Forbes still around?

LUX FEININGER: Indeed they were. And Paul Sachs I heard speak at least at one visiting committee banquet, my first, and possibly two. I have his book, I've read it, used it immensely. I have tremendous regard for him but can't say I knew him well. He was pretty old then. Also Philip Hoefer, his great friend of long ago, at the same meeting. Philip Hoefer of course I don't think taught at all. Then Edward Forbes I knew through two ways, the

Fogg is only one. I'd known him already years earlier from my visits to Lausanne [?]. He was Eric Schroeder's uncle-in-law and a very lovable and dear man. I've been to his house repeatedly. He also painted. Not only that but got others to paint. You couldn't visit Lausanne [?] as his guest without being made to paint. Paint in Lausanne [?] paint enormously, probably due to this day, although I haven't been there much lately. Edward Forbes at that time still had an office on the fourth floor of the Fogg and I saw him there occasionally but had nothing to do with him professionally.

ROBERT BROWN: He was a man who was fairly approachable, though, wasn't he?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, I would say absolutely, yes definitely.

ROBERT BROWN: And Sachs, was he around very regularly by the l950s/60s? [voice overlap, numeral unclear]

LUX FEININGER: No, as far as I consider, very little. He had been largely in my a legend until that banquet of the visiting committee, an annual affair, a fund-raising affair essentially but done in very handsome style, I must say, at the Fogg, with cocktails and dinner, and in those happy years still genuine Havana cigars -- it was before Castro was to arrange these things. So he was more or a living myth than anything very real.

ROBERT BROWN: Were these people -- Harvard was probably then one of the if not the top departments of Art History --

LUX FEININGER: It so considered itself and I suppose rightly so.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that something known to you -- perhaps you were too young in Europe, but known to you? For some years you'd known of this prior to your coming here?

LUX FEININGER: No, I can't say that it did. When I was newly out of the Army, I took a year of GI studies at NYU, in the graduate school.

ROBERT BROWN: Which had notable refugee scholars.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. And I got a great deal out of the courses I took there. Very much out of two of them dealing especially with Modern painting, Lupez Ray [phon.sp.] and the incredible Samoni [phon.sp.] on the art of the migrations. That was a year's course. Those two especially -- there were other good ones, mind you, but these two in particular helped me to be confirmed in my appointment at Harvard because I put that in my application, and that's about the only formal art historical training that I could claim. Being a GI student, I didn't do it for credit and I didn't get a degree but I had the knowledge. At least some of it. At that time, I assumed that in my use, pretty hot stuff. But when I got to Harvard and heard the faculty talk at their lunches, it merely proved that Harvard was vastly superior to [obscured by cough].

ROBERT BROWN: They were fairly self-satisfied, were they?

LUX FEININGER: They were not only that but they were somewhat insistent that it be recognized. And then they would trot out numbers and say "well, if they have two people that made them anything in some field or other, we have six. And as to picture conservation, they have almost nothing, and look what we have!" They did have a very good Conservation department, which I think Edward Forbes had instituted and that for years was administered by Betty Jones, a very competent person. But I don't know that they had George Stout -- I read his book, in fact I have it, because I was still occasionally doing a restoration, or conservation, I would say; he doesn't like the world "restoration." So this was an initial claim for them.

And then they used to think that their studio courses, beginning with the Denman Ross and Arthur Pope tradition that they were very good. And they had been good in the Norton sense in which art history was to concentrate on objects rather than on ideas. So out of that grew the, well, the Lab Course, as it was at first described. You know, Denman Ross was a tremendous theoretician -- I've read his book too -- and Pope was a very successful disciple of his. Now, Ross is a very widely known figure in this area because of his collecting. Pope based this out, you might say. He developed it and it became a useful tool in the instruction of young concentrators on the history of art. But you know Harvard, probably, as well as I do, and you know that what happens in the Colleges is really considered only preparatory, and what happens in the Graduate School is only considered after a year of your Master's. In other words, the Ph.D. alone counts but as you advance in that direction, you distance yourself from the study of techniques and methods of drawing and whatnot. In other words, the Lab Course becomes, first, meaningless and secondly, a bore.

By the time I was there, concentrators no longer were favored in any way. In fact, they were not too much wanted by me. I wanted an overall coverage. I said "Come all you laden and burdened, etc " [laughing heartily] do what you've been longing to do." I mean, of course, if somebody were a concentrator he wasn't refused for that reason, but some of them were actually quite dull guys, you know, whereas others were bursting with ideas

of what they'd like to do. The two best students I ever had were, respectively, an English major and the other an anthropology guy. He is a really outstanding painter. He is now and has been for years a professor in in one of the universities in Arizona. If you ever come to m y house in Westport, you'll see a painting he did while he was still an undergraduate -- I traded with him, I gave him one of mine, he gave me one of his. It's a beautiful painting, every year I see it I admire it more.

ROBERT BROWN: The advanced concentrators in art were, you found, generally less --

LUX FEININGER: Well, I wouldn't say "advanced." In some ways I wasn't too much invited to have freshmen. The freshmen had too much else to do, so it begins with the sophomores, that's when they choose their concentration, they don't know what it's going to do for them, you know. I'm afraid that although I was slow to discover as they got ideas does exist and in the fine arts courses quite easily.

ROBERT BROWN: But you had some graduate students?

LUX FEININGER: With permission. I had an occasional graduate student but I think they had to get permission from their department to do that. Yes, normally it was for undergraduates.

ROBERT BROWN: So you left Harvard against your will, or you'd rather have stayed.

LUX FEININGER: Well, I had time to make up my mind to like what I couldn't have. At first it was quite a blow but it seems to be so and I don't think I ever taught a better year than the last year I taught at Harvard. From the first, although the conditions at the Museum School were not favorable --

ROBERT BROWN: You mean the physical?

LUX FEININGER: The physical conditions were better than my workshop at Harvard, which was rottenly lighted, I had better space to work in. The pay was pretty bad at the Museum School to begin with but it was sufficient to keep the wolf from the door and I liked the work from the first day on. It was quite a different atmosphere, really.

ROBERT BROWN: They hired you fairly readily after they finally --

LUX FEININGER: Very readily. It turned out -- my friend Joan had told me this before -- he needed a man that was accustomed to talk to college students, because Smith at that time was seeking admission of the Museum School to the higher education thing, whatever it's called; there is a U.S. classification that schools --

ROBERT BROWN: The National Association of Schools of Art, or something like that.

LUX FEININGER: Something like that. And he needed to be able to demonstrate a certain intellectual level, which he hoped the guy that had been teaching years at Harvard would be able to help with. Which turned out to be, because he did get us that same on the next year -- the standing, you know, the certain standing that is granted to schools. So that was a fact in my favor.

ROBERT BROWN: You took on the first-year painting --

LUX FEININGER: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: -- which you said many students did not want to take.

LUX FEININGER: Well, if you wanted to become a ceramist or metalworker, you didn't see why you had to take painting. But it was something that the School had done for many years and continued to do until its search [?] was reorganized due to another big shot --

ROBERT BROWN: What did you think of the Introductory Painting being mandatory?

LUX FEININGER: At first I thought nothing about it, except that that's what I was hired to do and I had what seemed to me fair means of doing it. One thing was burdensome but I got very quickly on top of it -- I saw the students really only once a week for one day. That isn't really enough to get to know people. And yet I got to know them. My developed ways are [he laughs] memorizing not only the man's or woman's name and appearance, although they are importance -- I think you should know the name of every student -- but especially of course what they're good at, the memory for what they were doing. I can nail that into my memory; from that I can get back to their name if I see their face; and so on. This is a trouble that nobody else had taken before, they treated it as much of a bore as everything else. They said "painting only begins when you choose a studio" and there were at that time three studios to be chosen -- Schwarz, Clark's was the top, and then there was Jason Burger/Berger. There was also Gika [phon.sp.] but Gika, who had done the first-year Painting, did not have a painting class. [slight pause] I'm afraid we're getting too lengthy.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you describe -- how did you teach the Introductory Painting course?

LUX FEININGER: Well, I devised class assignments which I explained as well as I could and set them to work immediately. I saw to it that students were equipped with what they needed for the Painting class before we ever met. At the first meeting, after a few words, say a ten-minute talk, I had them working. And for each meeting, that is to say for each week, I devised a problem for the class, or if we got heavy into it, I extended the first week into the second week so they had another week. We had very frequent group critiques. Everybody had to put their work out up and down the corridor, and not only I would talk about what they had done but I got them to talk about it. And that was hard going but it can be done if you really work at it. [laughing] People don't like to . But I got them . This worked well from the beginning.

ROBERT BROWN: Were your students by and large fairly gifted?

LUX FEININGER: By and large, yes. A very interesting hodgepodge of old and young and educated and crass -- you know, you get all sorts of people in a museum school and there are no particular guidelines. You can have somebody with a splendid education coming from a good family and being very devoted, yet being a duffer at it, and you can have some kid from the slums that does wonders but is undisciplined and a snot-nose and can't be told much, but [he laughs] you have to play it by ear, you know? So I really worked with people rather than with numbers or units. Well, it was quite extraordinary. Got a few freaks in there too, here and there. Once in a while one had problems -- someone who went around messing up other people's paintings -- very disagreeable. It didn't happen too often. In general, it was good.

I did that in '62, half-time; I took only two sections, by my own decision -- I wanted to feel my way into it. Then had the option the next year of getting a full-time appointment or quitting. In the meantime, I got a rather tempting invitation to teach at the Maryland Art Institute. The father of an ex-graduate student at Harvard had heard of my work and invited me to come and see what he was doing.

So I took the train to Baltimore and spent a day at the Institute. I liked very well what I saw but there were certain reasons why I didn't want to accept the job. The pay was very good, the workload seemed extremely heavy to me. And then he told me it was much less than [laughing] what others were supposed to teach. And I decided that even though it was tempting in the sense that it was very well paid, it was too much work and would interfere with my own work. Also, frankly, I didn't like the idea of living in Baltimore. Pat had asked me to look around and see what kind of accommodations I would find. The "color line" seemed to me very much a problem in Baltimore and would give an indication as to neighborhood problems. Mr. Herron [phon.sp.] took me around very obligingly. We saw all sorts of areas and it was all very pretty but underneath there was something that I didn't like. Especially also the fact that he was trying to dislodge an old staff of art school faculty. He said, "They're all going to be squeezed out and you and others will take over." That had been the Bauhaus situation in l9l9, you know, and I was a mere boy then when I heard about it. I mean, I didn't think I wanted to get involved in that.

ROBERT BROWN: It was an ugly kind of stressful --

LUX FEININGER: Yes, very much so. He had a whole hallful of gigantic plaster casts and I said, "My, you could really do something with these." He said, "They're all going out. I can't wait to get rid of them. This old fuddy-duddy wants to keep them, you know, for another year; then I can get rid of him." Well, with all this I came home saying "N-O." I won't do it. But the trip had to be taken because I could now approach Smith and say, "By the way, Mr. Smith, I must make up my mind soon because they do want me in Baltimore." Oh boy! Did he rush to his desk pad, "Let's make a new contract." I said, "All right." There were conditions, I got pretty much what I wanted -- not so much in money as in terms of work hours and the pay itself became better in subsequent years. So I signed up for a second year. That would be '63-'64.

In the meantime we had bought this house and moved in. In '67, things began to ball into a thunderstorm, because the famous Nelson was expected from New York. There had been all sorts of investigations as to whether the School was really needed and whether the Museum wanted it as a department, and what to do with it if the highway went through the Museum area --

ROBERT BROWN: The Interstate Beltway.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, more than once. And would it be built again or would it be a heaven-sent opportunity to get rid of it altogether. What with all these things, the great man Nelson was supported I don't know by whom but of course the board of directors --

ROBERT BROWN: George Nelson, the designer, you mean.

LUX FEININGER: The designer was to come by invitation at a fancy figure, I've heard, study the conditions, interview everybody, and come up with some recommendations for the School. So we had a year of Nelson.

ROBERT BROWN: Some of the trustees were perhaps even set on ending the School?

LUX FEININGER: It was said to be touch and go, yes, half and half. I asked my good friend Charles Kuhn about it and he said he really didn't know. But at that time Egan's [phon.sp.] Store was still running. Did you know Egan's, Concord Avenue in Cambridge? It was a carriage-trade store, a beautiful store -- grocery, butcher shop inside, it delivered, careful orders. Mr. Egan a lovely fellow. Someone on the Board said, "Why don't you ask Mr. Egan? [breaking up with laughter] He's much more active than I am!" In the board meeting said, "A typical situation in Boston and Cambridge, I think. I never went so far as to ask Mr. Egan, who was a good old-fashioned self-made Irishman, you know. Highly successful but he had started from scratch. He would have perhaps told me what he knew, I didn't ask him, I merely report the fact. [another sentence obscured by laughter]

However, Nelson came and looked around, and more than that we had endless meetings. We were assigned to meet with him. It's very much like what's going on in Washington now. Designated groups of people were told to come, let's say, at eight o'clock to his room in the Hotel Sheraton and have a meeting. Then we went to other meetings. There were big meetings and individual ones and he asked endless questions.

ROBERT BROWN: What did they seem mainly concerned about, to judge from the questions?

LUX FEININGER: Virtually everything. The quality of teaching, the competence of administrators as well as of faculty, the method of selecting students, the approach if any to contemporary problems in art, I suppose, mostly -- all this was under scrutiny. The upshot when it finally came was rather drastic. The School was tremendously reorganized, departments were abolished, a method of replacing grades with credit points granted or refused by a review board was instituted -- some people called it "the arrival of student government," that was thought to be a little exaggerated; but students were supposed to be much more consulted in all affairs -- administrative and other affairs. Which in a year or two after it was instituted really began [he laughs] to grow like a cancer, until it died by its own weight. We'll talk about that in a minute.

But a rather heavy reorganization. Resulting, also, I'm very sorry to say, in the firing of a few people. Some of course I think were dead wood, but others I think were not. Like Burton Johns for instance. He taught Book Design; they had at that time a commercial art division at the Museum School and I thought he was excellent, and he was highly respected. But anyway he was kicked out and Bates, the and Drawing department. Now Bates is an estimable artist and certainly a very valuable artist but I do believe in his case one could say, his teaching methods were a little bit too convenient for himself, you know. He taught by way of a typewritten note that was tacked onto the studio wall by his assistant, a man I liked very much, Bob Grady, and explained to the students if they cared to come. And then they were supposed to work along the lines laid out by the typewritten script until the next week when the work would be submitted. And then somebody would, hopefully, look at it, and eventually it would get a C-minus or a D or whatever on it. And that was all the critique and all the instructions that was more or less provided.

ROBERT BROWN: It was just as well that he was let go, possibly.

LUX FEININGER: I'm over-simplifying things but this is in essence what Nelson went after.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you feel that the Report was warranted? I mean, that doing it, were there problems or were you reasonably confident in the School?

LUX FEININGER: In view of what happened in the world a year or so later, with student unrest everywhere and student protest and the Viet Nam protest, I think it was justified that something should be done. It was very inconvenient that it was being done, because I was very well suited the way it was. But my own wife thought it was about time that something was being done, especially to good old Smith who was just too much of a status-quo man, you know, and prided himself on usually breaking even with the School; to him that was a successful year, or rather all years were successful except one year when he ran into the red because the School didn't make quite enough money out of the tuition. I mean, that's no way to run a school in the year l968.

ROBERT BROWN: He had a rather mechanical approach --

LUX FEININGER: Perfunctory, yes. Okay, we're really getting into too much detail. Yes, the reform was monstrously drastic. A new head was appointed and so within a year or so of the old Bates method of teaching by temperate instruction, we had now a live jazz band in the drawing studios, models, I forget how many, beautiful models standing around, and people making a drawing about every five minutes and simply throwing them on the floor and doing another. And in order to stretch out their boards, they had taken the famous Masonite sheets which Mr. Banks had carefully salvaged and having preserved for his own usage, were being used partly as painting grounds or in some other ways maltreated, they were all ruined and had to be thrown away.

This was [gap, glitch on tape] "this is the way we're going to do things from now on. This is the way to teach."

But it was of course not the way to teach and it died down.

ROBERT BROWN: New teachers probably came in?

LUX FEININGER: A new method. I don't even know who the teachers, I think at first there wasn't one, it was simply assumed that everyone was going to do Life Drawing as well as everything else, regardless. We found ourselves faced with a few subjects which, until the term "first-year student" was abolished, which was it was a year or two later, we were hit with some queer courses. It was found that a first-year student under the new regime would have to take eight courses. And with art, somebody -- I won't name any names -- gave us such things as "Scuba Diving" and "Parachuting." These two were much wanted to also be assigned as required work for first-year students. They were painfully let go -- they were protested, faculty protested and said "No."

But in these other eight subjects students were supposed to submit a work for the review boards as a final problem, we said, at a faculty meeting we said, "What? All eight subjects??" The answer was "Yes." We said, [he gets incoherent here] "not able ...how can you expect ..." "Okay. One subject. Students ." This is how decisions were made, from saying peremptorily "yes, eight subjects," readily concede one. And then, instead of designing it, they'd say you could choose it.

ROBERT BROWN: There was no discipline and very permissive.

LUX FEININGER: Yes. And if I may say so, bowing to some non-existing idea of liberty.

ROBERT BROWN: It more nearly approached chaos, then.

LUX FEININGER: Chaos. Chaos was the first result that can not be laid totally at the door of the Nelson plan or the outcome of his suggestions, because the country itself was torn apart, you know. It was the year of the real, the gender protests, and the raid on Hemingway Street when the police beat up everybody you know, as a measure of the set of self-defense. It was very turbulent times indeed; very.

So, some of it is understandable but in general I found after a year or two or three of the regime that the only thing for me to do was do "my thing" and the hell with Nelson or anybody else [he laughs]. And that's the answer to my problem.

ROBERT BROWN: You just continued to do your teaching of courses -

LUX FEININGER: Yes, I did. I gave up even trying to bow in the direction of conforming to absurd standards of performance that could not be, and did not exist, anywhere. To give you an idea: all meetings of the faculty had to be attended, by mandate of the new head. At first he was going to tape record every minute of his goddam meetings. Then his man, his friend, our friend, rather -- head of the Photo department, not long afterwards he left -- took pictures-- whoever got up to say something in the committee meeting was photographed as well as taped. Nobody will ever know why, nor what they did with these tapes.

This quickly subsided. I give it only as some local color of the new spirit. And we were supposed to do "cross-fertilizing." That is to say, Teacher A was supposed to teach Class B, and the B Teacher would take Class A, just to see how it feels or how the students would like it.

ROBERT BROWN: You did some of that.

LUX FEININGER: Did some of that, then said the hell with it. We were supposed to have advisory board meetings as well as review board meetings. These existed only on paper. But somebody thought that it was being done. The advisory board meetings consisted of individual students, a student advisor of the students, a faculty advisor of the student, and the teacher of the student -- these four were supposed to meet for one hour every week and earnestly talk about anything the student would decide. Nobody ever came. I came to the first such appointed meeting and found that everybody but the student was there. [he laughs] The faculty advisor was there, the student advisor was there, but the student himself was not there. I never came to any other.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the effect on some of your colleagues? You mentioned Jan Fox [phon.sp.]. He continued at the school for some time.

LUX FEININGER: Yes, he did. He was far more infuriated by this decree system than I was. It was really a sort of a decree. I mean, I mentioned the word "liberty." It was in some ways absolute servitude. But well, some sort of non-existent idea that was floating somewhere in the middle distance of what it could be like if everybody felt like collaborating.

ROBERT BROWN: This new dean was, in a sense, carrying it out with enthusiasm, was he?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, but very blindly. I mean, I don't want to say too much about him because in some ways --

he's a friend, he's a dear fellow. But I thought he was a starry-eyed something.

ROBERT BROWN: This was William Bagnall [phon.sp.], was it not, at that time? What about Cox? Were you something of a friend of his?

LUX FEININGER: Yes, except that Cox the last years of his life lived in a bottle. Nobody could to anyone because he didn't quite know who we were. I would say we were friends for years, and we were never enemies; but I think Cox withdrew from everything and finally petered out.

ROBERT BROWN: It must have affected his work.

LUX FEININGER: I suppose so. Not at first, perhaps, but the big show that I saw was pretty much of works that were done before all this had begun to take effect. I mean, when I say his show, I mean his last show -- I'd seen several shows of his. I think he was quite a guy but he and others became victims not so much of a new system at this particular school but of the times. I can't help connecting the outer turbulence -- the assassination of Robert Kennedy and so on. And Johnson -- what a lesson! It was how we hear Johnson's election in l964. We escaped a grave peril, and four years later, he was derided and kicked around and hated. And the announcement that he would not seek reelection was greeted with cheers, more like a national bashing that had descended. Do you remember all that? One cannot forget these things. The upset was everywhere.

ROBERT BROWN: Cox, like you, brought something of a European background. You mentioned a Jason Berger. Now, he was a very local training center --

LUX FEININGER: Jason Berger was fired by the Nelson thing. Jason did not make -- well, you know, he only did what we others did, [laughing] he did what he wanted to do, but he didn't do it with enough skill and he fell by the wayside. He was asked to go. Banks was very bitter about it. With Peyton Jones I'd become -- with John, rather -- really great friends. At first I'd seen him from a distance and thought he looked very severe. At faculty meetings he was anything but, he was a scholar. He didn't like to be told. It was from him that I first heard the term that somebody gets a "dear John" letter. I think it's now become, I think, a linguistic property, isn't it? [Brown agrees] But he told me that he'd gotten a dear John letter, from the administration.

ROBERT BROWN: They'd decided not to abolish the School, so –

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