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Oral history interview with Duane Hanson, 1989 August 23-24

Funding for this interview was provided by the Lannan Foundation. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Duane Hanson on 1989 August 23-24. The interview was conducted by Liza Kirwin for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

Interview

LIZA KIRWIN: I wanted to just begin in the beginning. When you were born, where, and what was it like growing up in Minnesota.

DUANE HANSON: Think that thing is working? Don't you want to check it first?

MS. KIRWIN: Yes, I'm sure that it is.

MR. HANSON: I don't want to say all these words of wisdom. [Tape turned off]

MS. KIRWIN: It is working. Now, could you tell me about when you were born; what it was like growing up in Minnesota. I read that your father was a dairy farmer.

MR. HANSON: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. KIRWIN: Did you work on the dairy farm?

MR. HANSON: Oh, yes. It was a small farm.

MS. KIRWIN: How small is a small farm in Minnesota?

MR. HANSON: Well, this was about 40 acres, which would be very, very small today. At that time you could—when is that?—in the 1940s you could live off that, and if you had a few cows and a few fields for grain and all that to feed them. He had this little delivery route or milk route for the town of about 700 people. I was born in Alexandria, Minnesota, and that, by the way, is about 15 or 20 miles from Sauk Centre. I mention that, because that's where Sinclair Lewis was born; you know, if you ever read *Main Street*, it's kind of a neat book, old-timey before radio and television. It's hard to imagine how people lived without that, actually. Anyway, his boyhood home is there. I tried to get into it, but the lady was in church and never showed up so I never got to. Living so close you say, "Well, Sinclair Lewis," and I asked the lady that lived next door and she said, "His books weren't that good," she said. He was the first American to win the Nobel Prize in literature. I mention that because that's the area where I was born, very conservative. Scandinavian, German.

MS. KIRWIN: Were there a lot of other Swedish families in that area?

MR. HANSON: Yes. Well, the Swedes were east of town and the Germans were west. We had a lot of Czechs in the south and then Norwegians in the north. They were mixed up, but it sort of worked out that way because the Swedes always went to the Swedish Lutheran Church. That's where my grandfather—by the way, that's his clock over there. My grandfather—what was his name? Nelson, Andrew Nelson. That was his clock; grandfather's clock there. My mother was a twin and that's a picture of my aunt and mother. She was about two or three years old there. This was hanging in my grandmother's living room. This, I call my junk room, is sort of memorabilia from my past. I'm getting off the track. But that's where I was brought up, in that community.

MS. KIRWIN: Did your aunt live in the area, too? Did you have an extended family in Minnesota?

MR. HANSON: Yes. Most of the relatives lived around. My uncle Ernest took over the home place where my mother's father, where they were all, born and raised. So he lived there until the '70s and then it was sold off. My grandfather on my father's side was Alfred Hanson. I have a certificate from Sweden that he had to fill out to get out in those days. Sweden was like a feudalistic country. I guess most European countries were in the 1800s. 1883 he immigrated to America. I guess he had to have some permission. But they took him in the army though, and if they didn't need him, they'd let him go. My other grandfather was in the army. He didn't like it. He just walked out one day and went to Denmark and there's where he met my maternal grandmother and they were married in the States later. My father's mother was a bit younger and she came over to Minnesota when she was about six, seven, eight years old. So my entire background is Swedish. So when I had this little show in Stockholm, Lidingo at Carl Milles's studio, whom I knew when I went to Cranbrook. Anyway, it was a small show.

Six or seven pieces in there and the king came in and the man introduced me. He said, “Now, this is the artist here, Duane Hanson, and all his grandparents came from Sweden.” So I thought, oh, my, that would perk him up, Gustav Adolph, whatever it is, XVI. But he didn’t say anything. Then I remembered he doesn’t care about Swedes because he’s not a Swede himself. He’s French and German. His wife is German. His mother was German. That’s really royal. It would have sort of pleased my grandparents because they had pictures of the king up in the attic, King Oscar in those days. I don’t know what happened to the old pictures of the Swedish king. I remember them in the attic.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you have a religious upbringing in Minnesota?

MR. HANSON: Religious?

MS. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. HANSON: Well, we all went to the Lutheran church.

MS. KIRWIN: When I think about *Prairie Home Companion*.

MR. HANSON: My family, they went to church and all that. I have some of my father’s side they got pretty fanatic as to—there’s always a few in every family. It’s all this praying and “Jesus” every other word and all that, and it really turns you off. But my parents weren’t like that. We just had a smattering of it. But my father did send me to a Lutheran college and we got plenty of it there.

MS. KIRWIN: That was enough.

MR. HANSON: Yes. Yes.

MS. KIRWIN: Was that the first college that you went to?

MR. HANSON: Yes, it was in Iowa. Luther College, so you know what that was like. When I had a show in Des Moines and they asked me to give a lecture and it was on my birthday, January 17, 1977, and it was about 20 degrees below zero. I don’t know if you’ve been there in Des Moines Art Center. It’s really lovely. It’s up on a hill with a lot of trees around it. The director, who is now head of the Hirshhorn, we were out at dinner at a restaurant and he said, “We better get going because you have to give a talk and so on.” So we went and there were cars all over. There wasn’t any place to park. There was one spot in front of the museum where you walk in and he said, “I don’t know where I’m going to park.” Jim Demetrion. ”I don’t know where I’m going to park. All these cars. I didn’t expect that,” and he was so nervous and upset. I said, “Well, hell, aren’t you the director? Park right there. That’s perfect.”

MS. KIRWIN: Right in front of the building.

MR. HANSON: “Yes, yes,” he says. He parked there and we went in there and I was amazed. There were more people than Oldenburg had attracted and, being so cold, I didn’t think anybody was going. So I mentioned in the talk, I don’t know if I should have or not, that my experiences with Iowa weren’t too great because I went to that school, but I said, “This is making up for it, the turn out in 40 below weather.” They made a big cake of illusionistic plaster. You know, it looked like a cake but it wasn’t, and served canapés. It was nice. So things kind of come around like that. You think, “Oh, this damn place. I’ll never come back here again,” and then things will change. You’re invited back. People are nice and you’ve changed and they change and things get straightened out. Hopefully the whole world will be like that, too.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you have brothers and sisters?

MR. HANSON: No, I’m an only child. I guess that’s why I like a lot of time to myself. I have five children, three by my first marriage and two by my second. So I like my family, but I have to get away from them, too, because I just have ideas I have to pursue. This work takes a lot of time and concentration and it’s very tricky. If you get distracted you can make a mess of things. Besides, I do everything myself. Well, I have some help to make the molds and to do things that I can instruct the helper to do that aren’t that difficult. Otherwise, it takes forever. So I need a lot of time to finish a piece and that’s very frustrating sometimes because your mind goes on. You want to do the next one and the next one. In my mind, I’ve got the next 20 done, but getting around to do them is time-consuming.

MS. KIRWIN: This house is pretty much all studio.

MR. HANSON: Yes.

MS. KIRWIN: This is where you come to do your work. Does your family live near here?

MR. HANSON: Yes. We live next door. This is a house I bought from a friend of mine. Her father and mother lived here and Mr. Geiger passed away and Mrs. Geiger didn't want to live here because it brought back bad memories. You know, her husband was lying in there hooked up to the oxygen tank for about a year or two, or a year and a half. So she moved into an apartment and this house was empty. Mildred wanted me to buy it and I thought she wanted too much money, so I said no. I really wanted a studio that you always dream about with the tall ceilings and a lot of space. I thought, "No, I'll just wait and build one." Then she offered it to me again. It was a very low price I thought and it was when Reagan got in and everything kind of got turned around and houses weren't selling. In1981, I bought it and I moved in 1982. But I don't do any real business here. Most of the work is done in the foundry, otherwise they have code violations and you have to be careful with that. Then they turn you in. They already turned me in across the street, but seeing I don't do any business, they said okay. I don't sell here. So anyway, it's worked out because, like I said, I need some time to read where you're not in a mess with all the dirt and grime and dust I've had in warehouse situations, but they don't have light. They don't have windows and you have to open up the garage doors. They're all sort of used for mechanics and light manufacturing. No windows, so you open that up and then everybody looks in and says, "Oh, what are you doing?" I've had that fill of recognition and being pestered with people that are curious to know what you're doing. You just get tired of explaining it and on and on and on. I'm pretty well known around here now so it even gets to be quite a task when people want to come around and visit and all that. I keep my books here and papers and things. I do a little in back.

MS. KIRWIN: When did you get interested in art in Minnesota and were you always interested in sculpture and the figure or did you paint?

MR. HANSON: Yes, I was. I was always interested in carving things out, working with my hands, working in three dimensions with clay or wood, plaster, whatever. We had no art training in those days. The school had maybe two or three art books.

MS. KIRWIN: This is Luther College or high school?

MR. HANSON: No, it's high school I'm talking about. The college was even worse because they had a woman that had some art training, but they didn't offer any art courses and that's what I was interested in. So I was taking French, and Bible, and the prerequisites that you take the first year, English and history and the other stuff. So it was a disappointment, that school. So then my parents moved out to Seattle, Washington, so I went there for two years. They had a wonderful art program, the art history, and the painting, and design. Matter of fact, I gave a talk there a year ago last spring. When I was there, there was kind of a lumberjack guy who was teaching sculpture. He made us make little clay models. Then he took an axe, he had a big log there, and he took an axe. He started swinging at that log with that axe. I'll never forget it, and a figure would come out of that. Golly, that's amazing. His name was Dudley Carter and I thought he was an old man then. He had talked like dusters in his throat. "Talk about the forms. You can have a little more rounded here." [Said in a scratchy voice] I'll never forget that raspy voice like he was going to drop dead any minute. I don't know, three or four years ago, my dad and I, and they said, "Now, we have a very interesting sculptor to show you. This man carves with an axe, Dudley Carter." He was about 95 years old and still hacking away. "That's him!" I said to my dad. "That's him. Remember him?" So when I went to give that talk at the University of Washington, I mentioned that, that one of my first teachers in sculpture was Dudley Carter swinging an axe and all that. Of course, I went to Macalester College, where the Mondales went, only I didn't know them.

MS. KIRWIN: What kinds of materials were you using, everything wood and clay?

MR. HANSON: That was before sculptors got into welding. I've done that, too, and mostly modeling and carving stone. When I went to Cranbrook, that's where I met Carl Milles who had worked under Rodin. So it was kind of a tradition handed down. But he was a modeler, Carl Milles. So is Rodin. He had somebody else carving for him. But Milles cast everything into bronze. He did some carving, too. Milles was the big master. You know, he came around two or three times during the year and then he did his own stuff. Then Bill McVey was teaching sculpture. He's still alive. I think he's up in Cleveland. He's done a lot of big monuments of Churchill and whatnot. So I worked under him and he did carving. He did a lot of carving. So I got introduced to what you might call an old-time tradition of carving and modeling. But I've used all that as I developed my own techniques and directions. I also worked at the Macalester. A wonderful carver there, too. His name was Alonzo Hauser and he did sort of like Henry Moore-like things, with the negative space and the holes in the middle and on the side. Really quite nice. He finished them off quite nice. He did some modeling, too. I remember one he did of Martha Graham that was quite nice when he was in New York. Lonnie Hauser, I think, is in bad shape now. He might still be alive, but I heard he was in a nursing home. He must be close to 80. Anyway, about 20 years ago when I used to stop by when I was in Minnesota to talk to him, I showed him my book or some of my pictures of what I was doing, and he said, "What do you call that kind of realism?" "Oh," I said, "They call it the new realism, hyper-realism, radical realism." "Oh," he said, "I think I'll stick to the old-time realism." [Laughs] Then I also knew another sculptor in Minnesota, John Rood. Those were the two sculptors.

MS. KIRWIN: At Macalester?

MR. HANSON: At St. Paul, Minneapolis. Lonnie was in St. Paul and they were sort of competitors. I think they admired one another because John Rood married a rich woman and she said, "I'm going to make John the most famous sculptor in America." So she would subsidize his work and for the library of Minneapolis, he did a big scroll and I think she helped pay for it. Anyway, that's all right. A lot of his work was shown at the Walker. He did welded things. He did a lot of welding. I used to get letters from him and he said they had to take out one of his lungs because he did welding every day for 20 years. They said sculptors live a long time, but then the other lung went bad. He died about 10 or 12 years ago. But those two men - and I liked John Rood's earlier work. They were carvings. I don't talk about this much, but I guess looking back at it, you get to admire people. You know, there weren't that many artists around and these guys, at least, were showing and had a career out of it. Maybe they didn't get world-famous, but they contributed a lot to the art community in that area. Then I know Rood's work used to be shown in New York. I think I've seen it in there years back. So then Milles, of course, was world-famous and did the big fountains in Cranbrook and St. Louis and in front of the Stockholm Concert Hall in Lidingo, overlooking the water outside of Stockholm.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you work with him more than McVey?

MR. HANSON: Mostly with McVey.

MS. KIRWIN: Just because he was more accessible?

MR. HANSON: Yes. Milles was up in years and seemed disenchanted with the school and they weren't treating him right. I don't know why because he had the most beautiful studio I ever saw in my life. It was big windows and 25 foot ceilings at least. Now it's all cut up. It's all shops. It's just ruined, and then they put in this ugly foundry in Cranbrook. I don't know. I like Cranbrook and I love that director, Roy Slade. He's a very good friend of mine, but I remember the school when it was pristine; I guess when they had maybe more money and things weren't so expensive to run and everything was kept up a little better. It's such a beautiful place and it costs a lot to keep up. They have gardeners out there. I remember we had one model. She was a friend of Anne Lindbergh, she said. A red-haired woman, and she modeled in the nude. We had these big curtains over the windows there in the modeling room and she'd look out and say, "Those damn gardeners! They're looking at me." She didn't mind us looking at her, but she said, "They're sneaking around there looking. I know they are! I know they are! They're looking! See them! That one there. Pull that curtain!" It was so funny.

MS. KIRWIN: Who were some of the other students at Cranbrook when you were there?

MR. HANSON: Oh, yes. Julie Schmidt. He was a sculptor and he bought up that bronze foundry with the smoke stack and all that other stuff. He sort of disappeared and he came knocking on the door here one day about three years ago. He was teaching out in the University of Iowa in Iowa City. I said, "Hi, Julius. Come in." He said, "I'm down here and I'm looking for a gallery." I said, "What happened?" He said, "Well, I don't have a New York gallery anymore and I'm trying to get back into the swing of things." So I was really amazed because he had quite a name for a while and then I guess maybe slipped out of fashion or something. That's how things work. So Julius was there and ran the sculpture department for several years. I guess he didn't get along with the director and then he left. I don't know who else is anybody famous that I know other than Julius. That's the only one.

MS. KIRWIN: Of those five people that you just mentioned, how did they contribute to the development of your work?

MR. HANSON: Who?

MS. KIRWIN: Of the five sculptors that you just mentioned: Rood, and McVey, Milles and—

MR. HANSON: Well, I'd like to say none of them.

MS. KIRWIN: None of them?

MR. HANSON: I used to say that because I didn't want to give anybody credit because I was that arrogant in that respect. I'd say none of them and all of them because it's not just what you learn, how to hold a chisel and how to make this and do that. It's a matter of, I think, life-style. If I look at them back then; they were all different.

MS. KIRWIN: Which one were you personally closest to?

MR. HANSON: Well, like I say, none of them. I don't think I was that close to any of them, although I admired them in different ways. I saw what they were doing, but I didn't want to do it that way. A lot of students say, "Oh, I like that so much, I want to do it." Probably I admired Milles the most because he was the most famous and he worked with Rodin. He gave this little story. He said, "I was in Paris for a number of years and I entered

this show at the Salon and my work was rejected and I went to pick it up, and there it was sitting out there in the alleyway." He said, "Then come there an old man with the long beard," he said, "and he come up to me and he said to me, 'Is that your work?' 'Yes," he says, "that's my work but they don't want it. They threw it out. ' Oh,' he says, 'that's pretty good work. I could use some help. You come and work for me.'" [Spoken in a Swedish accent] He said, "Oh, but pardon me, who are you anyway? He says, 'My name is Rodin.'" He said, "I almost fell over. So I went and I worked for him." I don't know, maybe he swept out the studio, but I guess there was some association because Rodin had a lot of helpers. I can see some influence of the modeling; the musculature and the sort of balancing act that he was famous for, Milles. When I first met him, it was like he had a tremendous ego, the man, for one thing. He came in there—and I'll never forget—in a gray suit, and he had black, shiny shoes. This is in the plaster room where he made his sketches. He'd model them and then he'd have his assistant do the casting, I believe. I even did some sawing off the arms for the bronzes. Not much, but a little bit. But he came in there dressed like a prince, you know, and it just threw me off. You'd think he'd come in there with kind of sloppy old shoes and pants. That's what I wear. I look terrible, but he looked so wonderful with this long gray hair and steel blue eyes. His eyes looked right through you. And big, massive head. Something like Rodin he looked like. Kind of a heavy-set man. Not too tall, but heavy-set, but this sort of patrician look. You know, like some people they seem to look right through you? I've been on television with that guy; he startled me. Tom? He's on the *Tomorrow Show*. The tall guy. Tom Schneider. He was one like that, too. But he wouldn't look at me. He looked over at the monitor. That was sort of faking it. But this man did that, and so there's a mystique. Warhol had it a little bit, too, because I've seen him a few times. It was sort of a distant—you're close to them, but they're far off. You know what I mean? That's how that feeling was I had with Carl Milles. More with Carl Milles, of course, because he was an older man and I was a very young kid and didn't know anything. Warhol being so very famous and sort of being so out of it. He said to me—well, that's a different story. Anyway, so those things kind of get to you, even if they're not saying, "Well, I'll do this. This is the way I do it." This is sort of a presence, physical presence. John Rood, he was in society. He knew everybody and they gave parties. I took some classes with him at the University of Minnesota. We did some carving, and he didn't come around much. He'd just say, "That's pretty good. Okay," and suggest this. He never told you much. ' All of them were like that. I mean, they never told you what to do. They'd say, "It could be better if you did this." Looking back at it, I think they should have said, "Well, that's lousy. Start over," because I would have progressed a little faster looking back. I really give them credit for suffering through the students. They make so many mistakes and do such awful things. So I guess you pick up a little from each one.

MS. KIRWIN: Then, after you got your MFA, you started teaching in Connecticut.

MR. HANSON: Yes.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you go through the program thinking that you would teach as a way to keep making work?

MR. HANSON: I never cared that much for teaching because—especially young kids, they move around and drop paint and throw clay in the ceiling. You got to be a strict disciplinarian to keep after them and you get tired of doing that. Then you sort of lose your own creativity trying to bring out theirs. That was the trouble. I mean, it's delightful to see kids that are interested and they do wonderful little painting because there's so much natural talent that comes out with young people. Then they get inhibitions, the older they get. "Don't do this. Don't do that. Don't, don't, don't. Sit still." I mean, that kind of ruins it. It's a hard job. So I said, "Someday I'm going to get out of here and no more school teaching. I know I'm never going to be famous so I might as well," because in this racket, unless you're famous forget it, you can't survive. You have to teach, let's face it, or else you have to have a name. You have to be a little known. I just feel a little known today compared to like Warhol or Rauschenberg or somebody like that. But that's all right.

MS. KIRWIN: You didn't teach there for very long, though. You taught at two different high schools in Connecticut.

MR. HANSON: I started; do you want to go through that boring stuff?

MS. KIRWIN: Well, just very briefly.

MR. HANSON: The first school I taught was in Idaho because I was in Mexico. Macalester took a group to Mexico. My first trip out of the country and we went all over. Mexico City was wonderful in those days. There was none of that traffic or pollution. You could see Mount Orizaba. It was clear. It was beautiful, and Paseo de la Reforma. I'll never forget the trees. Now the trees are all dead. They're chopped off. Anyway, so I came back from Mexico and I joined up with some agency and they had this slot open in Idaho. So I got there a couple weeks late. I got twenty-two hundred dollars for the whole year. I think I saved half of it because I didn't have a car. So then I said, "Oh, I hate this teaching. I'm not going to teach." So I went traveling in the Caribbean, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Dominica. It was wonderful. I came back and I said, "What am I going to do? I've spent all my money now." So I went back to school. I had a little money left over and my parents gave me some. I went back to the University of Minnesota and that's where I met John Rood and met my future wife, who was a medical

student. Then I ran out of money, so I went to work for my dad's company. He was a salesman selling these magazines to farmers. So I did that. I didn't like that, either. So then I said, "Well, I have to go back to teaching school, I guess." So I got a teaching job - of all places, the place I hated most in the world, but that's the only place that was available, was at Decorah, Iowa again, where I spent that miserable first year. So when I had this show in Iowa and it was such a big success, it was sort of a get-even thing. So I went there and I said, "Boy, I got to get out of here." So then where did I go? Oh, that's when I applied for Cranbrook and I got in there. Then I got married and got my degree, a degree. My wife was a singer so she wanted to take lessons in New York, so we got a private school in Connecticut.

MS. KIRWIN: When you said you met your future wife who was a medical student, is that your second wife or your first wife?

MR. HANSON: My first wife.

MS. KIRWIN: And then she dropped out of medical school to pursue a singing career?

MR. HANSON: Yes. I got this job teaching art in this Edgewood School in Greenwich, Connecticut, and she has a lot of math and science so she taught science there. She had a beautiful voice, beautiful mezzo-soprano. She should have been in the Metropolitan Opera; she had that kind of voice. She really did. So she taught and then she got pregnant, so we had the baby there. That's the one I'm working on now. He's a doctor in Seattle. Anyway, then I made a hundred dollars a month and she made a hundred. Then she got a hospital job so she was making more than I was. But we couldn't live in the school there anymore with a child, so we got an apartment. Anyway I got another job in a public school where I was there one year. Then, from there, I got a job in Europe with the army, the Dependent School System. A girl I knew at Cranbrook had been over there teaching and she knew the director so she recommended me. That helped get that job.

MS. KIRWIN: Do you remember her name?

MR. HANSON: Fay Van Rople, her name was. She's an artist in California. I don't know what she does now. She was in weaving mostly. Fay Van Rople—I forget her married name. I've got it in my Rolodex. So I was over there for seven years: four years in Munich and three years in Bremerhaven.
[END of TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

MR. HANSON: One thing, they were mostly designs, carvings or small table sculptures. I have a few sitting around yet, but they weren't coherent. There was no direction. I hadn't resolved what I wanted to do with sculpture and as you remember, in the '50s, you had Abstract Expressionism and I couldn't latch onto that. I tried the painting, just smearing and dribbling and so on. But sculpture, I think some of the worst sculpture every produced were, in my opinion, done in the '50s. Looking back you can always tell the '50s. What is it? It's not this. They're not fish or fowl. It's supposed to be based on form, but there's usually not much form. It's modern but it isn't modern. You find that stuff a lot in Australia. They haven't gotten much beyond that. You know what I'm talking about. The Germans do a lot of it, too. It goes this way, and this way.

MS. KIRWIN: How large were these pieces that you were doing?

MR. HANSON: They weren't very large. Sometimes a foot high or two, three feet high at the most. But there was always part of the figure in it. But you didn't dare get too much detail in it because that was considered old hat, old-timey. I remember when I went to the art school in Seattle. "Design makes art," he says, "because nature —"No, I wanted to say something else. Anyway, in the schools, they sort of made you believe that realism was a no-no and over with, and dead forever. So you get a new kind of realism that was based on the material; the carvings to show the honesty of the material. The veins of the stone and the cracks in the wood you sometimes left to be what it is, which was kind of a nice theory. You left the tracks. The tools you used on the surface. Now, of course, this is the opposite. I cover up everything. You don't show what's underneath. It's all illusion. It's all trickery. It's all foolery. You must never paint over wood. You must never color stone or ceramic. You could wax maybe, and keep the natural earth tones there and all that stuff. Things were very compact because if you rolled it down a hill no arms should break off. That theory. Even my work today has some influence from that. I guess that's why I like big people because that to me was weight and volume and impact in sculpture. That's retained some of that. So what were we talking about? Anyway, so I was teaching in those different schools and then in Europe. I got a pretty good background of what they did in the old days and what the contemporary work was. The Germans were going nowhere those days. In the museums were a lot of Expressionists and now they've come back in the '80s again. My wife sang in the opera a little bit and then she got in a car wreck and that sort of ruined it for her. So we came back to the States in 1960. I taught in Hapeville High School in Atlanta—that's near the airport—for one year and we lived in Dekalb County where my wife worked in the hospital. They didn't have any expressways, or at least they weren't finished those days. It was just the worst traffic in the world. So I got a job closer to home in a public school in Tucker, which was about 15 or 20 minutes from where we lived. That school, I'll never forget it. They were going to build a new school. They had this old school and it had kind of

a dug-out cellar. You know, Georgia had that red clay and you have all these duties—bathroom duty and lunch duty and bus duty. It was always some duty. The principal, Mr. Turpin, and the boys would go in the bathroom and shoot off firecrackers. That annoyed and got us all mad. So we'd go in there and get those guys. I'd go in there and he'd run after them and they'd run down in the cellar down in that clay pit. They'd run around there and go out in the back and he'd never catch them. We went through this every day. It was such an old building there was no air conditioning in it. Imagine that in Georgia. There were these bushes along the windows. In the art room and all the other rooms, they opened the windows there, and these bushes were along the windows. Some of these kids, when they left the classroom, they'd throw their books in the bushes and we'd have to go out there and collect these books. Sometimes it would rain and they'd be all soggy. "Oh, boy," I said, "This is for the birds." This one teacher, she quit. She couldn't take it. Miss Roundtree, I remember her name was. So I was looking for something else. If I could get in a college, I wouldn't have to worry about this in private school. Maybe it would be a little better. So I did that, but it was some of the same thing. Then I got divorced from my wife in 1965 and I said, "I got to get out of here. I'm going to Florida." So I got a job down here in Miami Dade Junior College. Community College they call it. It was teaching in an open school where you don't get that.—When anybody can go, you get a lot of losers in there. A lot of people don't care about art. They just think, "Well, that would be an easy course to take." So you get a lot of those, but I did get some good students and as I travel around the world, once in a while I bump into them. One kid has got a place in Hawaii and he's doing quite well and up here in Gainesville. He comes by once in a while. And a few others. One's teaching up here in Boca Raton, teaching art in a private school. Anyway, that is to say that I had my sort of fill of teaching. I taught adult classes. I taught at night. I taught children. When I went to New York I taught part-time at New York University to graduate students. So, I mean, I did my bit of teaching for 16 to 20 years.

MS. KIRWIN: How did your first one-man show come about in Germany?

MR. HANSON: That's a good question. Well, my first one-man show was really in New York, a gallery show. I really didn't have any career until 1969 when Ivan Karp came down. He came down in December of '68 and looked at my work. I had a studio in Opa-Locka and it was filled with the earliest work. You know, my statement on war, the Vietnam piece. I don't call it that. I call it just *War.* Four dead soldiers and one dying. The football players engaged in very aggressive action. A dead Mafia victim, crime victim with his arm and one leg chopped off and a chain around him, cement block. This used to happen all the time, and now it's not so much Mafia. It's just drug stuff. What else did I have? I had a murder victim, the motorcycle accident. Anyway, I sent some slides to Castelli. That's the most important gallery in New York and I said, "Ah, it's no use. They won't like this stuff." She said, "Oh, go ahead." Her name was Turnay Coolidge and her husband was a member of this Sculptors of Florida where I had exhibited and won some prizes and a little notoriety. So she said, "Have you sent the slides to Castelli?" I said, "No, I don't think I'll bother." "Go and do it," she said. To have her stop pestering me, I sent them in there and then I waited two or three weeks and I got this reply from Ivan Karp. He said, "Well, the work looks very promising, very impressive. This is the kind of work we do not show at this gallery, but if you'll continue working and send more slides I think something eventually can be done." Signed, "Ivan Karp." I thought, "Who the hell is Ivan Karp?" The name I had heard some place before. "Oh, he's that guy that came down and gave that lecture." At the school we get a lot of people come down. That was the only one I had remembered because he was very enthusiastic and very interesting and alive. I said, "Oh, that's good. He's a good guy." So then he came down later and saw all the stuff, what I explained to you was in the studio there, all those pieces; he and his wife Marilyn. They didn't say anything. They looked around and I thought, "Oh, boy. I don't think they care much for," but then he said that he would call Leo, Leo Castelli, and recommend me for a show in New York in the fall of '69 because Leo had bought a warehouse. You know, that little gallery up on 77th Street wouldn't be adequate. I don't know if he's still got it or not, but it's quite small. I think 77th Street or 87th; whatever, 97th. So they had this additional space where they were going to show it. "But," he said, "I can't do anything for you here. You have to come to New York because this takes promotion. It's difficult work to launch." So my wife and I talked it over. I had remarried by that time, in 1968, to Wesla Host, my present wife. She was a schoolteacher teaching English in Hialeah. So we decided to just go up there and try it out. We found a loft on 17 Bleecker. That's a lucky number because I'm born January 17th and she's born March 17th. I'm about twenty years older. My daughter happened to be born two years later on October 17th. So the 17 worked out pretty good. We were there about three years and the first place I showed was two or three pieces at Whitney, in the fall of 1969. I could walk up Madison Avenue and see my work in the window that juts out. Having no exposure to New York, that was my first exposure.

MS. KIRWIN: How did you get in the Whitney show?

MR. HANSON: Well, I don't know. Ivan helped with that, or Robert M. Doty was the curator then, senior curator and he had this theme.

MS. KIRWIN: I think I have it written down.

MR. HANSON: What is it? *Personal Torment*, something like that.

MS. KIRWIN: I think *The Grotesque in American Art. II*

MR. HANSON: Yes. It wasn't a very good show.

MS. KIRWIN: I think it was longer than that. Okay. *Human Concerned Personal Torment and Grotesque in American Art.*

MR. HANSON: Yes. It had some good things and a lot of lousy things, although my things were the lousiest. John Canaday wrote about it. I don't think he mentioned my name, but out of the whole show, in the *New York Times*, they showed my policeman kicking the black guy. So my message got through. So that was my first exposure and then my second exposure was my first gallery show at OK Harris, 465 West Broadway, at that time. Ivan Karp had started his own gallery. When I went there, he said, "Come by and see the gallery," and I thought it was Castelli, but it was Ivan Karp's gallery. So I've been with him, we're celebrating 20 years of association. Well, the gallery's been open 20 years in October so we're all going up to have a celebration, take a ride around Manhattan in a boat and have a party. So in that first show, I showed the war group, the one that had been to Whitney, that riot scene, the accident, the football players. What else? So this got quite a bit of coverage in *Newsweek* and *Time*, but I only sold one piece for twelve hundred dollars. So he says, "You might be famous, but you're never going to be rich." I'm still not rich, but I'm doing all right.

MS. KIRWIN: I want to back up a little bit about when you first learned about using polyester resins in Germany.

MR. HANSON: In Bremerhaven, there was a guy named George Grygo and he was working with these resins. He lived in an old firehouse. How I ran into him, I was going to do some modeling in clay. I was teaching up there in the school and I didn't know where to get it, and this person at the art school told me to go up to the art supply store. He said, "Well, if you go up to George Grygo, he uses a lot of clay. Maybe you can get some from him." So I went up there and he gave me some and I noticed he was working with these materials. They were polyester and he made these reliefs. So when I got back to the States I thought I would try using this stuff and I did.

MS. KIRWIN: So he was casting off of clay?

MR. HANSON: Yes, and I did that, too. When Pop Art came along, the figure became fashionable again and I thought I'd do some things. I modeled them in clay and cast them in this material, sometimes putting it right over. I did a dead figure in a coffin and mixed the resin with talc and fiberglass, and went right over the outside and carved on it. That's how I did the first. I'd make molds and decide to speed up the process, and take off the molds from living forms with plastic bandages and put it right over, because I didn't need the detail. I wanted to put the clothing over them. That's how I worked with the war figures. They were sort of wrapped and carved and modeled, all at the same time. When I went to New York, I wanted to get more detailed, so I used the inside of the mold. I always used the plaster molds. I got away from the bandages because they don't hold enough plaster and they crack and fall apart. So then, when I got to Florida I got this rubber, which I use now, and that's with the plaster outside and the hemp fibers to make wrap-around molds, and slip the rubber in back and slide them off. Then, in that go several coats of body fillers and resin, backed up with fiberglass. That's what you see out there. That's put together and rasped and carved. Around the eyes you have to build up, take off. Also, about ten years ago, I started using polyvinyl acetate from DuPont, a flexible material almost like rubber, very flesh-like; but I've gotten away from it because it's so time-consuming in finishing. The stuff shrinks, for one thing, and then you lose a lot of detail when you finish it. But it was good because, if you're doing a man with a lot of hairs on his arm or chest, you can poke in hairs in this stuff, and I use it in my bronzes. About six years ago, I started translating these just like they are, with the polychroming and the chemically-treated clothing, to bronzes and inserting the hairs in the head and putting in the eyes, putting in the flesh tones - much as I did with the hard plastic and the soft plastic. So it's a continual process of evolvement. The same thing, but different. So I mean, I don't want to get into the nitty-gritty of details, because I think it's boring for people to read about that. There's enough written about it. I really don't have any secrets on it and I tell people how I do it. But when you hear it and do it and, after working a number of years, ten years, with that vinyl, I know its defects. And I know all the defects of all this stuff. That's the main problem of getting around them. You know this is going to shrink; you know this is going to crack and you know this is going to do this, and that, and the other unless you do this. So it's a matter of compensating for it. No material is perfect.

MS. KIRWIN: Why did you switch from the polyester resin to acetate?

MR. HANSON: Well, like I said before, with that you could insert hairs. Otherwise, you have to nail on a wig and the wigs always look wiggy, especially in men. This way, you can see where the hairs come right out of the head or the skin, especially with body hairs on legs and arms. Living in Florida, people don't wear heavy clothing that much, so a lot of the skin areas are exposed, and I wanted to show more of that fleshy area. Well, I can use it with the other, too, but it's an added illusion with the hairs, sometimes. You know, Chinese people and black people don't have too much body hairs. It varies and, of course, women are hairless, except the top of their head.

MS. KIRWIN: What was New York like then? Did you have a studio on Bleecker Street? Did you live in your studio?

MR. HANSON: Yes. We had a loft and I don't know who's in there now. I think Nancy Graves is across the street. I think that was a building that had a fire and they fixed it up. I think she's probably still in there. We were on that end of Bleecker Street, just one short block off the Bowery, where Elizabeth Street comes up and almost hits the building where I was in. We were on the fifth floor and it was really a nice loft. It was kind of a crummy building because the floors were pretty bad. They had this sewing machine factory on top and every day you heard "brrrr" from the machines. And then I'd work with plastic and, "Oh, that smells. I'm getting sick. That smells bad. Are you painting down there?" So, fortunately, next to the building there was the roof of the next. It was a rooftop that came up almost to the one window. It was a rooftop about as big as this room. This room is about, what would you say? Ten by twelve or something like that? It wasn't that big. We had this dog and we'd take the dog out there if it was an emergency, and had a little roof garden, flowers and things growing there. Then I would lay up. Even in winter, I could go out there and the fumes would go outside. Otherwise, you do get a lot of fumes and I was breathing those and I did get cancer a couple of times. I don't know whether it was caused by that or not.

MS. KIRWIN: Do you think it was?

MR. HANSON: Well, when I started working with this stuff, I wasn't as careful as I am now. I'd lay the stuff up with bare hands and I think that did more damage than breathing it, you know, going right through your skin. I'd wash it off right away. It would start to burn, but you see, I smeared this on and that was my way of working. I still do that, but I have rubber gloves. We were laying up yesterday and if you strike something and there's a little hole in there and it seeps into your skin, it starts to burn. I try not to work too long with it. We do four or five hours a day, a couple times a week, and then we go onto the next process. So I'm not that exposed to it anymore. It could. There's no way of knowing. I'm sure it didn't help any. As time goes on you—I feel fine now.

MS. KIRWIN: You take on greater precautions now working with the materials than you did before.

MR. HANSON: Yes, I take more precautions. I do some airbrushing on the surface and I know when I spray, that bothers me. So I have a good mask as protection. But, I mean, you can't always be covered up. When it's hot and sticky and something is burning and you can't see, things fog up. One of the worst things that bothers me is turpentine. All artists use turpentine, painters especially. When that stuff really evaporates, it really bothers me a lot. If you're air brushing, you cut the paint with that and you breathe the mist. You know, it gets in your lungs. Being an artist, there are hazards and there are all kinds of books out. With clay, there's silicone poisoning and the plaster floating in the air. You breathe all that stuff. It's not good. But if you're not doing the same thing every day. Like John Rood, I said, lost a lung from welding because that's one of the worst things. When you're welding, the chemicals that are given off are quite toxic. I'm sure that's what killed him. I know he did a lot of welding. Then there' s certain types of welding that are more dangerous than others.

MS. KIRWIN: Were there other artists in that building in New York on Bleecker Street?

MR. HANSON: Oh, yes. There were a lot of artists. Our friend, Mike Bakaty on the Bowery, is still there. Rauschenberg was in Lafayette. I think he still has the building. It's just around the corner from where I was. We went to one party there and I think it was about five floors. It's a narrow building and then he had this big kind of chapel in back. I never was in there. Of course, he has a nice place down here in Florida. I bump into him once in a while, but I don't know him that well. And Rosenquist, my friend Elinor Markowitz, she was subletting his studio in SoHo for a while. That was not too far from me. I'd run into him once in a while, but I don't know him that well either. John Gassiri is up above where I was. He's still up there. He's a friend of mine—does semi-nudes. Oh, John Clark was down a few blocks away. We never socialized too much with one another. It wasn't like the old days. I mean, there were so many artists and we'd see each other at the gallery once in a while and pick up our checks or drop off work or whatever, but the art community is large now. There were some loft parties and you meet people, but you're so busy working. I found out living in New York was fun but you're so busy working that you don't take advantage of all those things like plays and operas and shows. You just get involved in your own thing.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you have children living there with you?

MR. HANSON: Oh, yes. We had a daughter that was born in 1970, October, and she was a baby. But the second child we have here now, the boy, who will be 16, was born here in1973. So that was one reason for moving out of there. Having children and living in a place like that, my wife says, "You're going to kill us all with that stuff." So we moved down here and bought that house next door and we've been there since 1973, March 1973. It's time to move on.

MS. KIRWIN: How did you pick this community to live in?

MR. HANSON: My wife's father and mother live just ten minutes away and he was ill with cancer at the time. We didn't know how long he would survive and he passed away January '73. We thought he'd live longer then. So then we were sort of established here and then the next year, we went to - before we moved in here, we were in Germany and I showed there. Then the next year they wanted a show again and I got a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service. Before I had a show at Cologne, Onnasch Galerie, and then the next year '74, I changed dealers and I had a show in Hamburg. Also, a Dr. Tilman Orseville called me up and wanted to have a show in Stuttgart. That was my first museum show and I have a picture of the whole thing up above the door to the library there. Before you go, we'll take a look at it. It was one of the best shows of my work I've ever had because there was one truly big immense room. It was huge with no partitions and we had about 25 pieces in there. The room was so big you could isolate them, one in a corner, some along the walls, some out in the middle. It was great space. I've never seen anything like it since. That was quite successful. That traveled to Stuttgart and then Aachen, Akademie der Kunste in Berlin, and then Louisiana Museum outside of Copenhagen. On the strength of that, Dr. Martin Bush, vice president and head of the Ulrich Museum at Wichita State University in Wichita, KS, approached me about having a traveling show over this country. So he sent out letters and he got responses from about 20, most of the major museums in the country. So then that went to—Where did we open? Oh, Wichita, of course. Then it went to Lincoln, NE, the Phillip Johnson building into quite a nice museum there. It went to Wichita, Lincoln, and then it went to Berkeley, CA. In Berkeley, the Whitneys saw it and they didn't tell me about it, but they said they'd like to have it. That's how eventually it wound up there. Also, they were giving a party for Prime Minister Trudeau, and all my sculptures were around. He gave a speech and came over and talked to me and that was nice. Then it went to Portland and it was out there in the spring and the roses are in bloom and they had the rose parade. Also, they had that basketball—They won the pennant that year, the basketball team, and they had a big parade in town. What do you call them? I forget their team. Then it went to Colorado Springs. It went to Virginia Museum. Where else? The Corcoran in Washington, right across from the White House. It wound up at the Whitney where it outdrew every show they've had since Wyeth, I think, or something like that. People were lining up in the winter in the street. I couldn't believe it, and they didn't know me. Since then I've had shows all around Florida. New Zealand, we have a lot of my own work in that show. I've got five shows. I will have five shows in museums this year. Not to brag but, I mean, I feel funny about it because you have these shows and they go on and on and you wonder what it amounts to, if you're doing any good. Then it's great because then these children from this—well, let me explain. The exhibition travelled from Auckland to Wellington to Christ Church to Dunedin and finished up this summer in Hamilton, and the children from the school near Hamilton—Hamilton I think is on the north island. Auckland is the biggest city and they had thousands of people turn out. These children, about fifty of them, sent me letters that, "I like this one best because—"This was the best." "Oh, it was real." A great response from the kids. They were real excited by it. Then, when we were touring the Far East on vacation this summer, we were in—I have to think of this hotel—New Sadua Hotel in Bali. It's the nicest hotel there. I heard a lot of people speaking English with an accent and I thought maybe they were Australian and I said, "Where do you come from?" "Oh, we come from Wellington," this lady said. "Oh, Wellington," I said. "I just had an exhibit there in the museum." "Oh, did you make those real people?" It was called *Real People.* "Yes," I said. "That was my show." "Oh, that was wonderful." So I made about ten friends right there. I have this small show in Japan now at the World Design Expo, six pieces there, and they put me on television and I said a few words. Mr. Yatta, who is head of that pavilion, explained what I said, I guess. When we got to Indonesia the man says to me, the customs man when you come in there, he said, "Oh, I saw you on television." I couldn't believe it. So it's nice that wherever you go in the world there's somebody that knows about you. It's kind of a nice feeling.

MS. KIRWIN: I wanted to ask you a little about your international reputation and how it's grown. I read somewhere that the *Documenta 5* show was a real boost to your career.

MR. HANSON: Oh, it was.

MS. KIRWIN: Could you talk a little bit about what that meant to you and the response you got?

MR. HANSON: Well, *Documenta* is a survey show of contemporary art, what's going on. I think it has become—it was at this time, too, I would say—quite political. They have the people who chose their friends and so on. I just was lucky that the guys, that ahead, they liked my work and they had a few others in there. Photo-realism and my type of Realism was making an appearance. You know, it really never caught on because we work so slowly and we never have enough work to show that we never could dominate any situation. Like these guys now with Expressionism, they can do a painting a day or two, and they get two hundred thousand for it. Here I piddle away for months and months. Well, that's a different story, but I think that's what's part of it. I was fortunate to be in there and got written up in all the important German papers. Yes, I think I was one that they—the public—identify with my kind of work. They have the other stuff, too, but a lot of esoteric stuff and conceptual work, and whatnot. So, out of that, I got the invitation to have a traveling show. I think Dr. Oslo probably latched onto that and, as a consequence of that, I got the museum shows in Germany. Then, as a consequence of the museum shows in Germany, I got them over here in the States. That was highly successful, so then we had tours in Florida, not any too big cities yet. There was also a show in Chicago, which I never saw, which was thrown in while I was in Europe. I had nothing to do with it. I don't know where they got all these pieces. People tell me

about it and I don't know what they're talking about. I never saw it. So you got to have museum shows, otherwise you don't attract media, and you don't attract critics. To begin with, you have to go to New York, right, and you have to have a gallery and the gallery has to do something, or you have to do something for the gallery; whereby, you get reviews and written about. Then you go into the museums one piece at a time, and then they get a picture of the piece in the paper and they write about it. Usually that's what happens. They singled me out above everybody else because maybe not it's the best work, but because it's something that people recognize and are interested in, and that sort of builds and builds. So I know a lot of artists who you pick up the art magazines, they're always written about and there are ads on them. I don't subscribe to any art magazines. I never have. I don't read them. I don't look at them. *Artforum*, they wrote me up once. You really don't get in there unless you play this game or you buy ads and then they write about you and so on. That's just how it works. There's nothing wrong with that, but I feel fortunate that I never have played that game and perhaps I don't have the visibility like Henry Geldzahler. I met him at a party at—

[END of TAPE 1, SIDE 2]

MR. HANSON: Henry Geldzahler. I'd never met him. I used to see him walking around town, New York. I knew who he was, and he was at this party for Alice Neel. Andy Warhol was there and a lot of other people I knew, and I come into this room and I don't know if we were introduced to each other or what, but I didn't know what to say to him. Here's this very famous—what would you call him, an entrepreneur? Not really that. What is he, Henry?

MS. KIRWIN: Curator.

MR. HANSON: Critic, whatever it is. I didn't know what to say and he didn't say anything to me. He said, "Oh, this is Duane." "Oh, yes." Then they sent me this catalogue that he had arranged this show in Australia and they picked one of my works. He picked one of my works and it was this *Hardhat*. Then he wrote about me as being a very shadowy person. Gee, because I don't go around much in New York and nobody knows what I look like or anything. So I guess I have that sort of reputation. I don't know whether it's that or being very visible in New York, and there is that type, too.

MS. KIRWIN: I wanted to ask you a little bit about Pop Art and what is it about Pop Art that you picked up on, other than the figure?

MR. HANSON: Well, I think it made me more aware of my immediate environment, of what was close to me. I decided this art on a pedestal is crazy, you know. I don't want to do that. I want to do something that I have strong feelings about, about the society, about war, about the environment, about all these things, which I still have. So I did these very early pieces, which I talked about before in my Expressionist period.

MS. KIRWIN: Can you explain a little bit by what you mean?

MR. HANSON: They were crude. They weren't finished.

MS. KIRWIN: They were painted rather than sprayed.

MR. HANSON: They were painted and they were all a very rough surface carved out with a rasp. I had these big rasps. There were thick, rough edges on them. I would take and really file them down to get the right forms, and maybe starch the clothing so it would cling a little better, so it would look wet or something, and I started painting them. I liked Segal's work, but I didn't think he went far enough. To me they looked arty, although I like all the Pop Artists. I think they're very good artists, all of them. I just think they're a little, for my tastes, for what I want to do, anyway—a bit arty. You know what I mean?

MS. KIRWIN: What about Kienholz? Do you place him in that arty category, too?

MR. HANSON: I know who he is. Ed and I, we were talking about, well they work as a team now, Nancy and Ed now. You were talking about Mrs. Shahn. She's an artist. Maybe they have a relationship like that. I don't identify with him. I mean I did earlier on where he did the figure, but it's all symbolic. It's very surreal. It's a different direction. It's sort of an inner brutality, I think. Well, some of them, anyway. I suppose you could say that about some of my work, too, but his is just different. It's very symbolic and surrealistic. That's the way I look at it. I've tried to stay away from that. I think the real world itself is so surreal that it's not that interesting to go and make figures that are rather strange and odd like that. But, I admire him. I think he's a good artist.

MS. KIRWIN: Pop Art really made your work more receptive.

MR. HANSON: And sort of healthy types they use. You know, they're sort of wholesome. You know, Pop Art is kind of wholesome, and it's so American. Ed Kienholz, he did that *Back Seat Dodge.* He lives in Germany, you know. He's got a place there. It's a lovely spot off the Ku'damm in Berlin. Martin Bush, my friend, just went to see him. I was trying to get up to see him at his place in Idaho. In the summer he spends his time up in Idaho and my son

was getting married not too far from there, but it was a lousy day and I didn't get to go up there. It was a three-hour ride. So I regret not going up there. Maybe some day I'll make it. But Pop Art opened my eyes to just the American environment and everything around me, and the people. What's more interesting than the people? So I got to doing that. First it was Expressionist, sociological themes, sociological terrors of the 1960s. Then that was transformed to satirical types like the *Tourists* and over-stuffed supermarket shopping lady, the sun bather, tough-looking hard hat. About 1972, I took a friend of mine—I already mentioned him—Mike Bakaty, who lived practically across the street on the Bowery there, who is a very artist type with a beard and funny little glasses. Mike is a great friend of mine and he said, "I'm going to New York to be famous," and he played this artist picture. So I portrayed him much as he was. I didn't think I was doing a portrait, and I still don't think I'm doing portraits, but it came off as an individual within a stereotype. You know what I mean? An artist type. He had paint spattered on his pants, his hat and his glasses and the beard. It's a sort of artist type that you could see in almost any American and European city. Even today you still find that sort of—not quite a hippy type, but something like it. This got a lot of attention, and that was in the *Documenta*, by the way, that one with him like this looking down. There was a sort of sadness about it, as all my work has because I think we're in tough times. I mean the world is not getting any better. I was reading Jacques Cousteau and they asked him, "Is there any hope for the world and its survival, the way things are going with the environment, with all the problems of our population. Our forests are disappearing, a hole in the ozone layer, acid rain and you know, all the problems we get sick and tired of hearing about all the time." He said, "The way we're going, there is no hope. We're finished unless we change." And that is a hopeful sign because things in some areas are changing, getting better. But still there's a general, you know, like California with the traffic and pollution. People are moving out of there in droves. And the influx of people. Here we have Florida. The whole south Florida is dependent on Okeechobee Lake where they have cattle ranches, thousands of cattle. Well, their fertilizer and their waste drain into the lake. Half the lake is dead already. They planted sugarcane, which dries it up. The water goes into the Everglades and that feeds the aquifer and that's how we get water here. Of course, there's not enough water so now the birds are dying because there aren't enough fish and frogs. You know, the storks, they can't breed anymore. They can't feed their young because all that water is used for agriculture or sugar cane and the farming and all that. They're trying to get it to change. Planting rice, that would be perfect where the water would come down from the lake and the water would be good for the rice and it would flow on into the Everglades and the fish and the frogs and all the other things would come back and the wading birds would, like, and the whole cycle and animals would dry up. So when I think of these things, I think it's part of my message of my work. Right now, when you think of these tremendous problems and we don't know how to deal with it, it's sort of looking down at sadness and these people. I think we all feel it and they say, "Why don't they smile? What do you think about this aspect of life?" When things are not going well and people are not trying to make it better, I have no solutions but I just have this feeling of sort of doom unless we all get together and try to do something for the world and make things better; make others aware of these problems.

MS. KIRWIN: These figures you feel have a grim realization of doom for the planet in a way?

MR. HANSON: The what?

MS. KIRWIN: Doom for the planet that things aren't going to get any better?

MR. HANSON: Well, I'm fairly optimistic because without hope, I don't think you can really go on living as a normal person. I think it's just like recovering alcoholics and dope fiends. They reach a stage where—I was reading about a guy the other day and he was a lawyer or somebody. He had a great job and a great family and when he got to crawling on the floor and stealing stuff just to keep going, to feed his habit, he said, "This has got to stop. I got to do something." That's the sort of condition the world is. We got to stop fighting with one another and we've got to attack the real problems.

MS. KIRWIN: Will you talk a little bit about the transition from the very active, aggressive groups of figures you did early on when you were in Florida? It seems like it would be more likely you would do those groups in New York. Then you moved to New York and did the *Tourist* and themes that might be considered more Floridian.

MR. HANSON: Yes, but if you read the newspaper and watch the TV, it was there then. It's still there and when I did it, the guy said when I showed in Miami, he says, "Throw it out in the street. We got women and children coming in here." The Miami critic said I never had any friends down there in the *Miami Herald*. They have a little article on me today, but it's never in the art column. It says, "Now we come to the work of Duane Hanson. This we do not consider work of art because we consider such subject matter over and beyond the category of art. We realize that this might be some of the latest developments in art or whatever, but we don't condone this type of work and wish that the artist would spend his time in a better fashion." Something to that effect. So that's how they started with me here. Then, the next critic ignored me. Then, we had a good one, but she didn't stay long. Now we have another one and I can't figure her out, either. Critics are a strange lot. You know, you would think they'd be the first to recognize a budding artist, right, because they see so much art and they're supposed to study it and they're supposed to know something about it. But they seem like they're the last. Richard Wagner, you know, he wrote that wonderful opera, *The Meister Singer*, and that's basically he's trying to

get back at his critics. He criticizes every note that's wrong and he's pounding away. We had a critic when I started out who wrote for the *Miami News*. I forget her name. She was a big woman with red hair, and she didn't have a car so if you wanted her to write about you, you had to pick her up. [Laughs] And bring her and then she would write, see? They're always part-time. This is part-time. The one that irritates me is that they could be so valuable for promoting art and to encouraging artists, but I don't see that. I have some that hate me and some that love me. One of the brightest guys, and he wrote that book there, Kirk Varnedoe, he's at the Museum of Modern Art. I don't fit into modernism so I'm sure I'm never going to be invited there to show, although they had a show of Wyeth, I think. So one never knows. It's politics that enters in.

MS. KIRWIN: Your sculpture has been called Realism or New Realism or Hyper-Realism. What do those terms mean to you and how do they relate to your work?

MR. HANSON: Nothing.

MS. KIRWIN: Nothing. Good. Well, tell me about that.

MR. HANSON: Well, those are sort of categories that you get fitted into. When people write, they have to compare and I can see that, but I don't pay any attention to that. I am what I am as an individual artist. I think I'm different from Photorealists and a wonderful artist like John DeAndrea who does very classical, hyper-realistic, beautiful nude figures. Sometimes they confuse us, the public. I don't know why because we're miles apart. I know John. I admire him and I'm sure he admires me in different ways. We work differently; our techniques are similar. We use similar materials, but he's into a rather aesthetic statement of a beautiful-bodied person, and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm interested in—I don't know. I see beauty in the fat ones, and lean ones, and the ugly ones. I hate the word "fat" and "ugly" because I think a human being is beauty and it's truth. If you say something about what exists, what's truth, you know, like Rembrandt's picture of himself in old age. Though, he wasn't that old. He was only around 60, but he had a hard time in his later life. But it's really wrinkles; it's one of the most beautiful things of the aging process and the way he portrayed himself sort of suffering. There's beauty there in that. You say, "Well, it's not beauty in the classical sense with everything flowing and relationships. A younger person is probably more idealistic or attractive in that sense." So it goes. I've done older people and young people, and heavy weights and muscular. Each individual has a certain quality of beauty, I think. So it's not ideal.

MS. KIRWIN: So you don't really compare your work to the Photorealist painters or any of those others that are often paired with your work?

MR. HANSON: Well, they're working in a two-dimensional way. Like Richard Estes, most of them don't use the figure too much. They're mostly cityscapes or landscapes. Richard McLean does the horse and he uses a figure once in a while. But they're tied in with the environment. One thing with my work, of course, is that I don't work in tableaus or environments. I did one for Japan because that was kind of a thing they wanted, urban life. And I thought these people working on a scaffold would be kind of interesting. Usually I just isolate each figure and zero in on the individual, but I thought this would really be an interesting challenge to do it. So I did that.

MS. KIRWIN: When did you first meet John DeAndrea?

MR. HANSON: When he started to show in my gallery in early 1970s.

MS. KIRWIN: Were you working with the same materials at the time?

MR. HANSON: We had worked independently and worked out similar techniques. It's strange. But still my work was more sociological, I guess you'd call it, and his was more an aesthetic statement on the figure.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you learn anything from him about technique?

MR. HANSON: Yes, we've exchanged types of materials we use and that's usually what we talk about when we're together. "I use this." "I use this." I learn something from him. Probably he learns something from me. I don't know. He's more into that than I am, the process and the techniques. I'm more interested in - all this technical stuff doesn't interest me. It's the end product where I can really zero in on the clothing I use, the painting, and maybe an exaggeration a little bit.

MS. KIRWIN: Do you get an idea first and look for a potential model, or do you see something?

MR. HANSON: Yes, right. Once in a while it will be reversed where there is somebody walking around and I go, "That would make a great sculpture," and I'll consider it. Then if I can find somebody like that because obviously you can't go out and—

MS. KIRWIN: Do you ever approach anyone?

MR. HANSON: Well, I have. I took a guy off the street in New York and I didn't realize he was a wino and he started to go to sleep and all that stuff. I have seen a black lady I wanted to use one time. She worked up at one of these little drive-in stores, but she didn't really understand what it was about and she never showed up. It was probably good she didn't. I like to get people that—I go out to the school here, the art department, and I see young people there sometimes I can use, or art teachers. I've used in my *Tourist*, a couple, the first did, and the lady was an art teacher. I don't know, I think she just retired now. For this one in Japan, I used my assistant, the young guy that has these big shoulders. I wanted a husky looking young guy. Then I wanted a big guy leaning against there with some tools and that was the husband of the art teacher in the Hollywood Hills High School over here. What is their name? Then the third guy having his lunch on the ground was the fellow that works at the art museum over in Fort Lauderdale. He's a big guy, too.

MS. KIRWIN: You like big people.

MR. HANSON: Yes. When the Japanese came here, I wasn't sure what they wanted. They had this special building and they wanted a special theme, city life, urban life, people working in the street as you would be driving along, and that's what I did. It's a guy painting and clean-up lady and the three guys having their lunch. There's a scaffold there. When they were putting it all together with the Japanese workers with their hard hats, too, they were there, and it was a strange scene. But they wanted Americans because, I don't know, they're very attracted to our culture. They imitate us and still reject a lot of it. They keep their own culture going, which is good for their own identity, but still this sort of outward look. You know, how they dress and some of the music, some of the art. Not so much. The art goes between Western and Eastern in a strange way over there. Anyway, they realize that they're small people and they look up to big American types. So, that's what I did.

MS. KIRWIN: When you do a show in Europe, do you pay special attention to the way it's received by Europeans or Scandinavians or the Japanese as to the American-ness of the figures?

MR. HANSON: It's pretty much the same. I think that they realize these are American types but still translate it into their own culture and their own being, that we all get tired and we all feel sad at times, and get frustrated. In other words, we're all alike in our emotions and physical attributes, in that we suffer and we fall in love, and we have certain prejudices maybe, and moments of happiness and sadness. You know, we feel the same. When it comes to ideas and carrying out ideas, it's something else because, within that scope, as you know, how can you have an art hater like Jessie Helms and an art lover like Jacob Javitz. I think he's passed on now, but he's one. And Howard Metzenbaum is one of the great supporters of the arts. I mean two senators, diametrically opposite. So that's a different thing. But common emotions, we all have them. So I think that comes through.

MS. KIRWIN: Yes, there's a real universal quality in your work.

MR. HANSON: A universal quality, yes.

MS. KIRWIN: I wanted to ask you a little more about choosing your models and the whole process. I saw some Polaroids in your studio. Do you try out a couple different poses and photograph them and see what you like?

MR. HANSON: Yes. I have a Polaroid and I take a lot of pictures. In fact, I wanted to do a jogger some years ago and I was taking pictures for a couple years and I couldn't find the right guy, the right model, and I didn't know how I was going to portray it. This looked dumb; this looked corny. Years back, I used to make sketches. I do it intuitively. I decide to do a certain thing in my head and I get the model and we decide then and there before I work, you know, spontaneously. Then I get to thinking, "You know, this could have been better if this arm was down or if this leg was bent, or if this head was tilted a little bit." I got into all these self-agonizing things about what I could have done. Then, I got into some museum shows and I thought, "That looks pretty good," or, "Boy, you did a lousy job on that one," and, "God, I can't stand to look at that one." But if I'm going to make a career of this and they're going to show these things forever and ever, and they're going to be in museums and I'm going to hate this stuff ten years from now, I better make sure what I'm doing is going to be the best. So that's why I take all these pictures. Then, I can change my mind at the last moment and say, "This could be improved a little bit here." That's how I work now.

MS. KIRWIN: How much does the process inhibit the gestures or the poses of your figures because they have to be a certain way to get cast?

MR. HANSON: Well, we try to work out positionings of duration where they feel comfortable. If they don't feel comfortable it will show up. In other words, there will be a stiffening of the arm or leg. So that works. I say, "Do you feel comfortable with that" and you say, "Yes." "How about this?" "No." Nine out of ten times it doesn't look right either. Warhol and I were going to have an exchange. I was going to do his portrait and he was going to do mine. He started on mine and then you know what happened. He didn't get around to doing it. Anyway, he sort of worked that way where he took a lot of Polaroids. I had one with my hand against my cheek and he said, "Don't push so hard because that distorts. Just sort of relax." So you can tell that, see. Those things you look for. By the same token, with the stuff on it, the arm might hang down more because there's weight there. I try to

have somebody support it if I see it sagging down or if the head is going down too much. I can correct that when I put it back together, you know. I don't like a mold to be cut and dried when you're making it. John DeAndrea, he told me, and he showed me when he has some decisions he can make it all in one. The legs and arms, and the whole thing he makes one mold of. He slips it all out so they are done in half an hour. It's wonderful. Then there are no seams, just where he cuts them out a little bit. But then there's not this business of attaching, which I have to have. It just takes forever.

MS. KIRWIN: What happened to the portrait that you were going to do of Warhol?

MR. HANSON: Yes, and my friend, Dorothy Blough, down at Hokin Galleries, she talked to him every week practically and I said, "Well, next time you go up there tell him and let's get started on this." Then she got sick. She had an operation and this went on for two or three years. I was just getting interested again and then you know what happened [Warhol died]. So it just was unfortunate. I feel bad about it. But he had started. He showed me what he had done. They were on those acetates, you know. I don't know what it would take to finish them off. He had this assistant there, Rupert Smith. I think he did a lot of his screening. He maybe could run it off. I don't know. I met his mother. I didn't think of that to ask her. I met Rupert's mother a couple months ago.

MS. KIRWIN: Have you done other recognizable people, portrait commissions?

MR. HANSON: Well, recognizable, no. I've done myself, of course.

MS. KIRWIN: Would Warhol have been the first one then that you would have done?

MR. HANSON: Yes. I could still do it. I can model it and put the detail in and get a body type. I thought of doing it, going ahead with it but too many other things intervened. The latest thing is Bruce Helander, who has gallery in Palm Beach [Helander/Rubinstein], went to Moscow and spent four hours with the Minister of Culture. It's written up in the *Herald* today, and they want to show some Russian artists here and he said he would do that because they like to get sales. Every little bit helps, I guess, we're in such bad shape. They said they would like to show my work. But it's a matter of financing, and then another friend of mine is going over in September. There's a Minister of Culture that's official and then there's another one who is working—I don't know. Different things are developing there and people come and go, too. If they don't do the right thing they kick them out, I guess, and somebody else takes over. So, anyway, he knows some of the people so he's going to try to come over, too. It would be very exciting to do that. I'd be the first American sculptor to show in the Soviet Union. We'll see what happens. So, I mean I think I'm slowing down in my retirement age and still have to keep going.

MS. KIRWIN: How many do you make a year?

MR. HANSON: Well, I've been reading about all these artists in the back and how they complain, especially like Gainsborough. When I was a kid, I did that. That was one of the first things I did, [a carving of Gainsborough's] *Blue Boy*. That sort of probably was a seed to what I do now. My mother gave it to my cousin and kept it in the basement and then it fell apart. This is all carved out of a tree, just like the painting of the *Blue Boy* and painted flesh tones of the skin. He was holding a hat in his hand like the picture back there behind the chair. You know, it's freestanding. It's stiff and crude now, but for a kid of 13 years old—

MS. KIRWIN: It's very good.

MR. HANSON: All painted up, lifelike. What I thought was lifelike, anyway. Then when I went to art school, you don't do that anymore. You have to be abstract. You have to be like Picasso and Braque and those people. So then I felt like I was an idiot, you know. I wasn't modern enough to do that kind of stuff.

MS. KIRWIN: Has anyone ever reproduced a photo of that?

MR. HANSON: I'm going to fix it up. I'm going to keep this. This is the original. The reason I got it, I promised my cousin to restore it like it was. So I'm going to make a mold of it and paint it up and leave it like a relic, I think, because I kind of like it that way. Somebody has been trying to fill in the cracks there. I didn't do that. Some of the little buttons fell off. I made little buttons and they were sort of a spackling compound, and I remember I put in more of the folds of the garment and then it kind of fell off and cracked off. The hair was flowing down, brown hair. Anyway, that's how I started out. What were we talking about?

MS. KIRWIN: I was asking about how many pieces of sculpture do you make each year? '

MR. HANSON: I like to have three, four new ones every year. As I said before, or I meant to say, that I'm thinking of ways of speeding up the process because I just felt I was wasting a lot of time waiting for paint to dry, or waiting for the right model to come along. So now I have several molds sitting out there ready to fill and I haven't had time to do them. Then I've found some new materials where I can airbrush some of it and hand paint some of it. It moves a little faster. It's more interesting that way than when you stick with the same thing.

That's why I got away from the vinyl, which I never could really master. It's wonderful material but, I had some ideas how that can go faster, too, but I let it go until I get these bronze editions going and then I'll come back to it. I think I can perfect it now because I've been away from it. I still use some of it. I think that's the way to grow in this type of work I do. It's the same, but it's different material or different steps forward for what you can do. You can do things in metal that you can't do in something else and it's a challenge. You have to be constantly moving forward and challenge yourself onto greater efforts. For example, I did those five sculptures for Japan in about six months. That was unheard of. I never worked so hard and so fast in all my life. I had to have a deadline. They had to be out of here by the first part of May, picked it up, because it takes time to make the crates, takes time to ship them over, and all of that, all the logistics of that. I don't enjoy working like that with deadlines, but it really keeps you moving. You do, you know, if you have a show coming up. Last year, I had a show in Auckland at this time of year and that was the same thing there. We couldn't get enough work for the show so I said, "Oh, I'll make some extra ones." So I made these new *Tourists* and that was at the last minute. Then I threw in another piece. They said, "Oh, we'd like to buy something," so I threw in another one. I finished in a couple of weeks. I was going crazy. Then go over there with that long flight and go to all the openings and stuff and meet Her Worship, the Mayor, and Lord So and So or Sir. I mean they have all these titles, these fancy people.

MS. KIRWIN: It's hard to work in something that's a long process when you know what you want.

MR. HANSON: I've been giving a lot of talks in colleges and schools on that sort of thing. It cuts into my time. You have to have continuity. If you're doing something and you're off for a couple days and you come back, like I was gone a month in Japan traveling around over there. Then I come back and say, "Oh, where was I?" and "Look at this. Oh, that looks terrible. I got to do that over." I spent a lot of time just getting caught up. I'm ready to roll again now.

MS. KIRWIN: Do you keep pretty regular work hours at the studio?

MR. HANSON: Mornings are not too good for me. I'm a late riser. I'm usually here around 10:00. I don't do much before then. I'm more of a night person. I could work all night but that's not good to get in that habit because you get detached from the real world too much, I think. In the morning, I like to go out and shop. The traffic's not that bad. Then you feel pressure and you come back and do a little work. At night you really can't see the paint, either. You need some daylight to get the colors. Although I do some correcting by artificial light because chances are most galleries and museums use lighting. Sometimes there are no windows there—most of the times there aren't. So they have to look good by daylight and artificial light, and sometimes bad lighting like incandescent lighting in there, and sometimes it's fluorescent. You know, that's the worst lighting. It just flattens out everything and the colors are lousy. So you have to kind of compensate for that and realize that they might be seen in such a situation. Some artists just paint by artificial light because they say, "Well, that's what they're seen by, anyway," but I don't think you can get quite the - It depends on what you're painting. If you're doing flesh tones, you have to almost have daylight because the colors are so subtle. Like I notice, you're rather pale and more whites and pinks in your skin. Some are more brownish; some are more out in the sun; some are more yellowish.

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

[August 24, 1989]
MS. KIRWIN: Now, there was a question yesterday that had to do with your first show that you had in Germany. It was a very early show. It was before you were using polyester resins. What was that show like and how did that come about? This is when you were teaching in Germany very early. Can you remember that?

MR. HANSON: Oh, where did you find that?

MS. KIRWIN: Oh, it's in all your catalogues, all the chronologies of exhibitions.

MR. HANSON: That's not very important I don't think. I had a little show in Worpswede. That was a show of my more traditional works in the 1950s, stone carvings and clay. I remember that was a nice little show. Worpswede is this little village where Paula Becker-Modersohn [Paula Modersohn-Becker], remember her?

MS. KIRWIN: No.

MR. HANSON: That name ring a bell? She's very famous in Germany for all that sort of early German Expressionism after Cezanne's bowl of fruit and the portraits. Anyway, she was living in that city or village, and died very young of childbirth. The Germans still like her very much, I guess, because of her short life and then some of the tender things she did with her artwork. There was a great deal of interest in her career and then it was cut so short so there's this feeling of what might have been, I guess with her, more than anything. Anyway, I had this show there of earlier works in 1958 or '59.

MS. KIRWIN: Okay. I want you to respond a little bit about the way your works are exhibited in museums. They're often shown without platforms or labels. In the case of the Whitney show, *Rita, the Waitress* was placed in the cafeteria. How much control do you have over exhibition design and do you object to the way that your work's presented?

MR. HANSON: Often times I do, but in the Whitney situation you figure they know what they're doing. But I found out you have to be very strong to make your will known and when it comes right down to it, I don't like to make a big issue of it unless it's horribly out of place because there are egos involved in the museums, curators and people that work like that. They spend a lot of time and you come along and say, "Oh, move that over there. That looks terrible there, "and you make enemies that way. So you have to be very careful of how you handle it, which I try to do. By and large it wasn't that bad. Canaday wrote in the—what did he write for?—he wrote in some magazine. I can't think of it now. He wrote that he objected to their putting the waitress down by the cafeteria. That was not my idea and I didn't object to it because I knew why they did it. Because people will go in the museum and have lunch and then leave or they won't pay the extra money to go upstairs, or there'll be all these different floors and they may not go up there. Anyway, to sort of be an invitation, an introduction to the show. I didn't mind it that much, but he objected to it that it was too much of a display of theatricality or whatnot.

MS. KIRWIN: In a way your work makes me think not so much of pop and realism, but of happenings. That is, the way your work is placed in situations where it becomes a very active audience participation kind of experience.

MR. HANSON: Yes, I like that. There's immediate reaction to that. So in a case like that waitress and the museum guard, come to think of it, there is an environment already created for that sculpture. I guess it gets confusing to people and we shouldn't have too much of that. They get embarrassed and confused. Isn't that what art is supposed to be about? That sort of thing used to bother me. People laugh and joke, they came up and talked to them, but I thought, "Well, this is a way of dealing with the work, you know." At least there's a reaction and there's interaction because most exhibits you walk in the room and you know that sculpture sits on a base; you know that's a painting, it's hanging there on the wall and so it's all in a sort of "ho-hum" situation. But it breaks the barrier and a little of that illusion enters in.

MS. KIRWIN: It's part of the way people react to the work.

MR. HANSON: It's an interesting psychological part of it.

MS. KIRWIN: I think it was in *Art in America* I saw a notice under "Hanson Mania." There was a little article about (this was in 1978) the record crowds at the Whitney. On one top day, more than 5,000 people came to see the exhibition. On an average day there were more than 2,000 visitors to the show at the Whitney. You do seem to draw record crowds wherever you have an exhibition in a museum. We've talked about this in a couple of different ways, but why do you think that your work has such broad appeal? Why do you think you bring in the crowds?

MR. HANSON: Well, it sort of works out that way. People are attracted and I'm always amazed and I always think that wherever I have a show that it won't happen again, but it does happen. In New Zealand, and Japan, and wherever I show, it's the same thing. You think it would be a different response in every country or city or whatever. Especially in New York, I was very pleased because they're so—

MS. KIRWIN: Tough audience.

MR. HANSON: They're so sophisticated and they can be so distant and difficult. I think it's just that people enjoy seeing a sort of reflection of their society. The human form is so close to all of us and we don't really get a chance to analyze it, to look at it because of taboos and staring at people. It's rude and it upsets people. So in this case people look at the work and recognize maybe somebody they know, somebody in their family, somebody they used to know, and then I do all types. I do older people and younger people, and sporty types. I'm trying to cover the old societies, many different types that exist.

MS. KIRWIN: Your work in the 1970s seemed to have concentrated on lower middle class America. Then you've broadened your subjects?

MR. HANSON: I've broadened out to doing more younger types now, more sporty types.

MS. KIRWIN: Like the *Jogger*?

MR. HANSON: Yes, because a lot of them will be bronze editions and to expose more of the flesh areas that way. They're a little easier to work with, younger people than older people, of course. So I may expand that into more affluent types eventually, but I really like the people that have to work with their hands, do the grubby jobs, because there's an expressionist in me, and that's really what I am basically, I think, an expressionist. One of my

favorites, and one of the favorites of my wife, is that artist leaning against a plaster spattered step ladder and he's got plaster on his pants, and resins, and he has an old pair of pants patched up with tape, and his shoes are all broken out. It's sort of like when I'm working with the materials. You don't bother to wash them anymore because it's useless. The stuff drips on you all the time, on the shirt, on his arms, a little on the face. I did a painter that way, too. I spilled paint all over him to get color in, to get evidence that this guy really has been working hard and throwing paint around. It's fascinating.

MS. KIRWIN: So in a lot of ways it's a reflection of your own position as a working artist. You identify with these working types yourself.

MR. HANSON: Yes, because I think these people are really—we were talking about Pete Rose as a hero in baseball; there are a lot of heroes in society. How about the guy who risks his life repairing power lines, electric lines? I see these guys climbing up. Would you want to do that?

MS. KIRWIN: No.

MR. HANSON: Make a mistake and all this power goes through you and that's it. Like in New York these guys who wash windows. They're way up there. I don't know, you can hardly see them. I mean that to me is something and nobody ever—well, maybe they write about them, but there's so many here. And policemen that go around and they have to break up fights and go after drug dealers and might be shot at and killed anytime. And firemen. You don't know what you get into when a fire breaks out. There might be some explosive in there, some toxic material. One whiff and you're out. So many people in our society we take for granted that really hold the fabric of the country together. People in the army. They sit around for years and all of a sudden they have to go fight in some little island in the Caribbean. I mean, it's life threatening. Even a girl or a lady who works in an office downtown and has to buck all that traffic, has to feed her kids in the morning and go to work and sit there in that traffic and they're building all around and a truck could come by and roll right over you. I think that takes a great deal of stamina to really exist in our society. There are so many types like that. It's not always these people on TV that do outrageous things and get known for it.

MS. KIRWIN: Well, also mixed with this is—in your figures—a kind of sadness, an emptiness, desolation, alienation. Is that working against or you see that as a dual theme in your work?

MR. HANSON: Well, with all the problems when I look down the future and I look back—

[Telephone rings. Audio break.]

MS. KIRWIN: Is your wife Scandinavian?

MR. HANSON: Yes, born in Denmark. Her aunt was a doctor and this was in her consultation room and when she passed on I got it.

MS. KIRWIN: Okay. Where were we before the phone call?

MR. HANSON: We were saying something important there. What was it?

MS. KIRWIN: Well, I had asked the question about this sadness in your figures.

MR. HANSON: I mean looking back, you're not that old and you know looking back ten years and I look back many more years than that, and you see tremendous changes. Like my 97 year old aunt, I asked her what it was like to see the first car at the turn of the century and she said it was a little red car. There weren't hardly any roads, just little trails. It was a red car and you could hear it coming five miles away going putt, putt, putt, putt, putt. Then just think of, in her lifetime, then there came radio and then there came television and then cars all over. Of course, that's a long life, but even our shorter lives, we look back and I remember when I saw my first television set. Hardly anybody had them, now everybody's got them. Then they were all black and white. Then a few years ago, nobody had color TV. Now everybody's got it. They used to be little ones and now there are big ones, and they come out with better models all the time. That's just the technology, of course. Then you look at the environment and you know what that was like. When I was a kid, we could go out and pick these little strawberries in the woods in Minnesota. I don't think you'd find any anymore. Here, in Florida, I noticed when we moved in that house next door in 1973 in the winter they would have these little colored birds that would come, and I have a bird feeder, a little place where they come and sit, these buntings. I think they're called colored buntings or something. They had red breasts and little green wings. I haven't seen them now for about ten years. I don't see any birds around here anymore that migrate through. Just the blue jays and they're just here all the time. And you say, "Well, so what. You can live without them," but as years go on, you can tell something's wrong. It's such a joy to see a little bird like that and there were other kinds. There was another kind of bird, a blackbird, that my neighbor said was very rare, and it had kind of a rounded-off beak. I don't see them anymore, and a lot of other little tiny birds used to creep all over the orange trees. They're not here. It tells

something about their inability to migrate, I guess. That's going to show up sooner or later. Then in the Everglades these birds, the storks and the ibises, they're all dying out. So when you think back even a few years how it was, you can imagine what it's going to be ten years from now. You know, in Africa, rhinoceroses are dying out and the elephants are being killed off, and it's like that all over the world. Those little animals down in Madagascar with the funny tails. They don't have any place to live anymore because they cut down all the trees. That's the sad part of it. That's just the environment. Then there are other problems: population and all that.

MS. KIRWIN: So these issues weigh heavily on your figures?

MR. HANSON: Pardon?

MS. KIRWIN: These issues about ecology change, climate.

MR. HANSON: I mean, we don't talk about it, but we know it's there. Every day on television there's something, or in the paper little by little. I have the tendency to turn off and I think everybody says, "Oh, I don't want to hear about that anymore," but it's there and it's in our mind. We can be happy but we still have to think of our children and future years. What's going to happen to this planet if we don't wake up? So I guess that's some of it. That comes intuitively, you know. I just don't try to stress it and make it more than it is because it's a heavy burden for us all. So much of the world just goes on like nothing is ever going to end. It's always going to be like it is today.

MS. KIRWIN: How important are the museum shows to you? You mentioned yesterday you had five museum shows this year. As opposed to just having good gallery representation in New York, how important is it for your continuing career and reputation to have these museum shows?

MR. HANSON: Well, a gallery is a very short duration. A gallery show is important to keep the collectors informed what you're doing, and I need to have a New York show. I had one in 1984 and now it's 1989. He gets after me all the time, but I can't do everything. I can't have six museum shows in a year and do that. Maybe next year I can have that. And it's important to keep your work before the public so that they know that the art world is not just kind of a monolithic structure. I think the art world even today stresses the abstract and the modernistic. We're supposed to be in postmodern, but I think there's a great deal of reaction with this modernism. I have nothing against modernism in that I don't think any form of art should dominate anymore like it did in the 1950s. If you were an Abstract Expressionist, you did all right; if you weren't, you were nothing. It went into sculpture and graphics and everything else. Now it's more of a variety, all types of art, as long as it's quality. Perhaps there is a little bit too much of an emphasis on innovation, I think, and avant-garde. I don't know if that really exists anymore, but the artist does have to have some new way of saying what he wants to say, other than what has been done. That's always a problem. But I think that realism has been a bit shunned and pushed aside, and still is. So that's one of the reasons I do it, that realism can attract the public and be good art and be exciting and interesting. You see, when I was trying to be an artist in the 1950s, the public just was turned off with art. I think they hated modern art. They hated the stuff going on. Very few went to museums and the artists said, "Well, the public's too dumb, too stupid. They're not enlightened or they don't have the sensitivity to understand what we're doing?" What is that, anyway? I don't believe in that. I think there are a lot of people who don't have the sensitivity of really getting to understand, but there are so many that are. Maybe getting exposed to it they will get excited. I thought, wouldn't it be wonderful if you could come up with an art form which would attract a lot of people, which would be good art. I mean, I just thought of it. I never thought I'd come across anything like that, where people would just love to come in and look at it, enjoy it and have a good time and then get the message. But in those days, no, you couldn't have subject matter. No, you couldn't have a message. It had to be the high, holy temple of art. You know, art for art's sake. These colors spoke for themselves, these forms, and that was a wonderful thing, too. I have nothing against that, but it comes a time where that isn't really enough anymore.

MS. KIRWIN: You mentioned an artist needs to change or think of new ways of saying—

MR. HANSON: Evolve.

MS. KIRWIN: You have evolved in your career. You've developed greater finesse in using materials. Do you ever feel, since you're so well known for these cast figures, do you ever feel trapped by what you do? Do you ever long to do something completely different?

MR. HANSON: Not really. I like what I'm doing a lot and I've even tested myself; if I can model them without making the molds for the body, and I can do that, but it just takes longer and who cares. It's the end result that's important. Once in a while I would like to just maybe be like a painter and just let everything go. I have three canvases stretched back there and I have in my mind painted several paintings on those. They're about 5'X4' or maybe a little larger, and I'm going to paint those canvases sooner or later. I have the idea of doing some of my earlier work where I haven't been able to keep and to get back and make sort of a historical record of what I did in the early days, but in a two-dimensional way. The first one I probably will do is the derelicts; derelicts

sprawled out on the ground. I could do a whole series of those and then of the homeless, so much on everybody's mind that problem. I like what I'm doing very much and I see enough what I haven't done. I see a lot of things I want to do that I haven't covered yet, and I also see that I could maybe loosen up a little bit and be more expressive in some of them. I think that's maybe the way I'm going. It's fascinating. I don't want to get too much off the track because a lot of artists do that and people say, "Who did that? Oh, he did that? I can't believe it." I think there should be sort of a trademark: that's Warhol and that's Lichtenstein and that's Oldenburg. I think that's wonderful. Then they confuse you like that and I know the artists like to test their skills and branch out, but I like to have a career that sort of pulls together what you do.

MS. KIRWIN: Continuity. There's a lot of continuity in your work. How has bronze changed your work?

MR. HANSON: Bronze hasn't changed me that much. I try to do the same thing color-wise and with hair.

MS. KIRWIN: Is the surface any different? Can you tell?

MR. HANSON: You can hardly tell. They might be a little shinier, but we can dull them down. Of course, being metal you would think you couldn't get the skin tones, but we can get pretty good skin tone. It's nothing like the vinyl where the light enters into it and gets very fleshy, but you can lose vinyl by putting too much paint on it, too. So it wouldn't make any difference if it's vinyl or bronze or hard plastic. The idea is to get the light to reflect out. So they're painted with a light color base and then not too much paint on top of it so the light enters into the surface and is thrown out and you get more of a fleshy tone. We poke in real hairs and we put in eyes and real clothing. You see, that adds to the illusion so much.

MS. KIRWIN: Do you paint everything? Do you have a nude figure and then paint the entire body and then clothe it?

MR. HANSON: Right. When I started out I just sort of worried about the areas that were showing. I had a very hard plastic and it was so hard to finish off and always in a hurry. In New York, always in a hurry. I'm still in a hurry. I really didn't do too good a job underneath the clothing, but the last ten years I have. If we have a schedule for a show we don't quite detail it as much, but there's good flesh tone, there's good body detail under them now.

MS. KIRWIN: Not exactly like a John DeAndrea underneath the clothing, but it is painted.

MR. HANSON: Not quite but almost. You know, you see the one I'm working on out there, tremendous detail under it. They don't model in the nude for me. They have their underwear on and it's not a matter of—well, it is. If you get older people, the prudish part does enter in, but that's not as important as getting support for your waistline and the lady's breast that she has a bra on. That shows, true. That's really the gist of it.

MS. KIRWIN: When you're working on these figures I would imagine you get very close to them. Do you invent personalities for some of your figures? When you think about the *Tourists*, do you, in your mind, invent something larger than who these people actually were? Do you imagine a character when you're doing it?

MR. HANSON: With the *Tourists*, yes, because I think tourists are a bit outlandish. When they get out of their home territory, they behave differently, some of them. I mean, I try not to be obnoxious and to be the ugly American when traveling around, but in appearances, the last tourist couple was inspired from a trip to Hawaii, Maui and there's a town called—what's the name of it?—it will come to me. There's a town there near the hotel and they sell all these shirts. This one I'm wearing, I got this summer in Bali, but two or three summers ago in—they all go into town and buy shorts and then flowered shirts and that sort of stuff. So that's what I put on the man. The lady who modeled had—what has she got? Pink pants on and stripes going around her. She's a big lady so it makes her really look - But that's what she wore and that's what I liked. I put a little cap on her and the shades. So that's how people go around and it's funny and still interesting and beautiful. I mean, I just love it. Everybody's running around in their shorts and having a good time.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you actually buy the clothes when you were in Hawaii for that work?

MR. HANSON: No. Those were bought in K-Mart. I buy a lot of clothing, a lot of shirts and I say, "Well, that doesn't go with that." My closet is full of clothes here and I don't bother to bring them back because I'm too lazy. I just like to have some options.

MS. KIRWIN: Do you buy props when you're working on a piece?

MR. HANSON: Yes, I have to get props. Like I have to get a radio for this security guard. The most important things that I have to start out with for a standing figure is the shoes because the heel has to be just right or he falls over. It's a balancing act.

MS. KIRWIN: If you were going to have a lady in high heels, do you have to get the arch in the foot?

MR. HANSON: I did that of my wife when she was a Playboy Bunny when we got married and she had her costume. One of my early things, and it's not in the book because it's just sort of a whimsical piece. Then she had these beautiful high-heeled shoes and I made a round base for it. But that's about the only time. Oh, I made two bases, and then I did the girl standing on one leg, a baton twirler. I put that on a round base, too, but that's all that arrested action, which I don't do anymore. These are all kind of quiet, contemplative figures that I do now. They're much more convincing. But props are very important, and if the figure is doing something, is holding something, it shows that he or she is anticipating some kind of action. Like the tourists have their cameras hung around their necks and the camera bag in one case, and they're looking up. They're looking at something and they're about to maybe take a picture. You can figure out what they might do next, but for that moment they're looking there. People can look and stand for a long time, or lean against the wall, read a magazine, hold a magazine like in airports, newspapers. This man here, the next one, will hold a radio, walkie-talkie, whatever. He's just standing around being bored. I mean imagine being a security guard or a bank guard. People come in and out and you have to look, look, look, and you get tired of looking. Once you see something, you talk into that. People sitting at the table reading a paper or having some ice cream, or workers with a tool, holding a tool, having a lunch, having something near them, leaning on a hand cart, sitting on a hand cart, holding a Coke, holding a drink of some kind. That sort of adds to that these people are alive and that they just—

MS. KIRWIN: When you have your figures in exhibition, do you arrange them? Say you have a show at OK Harris or something like that, do the figures interact with one another? I know the show you just did in Japan you said they are in a situation where they work together. Do you conceive of placing your figures in such a way that there is an interaction between them? There might be a natural inclination for an audience to perceive them that way.

MR. HANSON: That's a good question.

MS. KIRWIN: If they thought they were real, coming into a room, seeing these figures you would invent connections among the different groups.

MR. HANSON: Well, there's the connection with the one we were talking about with the man and the scaffold and the show in Japan, in that they're all carpenters or working on a construction site. But I have stayed away from too much interaction, looking at one another or direct association. You know the *Tourists* are man and wife. They're sort of individuals, but they still go together, that sort of thing. That's worked out. I guess, come to think of it, you brought up an interesting point. Being it takes so long to do each one, I've zeroed on individual types, individuals per se, and then if there are similar types you can put them together and there still is some relationship; but it's not that eye contact one with another. It might be interesting to do that. Then those two are linked together more. I should do that sometime, yes.

MS. KIRWIN: Do you ever take parts from different figures and make a composite? Did you ever find somebody's arm was better with a particular head or something like that?

MR. HANSON: Well, yes. I remember one security guard I did years ago and his hands didn't look right and so I tried to get another man, and his fingers were so short. It's that little man there I still have and I've never used it. Just the way he was holding his hand together, I believe, and it slipped or something. I didn't think they worked. They were his own hands, but they didn't seem to go with his body somehow. I said, "What am I going to do? I can have him come back and do it over," but then I think by that time he moved away or something and so I had a neighbor across the street, her brother, I asked if I could take a mold from his hands. I used those and they worked pretty good. Not too often, but once in a while. Then I have put heads, a head I've had and put it on another body, but that's very tricky to do that because it can work and it can work against you because all our body parts are meant to go with our particular bone structure and musculature. I try not to do that anymore, but if I get hard up for a particular type I have done it.

MS. KIRWIN: How much do you alter the model's features and how often does that occur?

MR. HANSON: Well, in the earlier days I changed them. I didn't think they looked like the original at all and that was partly because I was thinking of something other than what they portrayed in life. Like I did my neighbor, Larry Toby, down the street here. It doesn't look like him at all. This was over 10, 12 years ago, 15 years ago. He's kind of a tall man so I made this guy shorter and I put a big stomach on him, which he didn't have, and I changed it around pretty much. Now I don't do that. I try to get the model to kind of portray what I have in my mind to begin with so I don't have to do that. I just had this feeling it would look better if he had kind of a big paunch on him. You see, when taking a mold off the body, especially the face, especially the noses shrink up. So I always add there. The material sort of shrinks on each excessive coat you put in, so I always build up the noses. Years back I didn't do that. Or the chin didn't quite fill out, I'd fill in there. The one I just worked on last month for the airport, or this month, too, the forms I didn't like. It was partly maybe the way the—well, this

particular model didn't seem to have - he had a big body but his face was very thin and sort of not puffy, or not filled out like his body was. So I made the face to go with the body and I don't know. It still sort of looks like him, you know, but I really changed it a lot. That's the thing I do now. I'm very careful that hands go with the body and the feet because you can see that immediately if it doesn't kind of all work. Sometimes I don't have to change much.

MS. KIRWIN: How long have you lived in Florida? 16 years?

MR. HANSON: Yes. I came down here in 1965 to teach at that junior college, Miami-Dade. I was there four years, 1965-1969.

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2]

MR. HANSON: So in 1973 we moved into the house next door, and now it's 1989. So it's 16 years the second time around.

MS. KIRWIN: I wanted to ask you how much living in Florida comes through in your work? Are there particular types other than the *Tourists*?

MR. HANSON: That's a good question, too. I guess quite a bit because I live here, but still I try to make sort of universal statements so it won't just look like Florida, everything I do. It could be California, too. The whole south is pretty much that way. Also, up north during the summers people wear Hawaiian shirts in New York and all over, Chicago, I guess. Summer is summer and we have longer summers here. I don't do too many winter times because I can't get the clothing here. It would be fun to do a bundled up person.

MS. KIRWIN: Want me to send you a down coat?

MR. HANSON: Yes, a down coat, really puffed out. These big ladies and big men that wear them, they just look like a tent.

MS. KIRWIN: They look like they're wearing a sleeping bag. They are wearing a sleeping bag.

MR. HANSON: I want to do one of those someday.

MS. KIRWIN: Those are funny.

MR. HANSON: You know, as an artist you want to show the human form a little bit. All covered up with mittens and coats and everything else, with this little round face sticking out on top. See, that's what I mean. There's so much to do. I think I've covered a lot, but then I haven't done this one, I haven't done that one. There's a lot out there. It's frustrating because I work so slowly.

MS. KIRWIN: I wanted to ask you about collectors a little bit. The people who have supported your work for a long time, and we talked about it a little bit at lunch yesterday. If you could mention a couple of the people who have purchased a number of your works in this country and abroad? How do you feel about your pieces leaving this country or going into collections and not being as available to tour in an exhibition?

MR. HANSON: Yes, that's another good question. I like to have some of the most important work, what I think are some of the most important works, to be in this country because I think my work is very American and it belongs here. However, like the *Tourists* wound up in Edinburgh and that's why I made a different version of that. That has bothered me somewhat. The one collector that has been very helpful and very supportive does have some work in this country and some in France. So that's all right because it's nice to have some work abroad.

MS. KIRWIN: Who is that collector?

MR. HANSON: That's Daniel Templon. Then, of course, another one who has a lot of my work is Fred Wiseman in Los Angeles, Hollywood.

MS. KIRWIN: Is your work in a lot of corporate collections? Is your work bought by curators for corporate collections or foundations?

MR. HANSON: Corporate collections. Yes, that has picked up because as the prices go up, it cuts out a lot of collectors that just want to spend so much. So a lot of corporations have art collections now as an investment or their leaders like to invest in art or they like to have art and so they have been buying. So that's sort of evolved into that. Probably will see more of that in the future, I hope. They put them on display in their headquarters or whatever, so a lot of people will see them.

MS. KIRWIN: You mentioned yesterday that you had cancer. How, other than taking precautions with the

materials, do you think that your work has changed in any way as a result of your illness?

MR. HANSON: Actually, that disease didn't bother me that much. I never felt sick. I was taking treatments in New York.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you get the chemotherapy?

MR. HANSON: First, I got radiology treatments and we were living, like I said yesterday, on Bleecker Street and I would walk up to—where did I go?—Beth Israel for treatments. I'd walk up to 14th street and I think it's about six blocks beyond there, 21st, whatever. I walked all that way up there and back and I felt fine. I kept working. I'd go up there in the morning and they'd put me under this, oh it was terrifying, this big machine and you don't know if you're going to make it. It was cancer of the lymph gland, and at that time it was stage one. I had a biopsy on my jaw. My wife saw this bump on my jaw here, side of my face. I think it was this side, the right side, and she said, "You better have that looked at," and I said, "Oh, it's nothing." She kept after me and the doctor said, "Oh, we don't know. We have to cut into it and biopsy it." Then they found another one under my arm and they cut into that, too, and that was it. It's frightening to know something's malignant that you can't do anything about, and taking over your body. In about a few months they had dried up and disappeared and then I kept working. These doctors, they never tell you what's going to happen to you, and the hair started to fall out in back a little bit.

MS. KIRWIN: Were these radiation treatments?

MR. HANSON: Yes, and I had a very sore throat. That's all I can remember. But I worked every day and I didn't even think about it. Then I went to Europe and then when I came back they said, "It's stage two now, it's gone down," the growing area. So then my wife called around and she said, "I don't think these cobalt treatments are going to be the right thing." So she called Dr. Distanfeld in New York who is an expert on chemotherapy and he suggested a guy—we were coming back to Florida—he suggested a Dr. Arnold Berliner. I still go to him for treatments, and he gave me the chemotherapy treatments and the tumors disappeared in three or four weeks and they never came back. They both were amazed because you never know about this disease situation. They always look at me as one of those who survived. But I mean I never talk about it. Like in the newspapers, I was surprised to see that they had even mentioned it because I don't even think about it. I had almost forgotten about it. It upsets my family, though, when they read about it because it brings back all that trauma and the worry that they had. And as time goes on, things get better in that respect with treatments. So I guess I'm very fortunate and I count my blessings every day. That's why, you know, my career started so late and I feel behind schedule. You see guys getting famous and going all over the world and showing things at 25, 30 years old. I never had that.

MS. KIRWIN: Well, it is odd that, say, this piece that was in the paper yesterday, that they paired your cancer with materials you're using. That comes up again and again.

MR. HANSON: I know. I never talk about that, either, because you can't prove it. I might have gotten it anyway. I think I had a very stressful time when I got divorced. I blame it more on that. My wife disappeared one day with the children and I never saw them again for about ten years. I've never really mentioned that to anybody before, but I think it was very hard on me because I felt she had no right to do that because I treated her with the utmost respect. She had a great talent, but she had a very vindictive quality about her. I think she felt she could have had a big career and I didn't help her enough, but I did. We went to Europe. She sang in the Opera House there. Her career didn't pan out and she had to take it out on somebody and that was me. That hurt me more than anything. I think a lot of disease is caused by stress where you feel that the world is closing in on you and there's no option. I had to go through that period.

MS. KIRWIN: Could you mention, about this recent development of maybe showing in Russia? That's very exciting.

MR. HANSON: Well, that's pure speculation and, again, that's like my disease. I'm dealing with it and I don't think about it because all these things that happened to me in the last ten years or so have come about out of the blue, things that you never plan on. I never thought I'd ever get to show in the Whitney. In fact, I wouldn't even go in there for years because they never would show any Realists. I have wonderful Realist friends and they don't even give them the time. I said, "I'm not going to that damn place again," and then they called up one day and they were going to have a show there. That's how it works and it's very exciting. So if it happens, it happens. I have a lot of friends who are influential and this friend of mine, Lou Pollock, is going over there first of September. He knows a lot of the important people. He's going to suggest it again. I have Senator Metzenbaum. He contacted the Soviet embassy and has put in a good word and it's coming from all directions so it's very hopeful. It would be a wonderful thing to do.

MS. KIRWIN: Well, they just had a heavy metal rock concert in Russia, so I guess they're—And a panel from the Smithsonian went to Russia to discuss cultural exchange. There was someone from our building who was

involved with it and said there was a lot of opportunity for exchange between the two countries. So maybe this will happen.

MR. HANSON: I think it's one of the best things that have come out as a result of the Glasnost. The only problem is that they don't want to spend any money on it because they can't afford to let any of their hard currency be wasted on stuff like that when people don't have enough to eat. But hopefully I think they're seeing that this is a way to boost their image as a great nation, as surely they need. I know in Germany after the war, one of the first things when people had nothing, and I lived there when we came in 1953 and it was still kind of a very gray area. I remember the people dressing very shabbily. They just didn't have any work. Nobody could afford cars in 1953 in Germany so they went around on bicycles and motorcycles. Nothing like today. And Japan the same way. What they did after the war when there weren't enough places to live - a lot of refugees from the east, you know—people had to take in strangers in their apartment, double up. By 1953 it wasn't that bad anymore, but right after the war they said they hardly had heat and they had to go to the library. They went to concerts to warm up. The culturists kept the country alive. The concerts and art shows and all this stuff, theater, people flocked in there just to keep warm and to do something to keep them busy. Then they got used to doing that, see, and there are opera houses all over Germany and art galleries all over subsidized by the State, by the city. The federal government subsidizes exchange, German Exchange Service in Berlin, still going on, and that sort of thing, which would be good for them. It distracts people from realities of life when you go to the Bolshoi. They have a wonderful ballet company and opera company there. Anyway, let's see what happens.

MS. KIRWIN: Is there anything else you'd like to say? I've finished all my questions.

MR. HANSON: Well, yesterday I kind of meandered around. I don't know if you made sense of it. When you think of something, that sort of ignites something else. I guess that's all right, too, when it's spontaneous. Well, I appreciate your coming by.

MS. KIRWIN: Thank you very much.

MR. HANSON: You asked some very good questions. I feel I'm just getting warmed up, though.

MS. KIRWIN: Well, I'll come back then.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Last updated...June 11, 2009