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Oral history interview with Alden Mason,  
1984 Jan. 13-Feb. 21

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Alden Mason on January 13 & February 21, 1984. The interview took place in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Lamar Harrington for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Interview

JANUARY 13, 1984

[Tape 1]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Alden, we're sitting here in your condominium in the Pike Place Market and I'm hoping that we can go through quite a bit of your career today. It would probably be a good idea to start from the very beginning and do a chronological kind of interview. You were born in Everett in 1919. Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: That's right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And how about your family? Mother, father, grandparents?-- people who meant a lot to you. What did all of those people do?

ALDEN MASON: Well, my father died when I was five years old. He, indirectly maybe, had something to do with everything that I'm doing because he was a housepainter. He did the false wood grain on doors and fake bricks on fireplaces?-- I don't know what you call someone that does that?-- but he did all this kind of finish copying sort of fine painting \_\_\_\_\_ on houses and so on. But when I was five years old, he got lead poisoning, apparently from mixing up gallons of house paint using white lead. They thought he had tuberculosis, which he also probably had, but that wasn't the real cause. So the doctor said, "Well, the only thing to do is to send him to Arizona." And so my mother took myself and we went to Arizona for almost a year, I guess. Of course it didn't do any good, because they later on found he had had lead poisoning actually. So we returned after about one year back to Mount Vernon [Washington--Ed.] and he died just about that time. And he laid the heaviest trip on a five-year-old child that could be possibly be made, because when he was dying he wanted to see me, and so my mother brought me in to him and he said, "Now Alden, you have to take care of your mother for the rest of your life." (chuckles) You know, what does a five-year-old boy do when you hear something like that? And I guess the strangest part is, my mother will be 90 on her next birthday and I'm still going up there every time she calls, trying to take care of all these terrible problems. When I'm a hundred she'll still be probably calling. (laughs) Anyway, it's very nice, but it's

[break in tape]

ALDEN MASON: Well, I think so! If I remember, yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And he was a painter, probably taking much the same courses that you were?

ALDEN MASON: I don't know. I don't really remember too many people. Marie Brown was there and so I remember her. Actually, I was ahead of myself was one of the problems. I started school when I was five and I skipped the second grade, because I read very precociously. I was reading everything from Shakespeare to whatever when I was just in, probably the third grade. So they had me skip the second grade because I could read everything, and it was just dumb sitting there. But I wasn't very good at math, and so when you skip the second grade you suddenly went into class where they were doing fractions and all this stuff, and I got really swamped. But anyway, physically I kept growing. I didn't reach my full height until I was probably 21 or so. I mean, most people develop and they're full grown at 16 or something, and I was probably was full grown at 21.

[Tape 2 -- 45 minutes]

ALDEN MASON: I guess what I'm trying to say, I was always smaller than everybody else in the beginning and then later on I was always younger than everybody else, and so I was always very shy and introverted, I suppose, in many ways. I didn't have that many friends and things because I went back to the farm every weekend, and I really didn't make that many friends.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay, let's talk about Fred Anderson a little bit. Did you both start about the same time, do you remember?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What do you remember about Fred? You've been close friends, haven't you always?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, we've gone to Mexico and Central America together, gone on trips together. We used to go fishing once in a while. We don't any more, but we used to. I remember the things that he did [in school], all those very small paintings with figures and images that I always thought were very charming and fascinating, and his surreal overtones that were kind of wonderful. I always enjoyed what he did. Then when we started teaching; we shared an office for our whole teaching life of thirty years, I guess. So, it was a kind of interesting playoff. He always liked these small, intimate things, and I was always trying to do something broad and grand. (chuckles) And later on, when I took him for the first time to Mexico, it was interesting because I'd be looking at all these birds and all these things, and he'd be looking at the small, minute things, little matchbooks that had little paintings on them, and all kinds of small, minute details of things.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Doesn't Fred Anderson have a fantastic sense of humor?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, and he tells stories beautifully. You can sit and listen to him for hours. He reads everything and all the time. And he remembers; whereas I don't remember much that I read, he remembers everything he reads. He read *The Blue Nile* or something and tells you all these fantastic stories for hours on end. Also his personal stories, his problems at home. He should write a book or something, because it's so wonderful how he can carry on that sort of thing.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: He's very low key, isn't he?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, well, his one flaw, I suppose, if there is one, as he said to me once?-- I said, "You should enter this show or do this," and he said, "Well, if I never enter a show, I can never get rejected." And I said, "Well, that's true, Fred, but you need to. You never get rejected but you never get accepted either!" (laughs) They [offered him a] promotion or something and I'd had him enter?-- in fact I sort of coerced him into entering?-- I think it was two, three national drawing shows and some other show, because he needed this for your record and so on, to continue teaching. And he won a prize in one of them and got in both the other shows, which is very difficult, you know. I got thrown out of both shows, I think. But then after I sort of pushed him to do this, he never entered any more. So he has a marvelous talent, which probably never got pushed enough.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It seemed to me he was always a humble self-effacing kind of person.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You know, I think we're all pretty much divided into competitive and noncompetitive people?-- it's probably too simple to divide us like that?-- but he didn't seem to be a competitive person in any way.

ALDEN MASON: Or if he was it never showed, at any rate.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yeah, right. Also, I wanted to ask you, did you ever work seriously in any other media when you were in school? Probably, because of the curriculum, you had to take certain things, but was it almost always drawing and painting that you were mostly interested in?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. I never did anything else. I took printmaking class, and we did some serigraphs. I could never get the edges to meet and I didn't like the mechanical involvement. I took a class in sculpture and a class in ceramics and all things that other people do, but I didn't do anything else really.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: As far as the philosophy of teaching in the School of Art, there was Isaacs, and he had been from Columbia, was he?

ALDEN MASON: I think so.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I did an interview with Ruth Penington just recently, and she introduced me to something that I hadn't really looked into much before, and that was Arthur Dow and Ernest Fenollosa, and I wondered, do you remember? Isaacs would have been influenced somewhat by their philosophy.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And certain other people on the faculty too, who had studied at Columbia or for some reason or another had gotten involved. Dow's book on composition was so big at that time and went all over the United States.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Do you remember very much in your study of learning about either one of those, or both

of those people?

ALDEN MASON: I remember looking at the book, briefly, but I don't really... It was fairly formalist and I guess I wasn't really too interested in it myself. Other than that, no, I really couldn't say. The school itself, of course, was, because of Isaacs's interest in French painting and that sort of tradition, there was a lot of formal?-- What am I trying to say? The push was toward a lot of formalist kind of training in a way, and yet at the same time, within that there was a lot of freedom to paint, too. But certainly the people you talked about were Cezanne and Leger and people of that kind: the School of Paris sort of thing. I suppose at the same time you had people in Seattle like Tobey and Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, who were probably moving in a little different direction, into the supposed Northwest School, who had a more mystical approach to what they were trying to with painting. There was always this kind of separation, a little bit, I suppose, the School of Art from [that] group of people.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, let's get around to the time when you started to teach. You were a student, you got your B.A., and you got your M.F.A., from the University of Washington. And I think you also were an instructor for a little while there.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, I was what they called a T.A. [teaching assistant--Ed.]. You did part-time teaching for a little bit. I taught a watercolor class for the architects, is the first thing I think I taught, and a design class. The architects at that time used to take a watercolor class at the School of Art. It was a sort of a service course in a way.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And in 1949, I have on your chronology that you were made an instructor at the University of Washington. Did you ever think about going some other place to teach.

ALDEN MASON: No, not to teach, but I had this idea that I wanted to go to New York and be a painter. (chuckles) I was seriously thinking about doing so. There was a problem, the same old problem. I mean your parents are up there and they didn't want you to go, of course. And I didn't have a lot of money. But I was certainly thinking about going. That's what I wanted to do. And then I was offered this full-time teaching job at the university, and, you know, my family, in other words, how can you turn something like that down. I mean, that's what everybody wants! So I kept debating about it and finally I said, "Well, this is such a good opportunity that I'd better do it. You can always go to New York." Of course I didn't go to New York, I mean, to work there at all, until a long, long time later.

[Break in taping]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: About teaching?-- Ruth Penington talks some about certain teaching methods, you know, where you draw from a plaster figure and I know that you had those figures at the School of Art, because I see them up on the third floor, or wherever that was.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, we did. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What about your teaching philosophies, maybe in the early days, or later, or whatever you want to say about them.

ALDEN MASON: Well, in the beginning, of course, you taught similar to the way that you were taught. I mean, Isaacs's formalist things he talked about, and the things that Ray had told me, things in design. I did basically the same things. But as time went on I became much more, I suppose, involved in the inventive, the emotional, the surreal. Very soon I started looking at people like El Greco's View of Toledo and things like that that I liked, and this of course is the expressive and dramatic dark and light and so on, which you see in that. That was my first real kind of influences. Marsden Hartley, maybe, who did strong dark-light landscape things which related to what Ray Hill was doing, but much more abstract, more expressive. So the two people I remember offhand in the very beginning would be the El Greco things and Marsden Hartley. And I began trying to do the landscape, but with that kind of feeling about it. Consequently your teaching then also became related to what you were doing. In my teaching I always relate it to what I was learning and what I was doing, and so I'd immediately try to bring this to the students, this kind of excitement, romance, and so on. Teaching there was pretty formal. In a sense, it was good, but it was sort of formal and cut and dried or something. I had this emotional intensity, I guess, and this is what I wanted to transmit to the students. And how do you do that? Well, that was the problem, to discover how that would be possible. But indirectly, you always did it through your own work and what happened to you when you would tell your students about it and try to get them inspired and sort of fired up with the same ideas. Not that they should paint like you did, but that you would have this emotional sort of thing that would carry into your teaching. Not a lot of that happened. It there underneath the intellectual cover, but it was never sort of exposed, said, you know, "God, this is exciting! Get in there and paint what you feel!" That didn't happen, but I tried to have that happen in my own classes. And perhaps it did.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I'm sure that it did.

ALDEN MASON: I, later on, went to Europe for just a few weeks, but I saw a lot of Bonnard's paintings in Paris, and suddenly all this open, shifting color and soft focus came back again (laughs), without having taken my glasses off. That sort of influence began to happen and the color began to come back, and the sort of soft focus, the way color could shift and move across a surface of painting to keep the two-dimensional surface. And then color is free to move up or down or across or anything, any way you want across the painting, that became very important to me. These images also began to appear in the painting, and when you would talk in the classes, you just would translate this into your own teaching, I think.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I was thinking about some of your students, and I always think of Chuck Close. He was definitely one of your students, was he not?

ALDEN MASON: Oh, yes. In fact, he used to knock on the door of the office about ten times a day for a while. At that time he chewed his fingernails down short and he was very nervous, and he painted kind of big gesture, abstract, sort of expressionist things, which I was doing at that time, when he was there, and which he liked very much. He in a sense was emulating what I was doing and he did it really very well. But he'd come in and ask, "What'll I do with this painting, Alden? What'll I do?" He was always so nervous and so upset and, you know, wanted some kind of confirmation of what he was doing was okay. Then years and years later, when I went to New York and stayed in SoHo for that three-month period, the roles were reversed. I went to Chuck and he got me Jack Beal's studio to stay in for three months. And then he said, "This is a little bit strange situation. It makes me nervous." He said, "I used to come and knock on your door all the time and ask you what to do with my painting. Now here you're coming and asking for my help. The roles are reversed, you know, like 20 years later." And he said, "I don't really know how to deal with this." He was just laughing, of course, but it was a change around completely.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: When he was your student, do you remember very much about his personal life, for instance, his family life? It seemed to me that I remember that he had quite a bit of responsibility. Did he, with his family?

ALDEN MASON: Well, his mother was living alone and he was sort of responsible for her quite a bit, I think, in some ways. I don't know exactly what. He came from Everett of course, and he had a lot of friends from Everett who came at that time and went to school at the university too. Some of whom have gone on and done some very good things also. He always had a sense of the flamboyant, or making things happen for him. I mean, he painted that huge flag, or he took that huge flag from the Goodwill that had holes in it and so on, and he stretched that and added things to it and painted on it, and left part of it exposed or whatever?-- I don't remember exactly. And he entered it in the Puyallup Fair [Western Washington State Fair--Ed.], and it caused such a lot of fuss in the papers and so on.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: He was an entrepreneur, wasn't he, really?

ALDEN MASON: In a way. But he also was able to get excited about what he was doing and so in a sense things happened just because he was very excited about painting. Like coming in there several times a day and saying, "What'll I do with this painting?" He was excited about it, and at the same a little bit confused about maybe what he was doing, like anybody else when you're first starting to paint. He had the ability and also had the emotional intensity and the desire to do something with it. And we got him?-- I'd helped write a letter and so on, as others probably had too, but he got to go to that summer school program they had at Yale. Then through that, probably, he got to go to their graduate program at Yale and then I think he taught there for a short time. I'm not sure about that. But anyway, in so doing, he met a lot of artists from New York and so on. The rest, of course, what happened to him, is history.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And his ability to make things happen just has continued, all during his career.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I remember just one small thing about him. He did seem to be quite an individual. And it seemed to me that he may have been one of the first people?-- would that have been in the middle sixties or late sixties?-- who wore a lace shirt.

ALDEN MASON: (laughs) I don't really remember that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: He wore it very proudly, and no one else had any lace shirt on, I'll tell you.

ALDEN MASON: He's changed a lot now; he's very [quiet], very cool, and very laid back.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Is he?

ALDEN MASON: His personality is changed a lot. I always liked Chuck, but that side of his nature is sort of moved

away from that into very serious.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What about other students? Well, you must have had hundreds of students, and so it's probably hard to think of students that meant a lot to you or that you had a kind of sympathy with.

ALDEN MASON: It's happened over the years, but then they always move away and disappear. George Bogart used to come and we were good friends, went fishing together. He was teaching in Oklahoma, and I don't know just where he is now, to tell the truth. He doesn't write anymore. Then a friend of Chuck's, Bakke, from Everett, he's teaching in Pennsylvania or someplace. There are a lot of people like that. Dick Dunlap went to California. He's had a show, in fact, at the Ruth Schaffner Gallery right after I did. He was a graduate student. He was a wonderful jazz musician and I think he's doing some things in California now, sort of combining music and sound with visual images. I haven't seen it, but I've read something in Art Forum or somewhere about it. So there are many students that go on, but you eventually lose track of most of them. Chuck I still continue, I know, because I've stayed in his studio so long.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Faculty members in the university system have a lot of responsibilities that other artists who are working full time as artists don't have: committees and that kind of thing. As you think back about your teaching, how much of a conflict did being a teacher have with your work as an artist?

ALDEN MASON: Well, a lot of people who teach have a hard time to keep their work going, because teaching is an emotional strain. Painting is an emotional?-- for some people anyway; for me it is?-- it's an emotional involvement there the same as teaching.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Um hmm.

ALDEN MASON: To have enough to go around to teach full time and to paint full time is very hard. I think a lot of people haven't been able to sustain that, even at the school. And yet I was able to do that. I painted all the time. I painted on the weekends, painted in the evenings, and so I kept painting. I think you could have done so more perhaps not teaching, yet at the same time, through teaching you got... Well, I taught for 30, what, 33, 34 years; I don't know what it is, and all the time you taught, the students were always the same age. They never change basically; they are all the same. And so you had this strange idea that you never got older, because you came into this new class and they were always the same: same age, same students. So, I think, in some strange way it keeps you kind of young because you're associating with young people, the way they think and talk and so on. And at the same time there're a lot of ideas come out of a painting class or designing class. Some precocious student will do some kind of wonderful things, and this is stimulating to you in your own work in some ways. There were children's classes over there too, and I always enjoyed going down and looking at the children's paintings; I'd always liked things like that. So you got a certain stimulation that living alone in a studio or away from that kind of university School of Art experience, people didn't have. If you were not a strong person, you can go down here and paint by yourself and maybe have a hard time to continue. So you were supported by that art community at the same time it also took a lot away from you. I can't tell you which is good and which, because if I'd gone to New York what would have happened? No one can tell those things; no one knows. So there's both pro and con, both good and bad involved. But I was able to do it, I think, although the last few years... Well, I quit teaching three years ago because I wanted to paint more, and full time, and the teaching has become harder. Not harder for me to do, but emotionally harder to be involved. I keep wanting everyone to do something now, marvelous. I want them to do what it took you 30 years to do, in one quarter, and so I find it harder to teach than I used to. At the beginning, too, when you first taught, you knew what was good. You'd say, "Well, do this," or "You should do that and it'll be great." And the longer you teach the more you find out you weren't sure what was good. In a way that made it hard to teach, because you could see someone blossom and do these things, but at the same time you didn't have the assurance to say, "Well, do this and it'll be okay." You're not sure any more what is okay.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now physically, I think you've been blessed with a lot of energy, a lot of stamina all of your life, which would have held you in good stead, I would think, in a teaching situation.

ALDEN MASON: Well, yes and no. I've not been that healthy. I've had allergies and lots of problems, a nervous stomach among other things. But despite all that, I have energy, yeah, a high energy level, even to somehow?-- People can get sick and say, "Well, I can't do that," but I do it anyway. And I was always interested in health foods and so on. I eat all these organic foods and do all these things that's supposed to keep you going forever. (chuckles) See, I had almost died from pneumonia and all these things when I was five years old; they thought I was going to die several times.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh really, when you were just tiny?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. And so I've always been, in a sense, a sickly kid.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Uh huh.

ALDEN MASON: But sometimes because of that you take better care of yourself. Sometimes those sickly people keep going all their life (laughs) for 80, 90 years or something.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: During all those years of teaching you also had responsibilities, to the department for instance, as all faculty members do. You were the chairman of the painting committee, I think, in 1969.

ALDEN MASON: A brief time, yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, just for a short time.

ALDEN MASON: Two years, or something. I tried to avoid all those things, actually.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: I did my best to avoid any responsibility other than the actual teaching. Because I didn't like it and wasn't very good at it, or if I was I didn't want to be good at it. So I didn't do an awful lot in that regard.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I notice in that same 1969 year, on your resume, you were the chairman of the Henry Gallery Committee. [LAMAR HARRINGTON was then associate director of the Henry Gallery--Ed.]

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Which was the committee that was considering... I think that was the time when the six visitors came, as consultants in a way, to the School of Art, to the Henry Gallery, about what the Henry Gallery might be. Also it had to do with the new building.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, and there was a lot of discussion about whether the Henry Gallery should be more closely related to the School of Art as a teaching adjunct, or whether it should be more of a separate museum. There was a lot of that kind of discussion going on at the time that I was doing that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And also, remember, there was talk of a new building...

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I remember all of that. I never did know why a new building never happened. I don't know whether you know that or not.

ALDEN MASON: (chuckles) No, I'm not sure either. It was going to so many times. It's a funding process and a lot of things involved. The idea of the building moved into, was designed as a teaching building to complete the quadrangle, which they wanted to do so much. And then after a while, they would build a new School of Art and we'd move out of there and it would become a classroom building. Of course that never happened. Funds became scarcer and things didn't move at the right time and so it never occurred, whatever the reason.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's see now, when you became a teacher, you probably had a lot of students who were on the GI Bill.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, there was quite a few there for a while.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Do you have any thoughts about that and what it did or didn't do for art in the United States, and about the university?-- I don't mean just the University of Washington?-- as a patron of the arts, in that way?

ALDEN MASON: Not really. A lot of the people on GI Bill were older people, older students than you usually had. That was interesting in a way, because you had a different attitude, a more serious attitude in some cases. So you had people who were perhaps more dedicated. I suppose in a way a commercial arts, not a commercial art school, but an art school as such, by itself, not connected with a university, gets people who are, in a sense, more dedicated. They're there to be a painter, whereas a lot of the people you get at the university are people going on into other areas or they're taking art because it's sort of the thing to do, or whatever the multiple reasons are. Whereas some of the people on GI Bill wanted to really be a painter, or be an artist. That's one of the problems with a school associated with a university like that: you get a mix of people, and a lot of people that aren't that serious about really just, "I want to be a painter and here I am," you know, "Help me." (chuckles) So the only thing I could say is that during that time you got some older people who seemed a little more concerned or serious about it.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Uh huh.

The four directors from the beginning of the School of Art would have been Isaacs, to start with?

ALDEN MASON: Um hmm, yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And then Boyer Gonzales.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And Spencer Moseley and Richard Arnold. Is it possible for you to look at all four of those and think what their contributions were, just briefly. Of course, Isaacs was there for more than 30 years.

ALDEN MASON: Right. Well, Isaacs had the greatest. He imprinted the school with his own personality, because he was a painter and had strong convictions about what painting should be, and the fact that painting was more important than other areas: design, ceramics, sculpture, whatever. So that was imprinted on the school, though he certainly allowed a lot of other things to happen, like the interior design program and art education and so on. But painting was the important thing to him, and that was certainly very strong in the school because of that. That's true of other people too, but not to the extent, probably, of Walter Isaacs. Then when Boyer Gonzales came in, he was a painter also, but he had a much more open attitude about all the arts were equal. Isaacs could be blunt and abrupt about what he believed and what he wanted, whereas Boyer was much more amenable with everybody in the university community. But at the same time, the school lost, perhaps, some of that toughness of, "This is what's important and right or wrong, you do this." Spencer has, of course, always been a good friend of mine. I've known Spencer a long, long time and I admire Spencer. He's probably the most intellectual of all those people. I mean, he's a genius in many ways. I suppose if there's a fault, it's that Spencer was all of these things, but maybe not as good an administrator, perhaps. I don't think he especially liked to do that. Although if he liked it, maybe that was the part that he was a little bit weaker at doing. So the school became a little more divisive, perhaps. And people like Gene Pizzuto and a lot of the younger people coming into the faculty at that time also changed things. They had their own special attitudes and ideas, and the dissension began to appear?-- younger painters, older painters, new ideas, and, you know, all the things that happened everywhere. And Spencer happened to appear at the time that this all began to come to a head. That made it difficult to be an administrator, whereas...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: See, a lot of people on the faculty under Isaacs had been students there.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, and...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And actually in the university system you really call that incest.

ALDEN MASON: Right. That's true.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That is what happened in that department. Then when Boyer came, his one thing that he did was to bring in a lot of new people.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And of course this situation that you were talking about a minute ago, you would expect that perhaps to happen in a situation like that.

ALDEN MASON: Right. And then when Spencer came all these people were there beginning to make themselves felt, and so you can say, "Well, maybe he's a good administrator; maybe just all these problems came and how do you deal with them?" It takes, really, somebody pretty tough and pretty whatever to deal with those things. And that's maybe not Spencer's nature that much to be that tough with people.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, and when you say he's a genius...

ALDEN MASON: Well, I mean intellectually \_\_\_\_.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yeah. For instance, he was always interested in interdisciplinary kinds of things.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And I think that a lot of heads of departments on a campus, for one thing they're not interested in other subjects and for another thing, they almost fend these things off because they don't really appreciate having them come in and be involved with the budget and all of that.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It's a threat, in a way. And it does seem to me that Spencer always encompassed everything, and was very much interested in all subjects.



ALDEN MASON: I think that's quite true.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How about Richard Arnold? I left about the time he came and I don't know much about him.

ALDEN MASON: (chuckles) I don't either because he was a fairly aloof person. He was there for a long time and hardly ever even said hello to me. So I really don't know very much about him at all. He never really called me in his office and talked to me about anything. So, to me he's a mystery person I really don't know very [much] about.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Another thing, the first three we discussed were all painters, and Richard Arnold?-- is he a painter or is he a graphic designer?

ALDEN MASON: He's a graphic designer and photographer, I think was his basic training, as far as I recall.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So that a lot of changes happened, too then, as far as what things were the most important in the department?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, I think graphic design and so on became quite important when he came. But on the other hand, things like interior design and art education, things like that, began to disappear. A lot of changes occurred which were happening when I left, actually, and didn't really pay much attention to because I knew I was going to leave very shortly.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Um hmm. Also during those years, after the art history faculty really got going?-- and I guess that would have been about in the middle sixties, when Pete Steefel and David Merrill came in. I was just reading the other day that Barnett Newman said that, "Artists need theorists like birds need ornithology." (laughter) How do you feel about that?

ALDEN MASON: That's probably true. (laughter) Well, Pete Steefel, of course, was such a volatile, exciting?-- I mean, he's the only person I ever knew who could show only two slides in two hours, and you could sit on a hard chair in the Henry Gallery... He showed Picasso's Night Fishing at Antibes and Guernica, and you were sitting on those hard slat folding chairs, and were fascinated for two hours. He could talk endlessly, and wonderfully and emotionally about these things, which most art historians don't do. I was very impressed with Steefel, and I enjoyed him very much. I was showing at Gordon Woodside Gallery at the time, and Steefel was asked to write a paragraph for my catalog, the little announcement for the show. When he got through he'd written like four or five pages, and Gordon was very offended because he was going to have to print this fairly inexpensive catalog with this paragraph in it, and here suddenly it turned into a small book. (laughter) He tried to get him to change it and Steefel didn't want to change it, so it was finally printed, much to, I think, Gordon Woodside's dismay and costwise and so on. But it was finally printed and it's the most verbose (chuckles), complicated and kind of wonderful thing that you ever read.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I have a copy of it.

ALDEN MASON: Oh, you do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: In it he analyzes the Ipana Aphrodite.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, right. I'd gone to a dentist, and it was always a traumatic thing. I have a lot of gold fillings and whatnot, and I did a painting of sort of a dentist?-- that was that brief time I did these flat, bright, sort of hard-edged pop things, which was a very brief moment in my life, but it happened to concur with this, and so that's what the show was and that's what he wrote about.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I know what you mean about Steefel. I took a year off and was in school that whole year, and I had him for four classes: three contemporary art history classes and one in, I think it might have been criticism or aesthetics or something like that. Didn't make any difference what you took from him?-- every course had everything in it.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And I'll never forget his excitement. I found the same thing: only one slide would be on the screen at each class, but you would cover the whole universe in that...

ALDEN MASON: Yes, in that one painting.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And he brought in psychology and anthropology and philosophy and aesthetics, besides art history and formalism and sociological aspects.

ALDEN MASON: It's like Kenneth Callahan, Tobey and so on. They are always talking about the totality of the universe and how everything's interrelated. They were sort of the pre-ecologists, or something, in their painting. And Steefel did that with a slide. This slide was the whole universe brought together.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I never did know very much about this at the time, but it seemed to me that both Steefel and Merrill, in the art history division?-- and I thought this was rather unusual, since neither one of them was an artist, as I recall?-- it seemed to me that they wanted very much to bring the art history division and the studio division together.

ALDEN MASON: Oh yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Do you remember much about that?

ALDEN MASON: Well, not really. But I know that talking to Steefel that was his great interest was that. He wanted even painters to come in and talk to the art history people; he'd want to bring people to do that. And when he had a party, he invited all the painters to his parties, and they were the ones that were there, not the art historians. He had this kind of interest and that was what was so wonderful about it. I think there was more excitement about painting and art history and the connections and so on when he was there that short time than ever has been before or since.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I was so sorry to see him leave.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, so was I.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And you know, I remember too that when he left, I suppose you could say that that was one of the periods, even though I was quite well along as a mature woman, I had been very naive about university dealings and politics before that, and tenure and all of those things.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, I can remember when Steefel left, he got an offer of a job at Washington University in St. Louis, I think, at a salary that was somewhat higher than what he was making here. But the thing that I couldn't believe was that the University of Washington would let this man get away! It seemed to me that the amount of money that he was going to be making there wasn't all that much more, except he also got some benefits for his kids. I think they were able to go to school back there. But you know, I thought about that and I had to talk to a lot of people about it, to try to get my own head straight about that, because it seemed to me not only an unjust thing, because he really wanted to stay at the university, but also a thing that would work to our disadvantage, not to have a person who was able to teach the way he did. Although there were plenty of drawbacks, there's no doubt about it. If you sat in his class and you were a certain kind of personality, you'd go crazy before class was over.

ALDEN MASON: Well, yes, that's true. What I was listening to was just a talk at the Henry Gallery twice. I was never in his class, so whether you might get the feeling you're supposed to cover this whole medieval whatever it was they might be doing, and then you wouldn't cover it all perhaps. I think there could be problems that would come with... I didn't know about those.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, I had problems like that as a student but I learned then pretty quickly. I was very conscientious about it all. I remember one day sitting in the library, and I was reading a lot of?-- he had huge bibliographies; we had to read so much?-- and I would read these things and I couldn't understand what they said. And one day he came into the library while I was reading, and I pulled him over to me and I said, "Pete, tell me what this sentence says here."

ALDEN MASON: (laughs)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It was some critic that was writing about something. And you know, tears burst into my eyes. I felt so terrible that I couldn't understand this. And I remember Pete said to me, "Just don't worry about it. Go on to the next one." (laughs) And I began to feel better then when he said that, but I was really sorry when he left. I felt that we had lost a great deal and I think you must feel that way too.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. Well, perhaps there were people who felt that; I don't know. But, you know, there should be room for all kinds of people and he was the one kind that I think we didn't have and we should have, and maybe we still don't have, actually.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, I don't think there are very many teachers like he was in the whole world.

ALDEN MASON: No, you don't find them like that very often, that's true.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: One question I wanted to ask, because this has come so much to the fore in recent years, and I feel strongly about it; as I look back at the painting division at the School of Art, there were never any women in the painting department. I don't mean to put you on the spot too hard, but can you remember anything about that?

ALDEN MASON: You mean, teaching?

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yeah! In the painting division. There were women teaching in all the crafts and in education.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: None in sculpture, as I recall. Some in design. But never in painting. There was a woman by the name of Barbara something. Or maybe her name [Araja, Rajish]. She came from San Francisco, and I believe was a visitor on the painting faculty for just a quarter or maybe a year. But that's the only woman I can ever remember.

ALDEN MASON: I think Margaret Tomkins taught for a quarter or something.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I'd forgotten about her.

ALDEN MASON: Probably she and Isaacs would have had very opposing personalities, so, I mean, I'm sure that?-- it wasn't probably because a woman.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: She was a fine painter!

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, but they wouldn't get along with each other. Margaret Tomkins and Jim FitzGerald are very tough personalities and very difficult to get along with. They were in the gallery [see pages 33-36--Ed.] together, and I admire them both, but they would be difficult. So I don't know; I can't say. The thing is that, you know, you can say, "Well, how many woman painters were there around at the time?" There probably weren't that many woman painters either. But you can't say that women weren't important, because Hope Foote ran the interior design department with an iron hand, so to speak. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, and when you look at Penington and Foote and Pauline Johnson, they were all very powerful, strong people.

ALDEN MASON: Extremely so.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And they were also hired by Walter Isaacs.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Which shows that he was not a sexist.

ALDEN MASON: I think he just didn't find any women that he thought were that good a painter.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, when I thought about this question today, I began to think, "Well, let's see. What women were there around the United States at that time?" There were some very fine painters, but I'm not so sure that they all weren't already attached to a strong art department. Like Joan Brown in San Francisco and, well, I can't name them right now. But maybe that they were hard to find.

ALDEN MASON: A lot of them probably wouldn't want to come to the Northwest. People wanted to stay in New York or California or something like \_\_\_\_\_. I think that to attract people to the Northwest?-- especially then?-- was not that easy to do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: To find the right person.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

[Tape 3]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: During the years that you were a teacher at the School of Art, do you remember visitors who came that were important to you and to the students?

ALDEN MASON: No, I really don't. We'd mentioned in the early days Molzahn and these people that came, but they never influenced me that much. The influences I had were the things I had searched out for myself, the people that I was interested in. I mentioned in the beginning El Greco and Bonnard and so on, but then I

became interested in surrealism in a sense. Miro very important to me and through that I became interested in Gorky, who does organic kind of abstractions. But I'd always been interested in this overview of the landscape, I mean landscape in the sense of water and sky and clouds and mountains, and suddenly with someone like Miro? -- and later Gorky?-- you begin to realize that there was this intimate sensuous, small little bit of landscape. You look down inside of a flower and see this sensual, sexual part of the flower?-- what the bee sees?-- and then you could draw that. That's a landscape too, in a different scale. I think looking at some of these people I began to be interested in that very much. In fact, it's something that still is. The drawings always did that especially, if the paintings didn't. I think that the interest came not from visitors to the school, for me, but from seeing shows and looking at work by these people who I was especially interested in and concerned with. The visitors that came I guess I was personally not interested in to that degree that I would want to be involved. I didn't even take classes from some of the people.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay. Now, after we get through with this part, we're going to talk about your painting, so we'll get to some more of that a little bit later. But I did want to ask you as an artist?-- and I think you've already touched on this today?-- that the interchange with other artists was important to you. I'm not talking only about people like El Greco and Miro and so forth, but I'm thinking of just the people who are around you all the time?-- or your students. Being able to talk about art.

ALDEN MASON: Well, yes. I think so. But not in how it affected my own work that much really. I'd talk briefly to Mark Tobey, I'd talk to Kenneth Callahan, and I always admired some of Morris Graves's things. In fact, some of the beautiful paintings were Morris Graves's?-- what do you call it? The Wounded Gull, the Shorebirds painting and so on. That was later, of course, but I admired the painting. So things like that would be an influence, in a way. I never talked about art that much, with other people at school

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, I see.

ALDEN MASON: I just went home and did my painting and I didn't talk about that much. The only person that really ever looked at my work at all, to amount to anything, was Fred Anderson. I always get in problems and I'd call, "Fred, you gotta come up and see what I'm doing," and he'd come out once every couple of months and we'd talk about what I was trying to do. He was probably the only critic I ever had except, well, Donna looked at the paintings and so on, but I mean other than that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And Fred was also your friend, so it was a kind of an organic situation.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Speaking about the community artists you just mentioned: Callahan, Tobey and so forth. In a certain year?-- and I don't have it right here at this point, but it's on your resume?-- you and some other artists in the community started something called the Artists' Gallery.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And there was a reference, someplace along here: "In 1958 Artists' Gallery sponsorships held by 36 art patrons of Seattle area gallery." Would that have been your Artists' Gallery?

ALDEN MASON: Yes. In order to support the gallery, I think it was Margaret Tomkins probably, but anyway they got the idea that you needed to run a gallery of course, and we weren't going to try to do it just from selling paintings. So they got these people to be sponsors and to be a sponsor you give a certain amount of money. For that you got a small painting from one of the artist members of the gallery.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Ohh!

ALDEN MASON: So every artist had to give whatever it was: two paintings or so; I don't remember exactly. And then the sponsor got one of these paintings and gave money to support the gallery for one year. We would then be assured that the gallery would run for the year, regardless of whether we sold any paintings or not, so we wouldn't have to worry about, in the usual sense that you gotta sell paintings, you gotta water down what you do. Somebody could just show what we wanted to show.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Can you remember the names of maybe just one or two of those people who were sponsors?

ALDEN MASON: No, I wish I could but I can't.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay, all right. Some of the other people who were in the gallery may remember, and I believe those were yourself, Louis Bunce from Portland, Manuel Izquierdo from Portland, Margaret Tomkins, and James FitzGerald?-- that's five.

ALDEN MASON: Who were husband and wife, of course.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And who are we leaving out?

ALDEN MASON: Bill Ivey.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay, that means that the Morrises were not part of that then, Hilda and Carl?

ALDEN MASON: I don't think so, no.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That was a co-op. Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Well, We didn't use that term, but I guess you certainly could.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But it was not a dealer who had started a gallery and then became part of the so-called stable.

ALDEN MASON: No, it was a co-op. We ran the gallery and showed shows that we thought would be interesting, controversial, or whatever. Each person had one show, also, during that year, which didn't leave as much time as we wanted for showing some other people. I suppose it's a forerunner of what PCVA [Portland Center for the Visual Arts--Ed.] was trying to do, trying to show controversial things or things that the museum wouldn't show or from out of town and that sort of thing, difficult shows. We were going to try to do that too, but time you ended up showing all the members' work and getting involved and all that, it didn't somehow leave as much money or time to do that as we wanted to do. But it was interesting. It was one of the early galleries in town; I think it showed some interesting work for the time, but it didn't last very long because you get that many artists together (chuckles) and it's very difficult, actually.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: The Northwest School has been talked into the ground. (chuckles) Do you have any thoughts about that today, with this perspective now? About any of the artists who were involved in it, especially? Stories about any of the artists or thoughts about their philosophy? For instance, the correctness or lack of correctness about something called Northwest School.

ALDEN MASON: Well, as I said a little earlier, I guess that the School of Art was, in a sense?-- [between] the public or the collectors or whatever always was kind of a separation, because they always talked about the School of Art being involved with the School of Paris painting. People downtown would say it in an insulting way, because that was derivative and classical and traditional. Whereas the people downtown?-- referring to not only Callahan, Graves, and so on, but referring to others as well?-- were opposed to that. They were painting more personal things, and therefore they were doing better things. So there was always that kind of running, not battle, but difference that kept going on. And I think both sides were right. Some of the [formalist, foremost] things that were going on, and the tradition is important. The students at the School of Art learned that and the people that you think about now?-- we just mentioned Chuck Close, or Bakke, or Bogart?-- you can go through a list of almost any catalog, like the Northwest Annuals of years ago, and who are the names there that you still find? They almost always are people who went to the School of Art, university. And not who went downtown. And, well, I don't know whether to mention the name or not, but Bill Ivey and a lot of the people thought little of the School of Art. Even the people that I was associated with in that gallery?-- Margaret Tomkins, and James FitzGerald?-- always spoke very disparagingly of the faculty and the school itself. They excepted me, but hardly anyone else. And it was interesting because later, the first time in his life, Ivey had a private school for just a short while, and one of his students had a show, I believe it was at Foster-White. The work looked exactly like Bill Ivey's work. Yet he was the one that was always saying, you know, "Well, you can't teach up there because the imprint, the stamp of the university is on all the students, and that's so terrible. You shouldn't teach that way; you should let the students develop their own personality in their own way, and not teach in the sense that we are doing." And yet, in the short time that he taught?-- and some others too?-- the students that came out of their private classes exactly painted like they did, much more than anybody at the university did. Whereas you got people like Chuck Close and so on I mentioned coming out of the School of Art. So I don't think those things that they always brought up are true at all. I just don't believe that. And they weren't good teachers, probably, especially.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Don't you think that the community artists and the quote "university artists" in almost any big city that there's always that kind of tension or dynamic between...

ALDEN MASON: To some degree, although here the university and School of Art in a sense is so sort of important or dominant. In a big city like in New York there are many schools and so on, and you get all kinds of people going their separate ways. Or in Portland, you had the Portland Museum School as well as other schools?-- Reed College and others. But here it's sort of was that school and there was a greater separation or dichotomy perhaps. Plus the fact that here you had people who became important. I mean, Graves, Tobey, Callahan and so on, especially in those years, were some of the most important painters in the country. So you had that kind of

greater separation or whatever because of that, because they were big names up there, and so they were promoting this kind of painting which had to do with the mystery of the landscape, and man and nature, in the intimate kind of painting, or the painting out of the subconscious, or whatever they were all doing. And I'd, in a sense, related to a lot of that because the things about Gorky and other people who did that similar thing except in perhaps a little different way. Gorky worked out of the tradition too, in a way. I liked a lot of those things that Morris Graves did and I was probably influenced a lot by some of those things. Or Tobey's linear calligraphic things. I did a lot of drawing, lot of calligraphic things over the years and probably a lot of that influence came from people like that, as much as did from the university indirectly.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It's interesting, isn't it, that this group of so-called community artists?-- I don't know who was the initiator of the so-called Artists' Gallery?-- but it's interesting that you were the only one who was not a so-called community artist. Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Right, that's true. I was accepted by (laughs) both sides, let's say.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And you didn't start the idea, did you?

ALDEN MASON: No-no, not at all.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So you were invited to join them?

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I wonder what it was that they saw in your work that they felt merited your being part of them.

ALDEN MASON: I'm not sure. I couldn't tell you that, but Mark Tobey gave me a first award in some show at the Henry Gallery. I don't even remember what the show was, but it was some invitational show and he was the juror, and he gave me the first prize. And just before that I had met him at Otto Seligman Gallery and we sat and talked awhile, the only time I ever talked to him, really. We talked for five, ten minutes or so, and he said he admired my work and so on. And Callahan, of course, wrote many reviews when he was a reviewer, critic, for the Seattle Times and he always said very glowing things about my paintings.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, he did.

ALDEN MASON: In fact, he has a little note in his book there where one of the shows I had, he left a little message at the desk and said, "Really outstanding work, Alden," or something, "Kenneth Callahan." Deliberately left it at the desk. So yes, I was always treated very wonderfully by all those people and as you said, probably the only one, really.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, it had something to do, probably, with the individuality of your work, I would think. Based on your own experience, what would you say about audience appreciation in Seattle, over the years and maybe earlier as compared to today?

ALDEN MASON: Well, in the beginning no one bought anything. I never sold anything, of course. And it was really a struggle. Prices were very low. Of course, they were low everywhere, but I mean they were so much lower than New York or anyplace else. And I think that as time has gone on, things are selling better in Seattle. People that buy art in Seattle, especially about five years ago, were probably better than San Francisco or Los Angeles in many ways. Very surprising, and that change has come about slowly, but at the same time it's in the last ten years, I think, that really has happened. The other thing that's happened probably is that people are buying... In the beginning and once Tobey and Graves caught on, people bought Northwest School sort of work. Callahan always sold well, since he started. But in the last ten years people have been buying more diverse things. Motherwell prints have sold very well at Diane Gilson Gallery in the last five years, for example. And the last couple of years when I had a show with a yellow and red, bright color, they bought these paintings instead of the gray paintings. They bought bright-colored things.

[Break in taping]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now we've talked a little about your having stayed in Seattle. You've had family responsibilities. But did you ever really think seriously of leaving, maybe going to New York, and then decide, "Well, no, I can't do that because this or that." Or has it been more a matter that you had your job at the university and, although it was a kind of struggle, you just decided... Maybe you didn't give much thought to leaving.

ALDEN MASON: Oh, I thought about it. (chuckles) Many times. But in the beginning, I wanted to go to New York and do these things, and as the time went on I, well, I'd been to New York once or twice just briefly, for a couple

of weeks, and found it very exciting?-- the galleries and the tempo and the competition and the stimulation, which was obviously there. But at the same time, I became more involved again in nature and birdwatching and all of these things, fishing and so on. And later on, when I stayed in New York, I felt like I had to go to the Bronx Zoo to feel trees (chuckles) and find this kind of reality. I guess I became more interested in that kind of aspect of the landscape and thought that I couldn't really live in New York and be happy there. So it was because of that that I decided that I just wouldn't or couldn't do that. Not because I was afraid to, especially, or some of the other things. But I also felt that I was missing something by not doing that, because here are the people who are really making art, and the activity was. In Seattle, the kind of people who were painting didn't have the kind of vitality that I really wanted to have in my own work. I missed that and think that I missed something by not going there and doing that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But you had a lot by staying here too, obviously.

ALDEN MASON: Oh, a different kind, I suppose. Like Chuck Close told me when he came out here on a visit and I took him fishing?-- he and Joe Zucker, who's a painter in New York, who I also took, before that I took to Canada fishing for two weeks. He was a friend of Chuck's too. They came out, I took them fishing up in the mountain lake, and Joe Zucker had this leather buckskin outfit with fringe and dressed up like a mountain man. (laughs) We hiked about four-and-a-half miles into a mountain lake and carried an inflatable rubber boat with us. Well, we got about half way up there and Joe was falling down and perspiring, so I finally took the boat myself, went on ahead and they fished from the boat, and I carried the boat all the way out. They were just exhausted. But what Chuck said was that, "You know, this is great. I love skiing and I love going with you fishing, but," he says, "here you'd be seduced by that all the time. I'd be going skiing, I'd be going fishing and the landscape's so beautiful. "I wouldn't get any work done. New York is so kind of awful that I just paint all day until four o'clock and we go to a preview or something or go to a party and then I come home and get up and I paint again all day. And that way you are committed and get work done. If I was here," he said, "I would never get any work done." So I don't know. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I wanted to ask you about what you've read over the years. What have you enjoyed the most? Kinds of books.

ALDEN MASON: Well, I read a lot of things, lives of the artists, and then also about the people that I mentioned already that I'm interested in. But mostly I read things about (chuckles), about birds and birdwatching and travel and magic places over the horizon someplace. I guess I read things like that and novels and other things. I don't read that much about art, as such, like most people probably do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And you haven't read a lot of things about the theory of art or a lot of things by certain philosophers over the years?

ALDEN MASON: No.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's discuss dealers just for a moment. What was your first serious association with a dealer?

ALDEN MASON: Well, the Gordon Woodside Gallery, I suppose.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I have you down in 1962, first Woodside.

ALDEN MASON: Well, the first show I really had I suppose was at Zoe Dusanne.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: In 1957.

ALDEN MASON: Is that right? I don't remember.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yeah.

ALDEN MASON: Zoe Dusanne showed some of the first important painters from out of Seattle at her gallery. She had?-- oh, I'm not thinking very well today?-- the Sam Francis show, watercolors, and other things of that kind... Weren't being shown in Seattle so Zoe Dusanne did a lot of really wonderful things in the gallery she had in her home. I had a show there and I think Paul Horiuchi had a show about the same time. That's probably the first really show I had. In fact my mother came down for the preview and brought Scandinavian rosettes?-- krumkake or something like that?-- it's a little Scandinavian cookie thing that looks like a flower that you dip in oil. And they got all over Zoe Dusanne's rug and she was rather unhappy that these stained her rug, all these fancy things that mother brought.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: She was really very careful about her house, wasn't she?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And her person, too, the way she looked.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Do you remember any stories about Zoe when you were dealing with her there?

ALDEN MASON: Not really. I was only there for one or two shows.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And you were really not, you couldn't say that you were a mature artist by that time?

ALDEN MASON: Not really, no.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And she had had a tremendous amount of experience as a dealer, even then, in 1957.

ALDEN MASON: Oh yes, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It must have been quite an experience for you.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, as I said, I was always kind of introverted and very shy. Now you can't stop me from talking in a class but at that time I was overwhelmed by all of these people things and so I was very quiet in there. I just had my show and met some people and went away.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How about, I have you down as the first show would have during the World's Fair at the Gordon Woodside Gallery.

ALDEN MASON: I didn't remember it was then, but that must be right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I think that's what it was. Anyway, and then you also were with Woodside when he started his gallery down in California.

[Break in taping]

ALDEN MASON: Oh, Gordon Woodside was a very emotional figure, and his gallery was dependent upon a lot of people who he got sort of personally involved. They would buy paintings from the Gordon Woodside Gallery not because of who the artists were so much as the fact they'd bought it from Gordon Woodside and through his gallery. He had a loyal following of people. The preview was like a closed party; all these same people would always come to every preview. And they almost always would buy something. So even if you didn't sell a lot, they'd still buy something from whoever you were, and that was always kind of interesting. There was a big stairway and Gordon would go up and down the stairway. It was always a very nervous thing and yet people were very loyal to him. And he showed some very beautiful work. The story you just mentioned is that he was losing some of his hair, as I have, and he told me?-- at least the story goes?-- that when he was in San Francisco, Sally Rand said that he would look so much younger and more...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That's Sally Rand.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, the fan dancer I guess. And so they made a meeting that he would, she would get him a toupee. So she brought this one and put it on his head and said, "You look just marvelous now," or something. And then, as far as I know, he's been wearing it ever since. (laughs) But Gordon did a lot of very nice things for me, and he always had fabulous parties. He had a friend, who was a designer or something; she gave real marvelous parties. And we went to dinner parties and it was very nice, but as the years went by he got more difficult. I suppose we were both sort of emotional people and there were some things that I think didn't happen right and we had a severe falling out. He told me never to come back in his gallery again as long as I lived or he'd have the police after me. And his lawyer would call me and I would never be able to show with anyone in Seattle again, because he would make sure that no dealer would ever show my work, or no collector would ever buy my work. He called on the telephone at home and he got my son, unfortunately, and not me, and he started telling all these terrible things, insulting things, and then my son kept trying to say, "This isn't Alden; this is Roger." That made me really very angry, so we went over right afterwards to catch him before he left the gallery and I said I wanted to take my work out of the gallery. So I left the gallery. And there were some problems?-- right or wrong, I don't remember?-- about the gallery in San Francisco: I hadn't been paid or something about that too. And he said, "Well, the gallery in San Francisco had his name, but it was Colonel Sanders?-- it was a franchise. He really didn't have anything to do with it. (chuckles) So anyway, I left there with somewhat bad feelings, I guess, on both sides, but especially on his part. I really wasn't that angry, but when I finally took the work out of there, he got really put out about that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You know, I think Gordon has been a rather difficult person in relationships all of his career. I remember one time when?-- as I did quite often when I was at the Henry Gallery?-- I was trying to do something to help some artists of the area to be seen by somebody who was going to be coming around town.



I'd talked to several of the dealers?-- I always worked with the dealers that way?-- and got the names of quite a lot of their artists so that I could be sure to tell this museum director who was coming into town so that this person would be sure to see their work, somehow. So I called Gordon and asked him for the names and he got so angry at me?-- Maxine Cushing Gray had already published something in her paper that I had done something against her protege, Bob Carpenter, who owned a gallery over in Bellevue. I had not done what she said I had done at all, and in fact, there again, I was trying to help some artists when this whole thing happened over there. Well, Gordon got so angry at me about this. And I went into his gallery one day, there were people all around, and he just read me out, right in front of all these people. It was so unjust.

ALDEN MASON: There were people there when we had this last discussion too. [Bang.]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh. Well, what about Esther Robles? You had a show there, I believe.

ALDEN MASON: I had one show there and the work was up in group shows for, I don't know, two years or something.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That's in Los Angeles.

ALDEN MASON: Right. She was one of the first?-- not the first, the second or third gallery?-- really major galleries that opened in Los Angeles.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Did you get to know her very well?

ALDEN MASON: A little bit. We were out to their house and so on. (chuckles) She danced on the piano one evening, or something (laughs) after a few drinks. She was a very lively person and I sort of enjoyed her. She scared me the first time I walked in there with my work. I still have a hard time going to a gallery to show my work. I don't have the right ego power to do that and I don't like doing it. But I walked in there, and there was other people ahead of me that showed her some work, and they treated them rather badly. A guy took his watercolors, you know, sort of skulks out the door and I thought, "God! This is terrible, and my turn is next." But she happened to like the work and took me in her inner sanctum?-- she has a special room for collectors and so on. It has a big, big hardwood easel with red velvet draperies behind it and these leather chairs and desk, and then she sits there and the client sits in this desk and you put the painting up in this huge, mammoth easel and dim the lights. So I got into this place and put my paintings up on this easel so she could look at them, and for someone like me that was quite a scary and rather impressive performance I've never forgotten. And from that to dancing on the piano and having too many drinks is quite a switch. But anyway, it was very pleasant.

Alan Davie?-- the person [from London--Ed.] whose work I'd admired about this time?-- I saw some of his; a gallery which I've forgotten the name handled his work in Los Angeles and I saw it there, and I admired it a lot. And he later on had a show at Esther Robles. And he was going to come out for his opening, but what he wanted to do was to see a bullfight. She abhorred bullfights, but they had to take him over across the border to Tijuana to a bullfight, because that's what he wanted?-- at least that's the story she told me. And it was so funny because just two years ago, Karen?-- that's my wife now?-- went to Vancouver [British Columbia--Ed.] and took a summer class with Alan Davie. And I finally met Alan Davie?-- went up one day during the class and met him and talked to him for quite a little while. He liked Karen's work very much and was quite taken by it. I always thought he was?-- in the pictures in his book he's this big, kind of brash guy, and actually he's very quiet and reserved and not like what I thought he would be at all. And he taught pretty open. I mean, his students just sort of did what they wanted to do. He didn't talk about color, he didn't talk about form; it was exactly the opposite of what Isaacs did. It was a lot of fun meeting him, because over the years he'd kind of been an idol of mine and I had bought his book and so on. So Karen took the book in and he signed the book in the front (chuckles), and after this long expanse of time, I finally met him in this roundabout way.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That's like more than 20?years.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now, you've had a very long and, I assume, good relationship with the Bau-xi Gallery in Vancouver, starting in 1965 and going right up to now. Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, I don't really show there anymore. I mean, I could and all, but things never sold very well, and it's a hassle getting across the border. But Paul Wong and I are still very good friends, yes. He saw my work down here and just liked it and called me up and said, "You know, I really like your work. I'd like to show it." But he didn't like to show people from the States because it doesn't sell well in Vancouver and, as I said, there's so many problems getting across the border and everything. He was always very upset because it was never received, maybe, that well and never sold up there that well. It made him mad because he liked me and he liked the work himself.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: He was probably embarrassed.

ALDEN MASON: And he got embarrassed. I'd say, "We better not bother to have any more shows," and he'd say, "Well, we should have a show again." What he really wanted to do was to make amends and have this big splash and it never really worked. So even though I had quite a few shows there, nothing much happened to my work up there. But Paul has been a friend all these years. In fact he had some huge celebration, whatever it was, so many years of the gallery and so on. He had friends from all over Canada he'd millions?-- I mean, not millions, but thousands of dollars. Had a big dinner there. I was there as a special guest and we've been real good friends, but gallery-wise nothing much happened to me. I think Bau-Xi is probably the Chinese, means Paul Wong, or something.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, I see.

ALDEN MASON: I'm not sure of that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You know, I'm just looking again at Woodside here. You actually were represented by him in Seattle and in San Francisco all the way from 1962 to 1969. That's a long time.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, it is.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And during that time you didn't really?-- well, you were showing in Vancouver at the Bau-Xi and also maybe a show here and there. But Woodside was your major dealer during all those years.

ALDEN MASON: I got a letter just a couple months ago. I don't know if I told you that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: From Gordon?

ALDEN MASON: It was from John Braseth, who now runs a gallery with Gordon. Diane Gilson had closed the gallery here in Seattle and they had heard that, so I got a letter from Braseth saying that they would like me to show with them again. That Gordon was not mad at me any longer and he would be appreciative of having me come back. And they showed all the old masters and that I should be there and that they certainly could sell my work very well for me. It was a (chuckles) rather long letter of that tenor all the way through. And big gold seal on the outside. (chuckles) And a few misspelled words here and there. But anyway, I talked to him and said that I had other plans and so on. But it was kind of fascinating again, this long space of time and then to get this letter.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How things can change in between.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You had an exhibition with the Seligman Gallery in '68. Was that a solo or a group show?

ALDEN MASON: I think it was just a group show, if I remember right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What do you remember about Otto Seligman?

ALDEN MASON: Not very much. We talked a little bit, and that's where I met Mark Tobey was when he had the gallery in his apartment. In fact, I was introduced to Tobey by Otto Seligman. Otto was a very European, very refined, very aristocratic sort of person. Talked a lot about music and the attitude that you have toward art: it was precious, you treated it in this precious way and with great respect and so on, which is all very interesting to me. But it also was sort of small-scale and intimate. I mean, he liked things of that kind. Living room art?-- you put it in your wall and this sort private sense of collecting art and so on. He had a rather different philosophy and attitude than a lot of?-- well, of course, that was probably more prevalent then than it is now anyway. So we never got that close because I always wanted to do paintings 50 feet long and I never could or did, but...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Even then?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, even then. And wanted it to be vigorous and bright-colored and brash, and he was talking about sensitive and things of this nature. And in a way, Tobey did too, when I was talking to him. I don't remember the conversation; I wouldn't even want to try to. But he had talked about the intimate quality and the philosophy of painting being this very personal thing. It's like an abstract diary or something. Which I agree with and yet at the same time I always wanted to do (chuckles) something beyond that or bigger than that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Was Francine Seders working for him at that time?

ALDEN MASON: I thought she was.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But you didn't get to know her then.

ALDEN MASON: Not, not then. She opened a gallery of her own, which indirectly took a lot of the people, I guess, from Seligman's. A lot of people that showed with Seligman then moved to her gallery.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Have you gotten to know her in the meantime very well?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, I know her fairly well. In fact, she sort of worked with Gordon a little bit. They worked together a lot. In fact I think Gordon probably told her that if I came to show there not to show my work, because she was very nervous when I went over to see her. I went over to see her about something else and she seemed to be a little bit nervous, and I think it was probably Gordon had been calling her. (chuckles) But I didn't have any intention of asking to show with her, because I didn't want to, even if she had been interested, because so many people in the university show there, like Bob Jones and Michael Daily and so on. And I thought it was not incestuous, but there was just too many people from the university. I didn't want to be part of a group of that kind. So I'd never really considered showing there because of that. But she's a great lady.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now we're at the point where you started with Polly Friedlander. This would have been after you left the Woodside Gallery.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That's from '70 to '76.

ALDEN MASON: That's quite a long time too! And that ended on a bad note also.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Very bad, didn't it?

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But, you know, her space was very beautiful wasn't it?

ALDEN MASON: Oh, it was one of the finest galleries in Seattle. The space was marvelous and in a way she did-- despite all the bad things that I'll have to say about her, she did a lot of good things for me, because the space was so beautiful and I could do big paintings and she sold an awful lot of them. It's the first time I really started selling my work. In fact, I sold out a show, which everybody dreams of having happen to you, I suppose. So she made those things happen. But at the same time I brought some paintings that were beginning to develop and people were beginning to notice at the same time. So two people with similar ideas got together at the right time. In the beginning at least, it was a very fortuitous thing for both of us.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It was exciting. I remember walking up those stairs and walking into that huge space.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And the lighting always seemed to be very good. Did you think that it was?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. I had a lot to do with it. I helped her, you know, many ways, sort of designing the space and had a lot of personal things to do with it.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Because she was very new at this herself.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, she was. She'd taken some art history and so on, but she'd never really been involved in it. Except that she was married, or getting a divorce from?-- I don't know which Friedlander it was?-- so she was involved in the kind of selling they do, which was very different of course, but...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Uh huh.

ALDEN MASON: So it was very dramatic, very exciting. And I had a painting in, I guess it was a Northwest Annual, probably about the last one they had?-- one of that, begin that Burpee garden series sort of painting?-- and several people wanted to buy the painting. One of them was the Haubergs [Anne Gould and John--Ed.]. And several other collectors, because the painting got a prize or whatever happened. Anyway, the people liked that particular painting. It was the first big oil painting. Consequently that sort of started things going, so that the gallery sort of took off because of that, too. It went very well for both of us, though it didn't end up that way.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: As I recall, too, Polly had quite a flair for living. She had a wonderful apartment. You remember up on Capitol Hill?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, I probably supported that. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Lots of wonderful parties.

ALDEN MASON: Yes. She had a maid come in and serve and do all the cleanup and do all this. Yeah, had my paintings on her wall.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So the great problem there was actually the financial problem, and she eventually went into bankruptcy, is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, well, the last two shows I had there basically sold out the show. The first one gradually pretty much paid for?-- it took a long time, but it pretty much paid for it. And the second show sold out and then a few months after that she went bankrupt. I lost \$17,000, something like that, that never was paid. And you can say, "Well, a gallery can have problems and that can happen," but the bad part of it was that she got two or three paintings that came back from the Ruth Schaffner Gallery in Los Angeles. I had written to them and they were supposed to come to my studio, but they sent them to the gallery?-- and this was after she had said she was declaring bankruptcy. The paintings came to her and she sold them, immediately, in a week! I'd been to [Gene--Ed.] Brandzel, the lawyer, talking about this already and he said there were no assets visible and that suing would be a big problem, and if I wanted to go through this or not. I might not get anything out of it. But I called him and he said, "Well, you better call and find out who bought those paintings right away." Because she told me that she would pay me the whole amount for the sale of those paintings. And it didn't happen, of course, for a week, and so then he said, "Well, why don't you call them." One of them was the Bremerton Community College, and so I called over there and they said, "Oh," that they'd paid for the painting already. Another was some designer in town, and I called and, "Yes," they'd paid already. So she'd been paid for, I think it was three paintings, whatever, two or three paintings, the full amount. But I hadn't received that money either. And that's like just stealing, you know.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yeah.

ALDEN MASON: She just took it, because our association was all over with. I was taking my paintings out of the place and so on. So that really made me extremely angry and I went over and talked to her and she cried a lot and... You know, what can you do? I swore and she cried.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It would seem to me that with an artist and a dealer in a situation like that?-- say, you sell quite a lot of things and you don't get paid for them, but maybe it's only five paintings?-- then you hesitate to go get legal help, because if you do, you may never get anything out of it. Where if you wait for a while, good things may start happening for the gallery. So it puts you in bad situation.

ALDEN MASON: Yes. And the thing is that when she got paid, she'd always tell you, "Well, you know." All the galleries do, that "I haven't got paid yet," so you never expect to be paid...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Immediately.

ALDEN MASON: ...till six months after the show, if it was a sellout, like that.

[Tape 4 is blank]

[Tape 5]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: One thing that we didn't talk about when we were talking about the University of Washington, something that occurred to me the other day, was that one quarter or one year when Boyer Gonzales was the director, there was the possibility that Mark Tobey was going to come to teach. Do you remember anything about that?

ALDEN MASON: No, I just remember that they talked about it. The only thing I remember is he had wanted to off and on, but then when they actually asked him I think what he said was he didn't really want to teach. I think he was also irritated?-- they should have asked him 20?years ago. And I'm sure that's what \_\_\_\_ .

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Possibly.

ALDEN MASON: That's the gist of what I got and remember.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So anyway, he didn't come to teach.

ALDEN MASON: I think he said that "They ask people when they don't need it, but they don't ask people when they need it, in the beginning," and so on. Of course, that's true of the galleries or anything; they have know to shown what, you know, you're [certainty, circling, circulating] any more. So...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That's true. There's probably hardly anyone in the world who hasn't felt that at one time or another.

ALDEN MASON: I'm sure, I know.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Before we go on to talk about your galleries and your actual paintings, I wanted to ask you about the years of your marriage with Donna. I think we said earlier in the tape that you were married in your early years and had one son. Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, that's right. Wasn't early. Well, I was 29 or something like that, I guess. It depends on what you mean by early or late. (chuckles) Donna came from Mount Vernon; she lived in Mount Vernon when I met her. And when I first started to teach, actually, we moved to Seattle, sort of together \_\_\_\_\_. And started teaching here, so we were together for a long time, about 30 years, I think.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Till actually, perhaps only two or three years ago.

ALDEN MASON: Well, four or five years ago. Five years ago.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And she was not an artist?

ALDEN MASON: No. But she was very helpful and did a lot of the bookwork and writing letters and things like that. That was very important?-- that I didn't do very well. (chuckles) So she did a lot of those things that you don't get much respect for.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Or credit or recognition.

ALDEN MASON: By me, credit, right, but not by other people. Certainly she was very important, very helpful in sustaining the energy it takes to do all those things.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And of course was a mother.

ALDEN MASON: And the trips we went to Mexico, and all those things she went with.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: As I understand it, Donna in recent years, since you have been apart, has even gone on to be involved in the arts some way.

ALDEN MASON: She had a gallery in which people could consign work for resale for?-- I don't know?-- three or four years. But she gave it up just recently.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, I see.

ALDEN MASON: It just didn't pay that well for the energy she had to put into it?-- like the gallery business often does.

[Tape 5 duplicates much of the discussion of galleries and dealers from previous tapes. In the process of eliminating redundant information, the flow of conversation in the following pages has been altered.--Ed.]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, let's go on now. Let's talk first about the gallery people that you've been represented by over the years. Now I know artists have various kinds of arrangements with galleries. So when one says "represented by" that can mean a lot of different things. I have a list of gallery owners, dealers, over the years, that you have had some association with, perhaps only one show, and maybe some of them you don't really consider to be your own gallery owner. One of the first was Zoe Dusanne in 1957.

ALDEN MASON: I guess that was about the first show I ever had. Zoe, you know, had a gallery in her house, and even though the gallery was in her home, it was not like something in your living room. She had a really beautiful space, and it felt very separate from her home, even though it was in her house.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now, was this when the house was on the side of the hill overlooking Lake Union?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, right. The freeway took it finally, I guess; it finally disappeared.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Right. So Dusanne really did a lot, I suppose, for getting the people in Seattle to recognize and enjoy modern art.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, she certainly did. Brought in people that, they hadn't seen their work here before. I can't remember the names. I remember Sam Francis because that was there on the wall just before. In fact, it was one of the first of his watercolors that I saw, which I thought was really very beautiful.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Then next I have Gordon Woodside with shows in Seattle: 1962, '65, and '67. And then when he started his gallery down in San Francisco, shows there in '65, '67, '68, and '69. So you had at least a

seven-year association with Gordon.

ALDEN MASON: Right. I think there was a show at the Seattle Art Museum, though, 1958, which is right after Zoe Dusanne's.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay, now, this was not a dealer show?

ALDEN MASON: No, no, but that, in a sense, one of the first shows, too. It was just a small show in the museum, one of the small rooms. But it was part of the naivete ', I guess. I was talking about the first show, because I went to Dr. Fuller myself and just sort of knocked on the door and said, "Hey, you know, you liked my paintings,"?-- because there was a painting purchased in a watercolor show, or some show at the museum, and so I got the idea that was important enough. He was so surprised, I think, that he couldn't say no. (chuckles throughout the entire preceding paragraph--Ed.).

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So he bought one?

ALDEN MASON: No, so he gave me a show and \_\_\_\_\_. It was a very small show and it was in the middle of winter and that winter we had about three feet of snow. Ray Hill, who I had taken watercolor classes from, came in a taxi and almost never made it. But I can remember that too, because I thought that was real nice. (both chuckle)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, so that one was in 1958 soon after the Zoe Dusanne show. And then I guess we would come along to Gordon Woodside.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So let's discuss Gordon as a dealer for a few minutes.

ALDEN MASON: Well, he did a lot of nice things for me. He showed the work for a long time, sold some paintings. He didn't sell a lot of paintings but despite that, he kept showing the work as it changed and grew. And he was really nice. Toward the end of our relationship \_\_\_\_\_, we got in some discussion about sales and money and the things that you get involved with with people in galleries. And so thought maybe he should return the work and I should go on someplace else, and he got really very unhappy about that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So '69 would have been your last exhibition with Woodside and that would have been in the gallery down in San Francisco. But going back in 1965, you had an exhibition with Esther Robles in Los Angeles. Can you remember something about that that would have been especially important to you?

[Repeats anecdotes from Tape 3--Ed.]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How about the Bau-Xi Gallery in Vancouver? You've had a long association with Bau-Xi.

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Starting '65, really coming right up to today, haven't you?

ALDEN MASON: I quit showing there. It's hard to sell things in Canada; sort of the Yankee go home sort of thing a little bit, probably. Also getting things across the border is awkward. And now Paul Wong is going to mainland China and trying to put together films and books and all kinds of things to distribute in Canada, but also worldwide eventually. This is the last thing he's been doing. He's a whirlwind of energy. It's a fantastic?-- he came from mainland China to Hong Kong, and for a couple of years he said he spent, well, he slept about two hours the first year and three hours the second year, learning English, learning Western painting, and calligraphy and also some of the traditional calligraphy and so on. And then he finally emigrated to Vancouver. He opened a gallery and he ran a frame shop to support the gallery and taught calligraphy at the school up there, Vancouver School of Art. And then he brought his parents over. He's full of energy, amazing guy. And he's still going on and on.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And I think you've had a longstanding and good relationship with him.

ALDEN MASON: Yes. We're real good friends.

[Brief discussion of Seligman Gallery follows--Ed.]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Then Polly Friedlander, beginning in 1970 and running until 1976.

ALDEN MASON: Right. And I guess, despite the bad things I have to say about Polly, she certainly opened one of the best galleries in Seattle, and had beautiful space and showed a lot of interesting people...It's just that toward the end of our relationship?-- it's sort of like Gordon Woodside. Things only last seven years, it looks like.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So that was a situation where there were good things and some very bad things too.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: In '71 and '72 it looks as if you had exhibitions with Gerard John Hayes, in Los Angeles?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, he opened a gallery in Los Angeles, and he wrote to me that he'd liked the work and seen it in Seattle and asked me to show with him. He had a nice gallery space and so I did. The gallery, however, didn't last more than-- I don't know what it was-- three, four, five years. He had a computer business and it just got too much for him, so he had to finally give it up. Unfortunately, I got involved with galleries that either gave up or changed; there've been a lot of gallery changes, which, you know, you'd rather sort of stay in a gallery and have them develop you over the years. And somehow things didn't work out that way.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, I think it's also possible that artists stay with galleries for a long time because, for some reason or another, they don't like to change, and that can work against you too, if you're not constantly searching for the right spot for you.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: In 1974, '75, and '77, I have down exhibitions at the Allan Stone Gallery in New York City. How did that come about that you met Allan Stone?

ALDEN MASON: It was about 1973. I went to New York to stay for three, four months; autumn quarter when I was teaching I took a leave. Chuck Close, who'd been a student of mine, had a loft in New York and he'd arranged for me to rent Jack Beal-- a realist painter in New York-- to have his studio. So that's what I decided to do.

It's interesting to me because in Seattle you don't talk to any other artists especially. It's pretty isolated. And I thought, well, in New York, this huge place, you wouldn't ever meet anybody. And I don't know, did I tell you when, on the plane, I opened the Time Magazine and here was a show, Joseph Raffael, from California, having a show in New York. And I thought, "Gee, I'd like to see his work. It's somewhat reminiscent of what I was doing with oil paintings.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yes.

ALDEN MASON: But you never see things. I mean, you're just living in Seattle. So I got off the plane and Chuck Close picked me up and took me out to his studio, or where he's living in the SoHo. He said, "Would you like to go across the street? I'm invited to a preview tonight, a friend of mine, Raffael, is having a show at Nancy Hoffman's."

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: And so we went across the street and there was Raffael and there was his work and, you know, I'd been there only two hours. Then of course I was renting Jack Beal's space and so I had, had to sleep in Chuck Close's studio for about two weeks, I guess because Jack didn't move out when he was supposed to. But I met Jack Beal, who is of course a well-known realist painter, and several other people in the building. And then a couple days later, Jackie Buechner, who's a former student, called and said that she was having a party for a couple of people-- a poet, who's name I've forgotten, but anyway she'd invited DeKooning to come, who was a friend of her friend. Her friend didn't drive so she acted as a chauffeur to drive her out to DeKooning's studio every few months or so. So anyway, she said that he was, and would I like to come. And of course (chuckles) I said yes. So here was this party; there was only about six, seven people there. And she showed DeKooning my slides and he looked at them.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Really? Isn't that interesting!

ALDEN MASON: And said, "You know, when I first came to New York I showed my slides to the Pierre Matisse Gallery. They said, 'Well, DeKooning they'll never sell. Don't call us; we'll call you if we change our mind,'" or something like that. So he said, "Don't be bothered by people turning you down or getting rejected." And that same evening I think it was, a Scull auction was going on, and one of the paintings that was being sold he said he got about, I think it was \$2,800 for, under \$3,000, and it was going to be sold at the auction that evening while we were talking. And I said, "Well, you know, if it's going to go for a lot of money?" and he said, "Yeah, undoubtedly it will," because it was an important piece historically. And I said, "Well, aren't you upset by the fact that you know it'll sell for a lot of money?" And he said, "Well, yes, you are. And at the same time, when they bought that painting I really needed that \$3,000 and they had the courage to gamble, to buy it. So I can't really be that upset by it either." Anyway, the next morning I opened the Sunday Times, and there was an article about the auction and the DeKooning sold for-- I don't remember the amount anymore-- but \$365,000 or whatever it was. (chuckles) It was a fantastic amount of money.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Like 10,000 times as much as it, they paid for it.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, right. Well, all I'm saying is that you met all these people, and New York in a sense was much smaller than Seattle, partly because so many of the artists in galleries are in the SoHo, at that time especially. And lived there, so once you knew someone, especially the stature of Chuck Close and Jack Beal, it opened doors to everybody else right away. So I met a lot of people that way. But anyway, I went to the galleries and that was terrible. I'm not very aggressive in circumstances like that and I don't have enough ego about my work, so it was very difficult, but Chuck Close gave me a list of ten galleries and I went to them. And knocked on the door and showed your slides and so on, and it was certainly?-- I got a stomach ulcer again. (chuckles) But anyway, finally went to Allan Stone and the girl at the desk, Joan, said, "Well, they get about 250 people a week bringing in slides." So I said, "Well, God, you know, what's the use?" "But," she said, "I like your work and it's kind of abstract expressionist sort of things, which DeKooning [means Allan Stone--Ed.] likes." She says, "I'll show them to him, and he'll give you a call if he wants to see them." So she called me just about two days later and said that Allan was coming down to SoHo to look at someone else's work and he wanted to stop about six o'clock and look at the things. So I cleaned up Jack's studio and painted it white. It was such a mess in there. And we had to take one of the paintings up on top of the elevator?-- not inside of it, but on top of it?-- because the elevator was too small. It was a terrible mess because the paintings are too big to get up the elevator. Chuck rolled his own, so I [never had them] put together outside the studio. Anyway, he didn't come till 10:30, I don't think, and I never drink, but I had a few drinks and was getting very nervous. (laughs) But he finally came and he just stood there, looked at the three paintings that I'd brought with me from Seattle. Didn't say anything for a long time yet. A young woman who was a reporter or somebody from Canada was with him, and they just stood there and looked at the paintings a long time. I was getting more fidgety all the time. Finally he said, "Well, I'll give you a show this coming fall, and I'll buy all three of the paintings. The gallery takes 40 percent, but, of course when I buy the three myself I'll have to get 50 percent off." And he said, "Well, does that interest you?" And I sort of said, "Well, there was four or five other galleries that had promised to come and look at the work the next couple of weeks."

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs uproariously)

ALDEN MASON: And he looked me astounded, you know. Just the effrontery of anyone saying that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: He only had 250 artists a week bringing their slides.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, right. Right. He looked very shocked and he said, "I'm having a show for [Wayne--Ed.] Thiebaud. I usually don't have previews, but I'm having a preview party for Thiebaud next Tuesday"?-- that was about two or three days away?-- "So you come to the preview and then tell me yes or no, make up your mind, and, and then you can get a chance to talk to Thiebaud and see what he thinks of the gallery," or something like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: So he went away, and I went to the preview with Chuck Close, and met Thiebaud and [Richard--Ed.] Estes was there?-- who surprised me, because his work is hard-edged and clean and professional and skillful, and then?-- to me, anyway, at the time he looked like about a 16-year-old boy with a big sheepskin coat from the Midwest or something, and didn't seem to know where his work was. But Thiebaud was very professional. His wife had done a film on him. So anyway, better stop this long story, but...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But did you get to talk to people at Stone?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, I did. And Allan came over and said, "What do you say?" And I said, "I can't stand it going to galleries any more." I told him I was getting a stomach ulcer and I said, "You know, it's very wonderful that you like my work and you act that directly. How could I say no?" So that's how it happened. He still has two of the paintings in the gallery, I guess. Either he hasn't sold them or he doesn't want to; I don't know which.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Isn't that interesting?

ALDEN MASON: Because Greg Kucera, who I show with in Seattle now, was back there a year ago. He walked in just to say hello and tell Allan what I was doing, and then he showed Greg two of the paintings that he still had there. He also came to the show I had at Charlie Cowles's. And he never goes to shows. I just saw his daughter in San Francisco. She's opened a gallery in Germany, Stone Gallery. I was talking to her about Allan and she said, "Well, he never comes to shows. It was pretty good he came to Charlie Cowles to see your show."

[Break in taping]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, but this is all very interesting. The problem is that we need about nine more hours.



ALDEN MASON: I know. That's why I don't want to indulge too long here.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs) Well, after Allan?-- oh, that's a wonderful story. Is there anything more about that that you want to talk about?

ALDEN MASON: No, not really. I liked Allan and still do, even though I'm not with him any more. I left the gallery partly because he has a wonderful reputation as a dealer and everything, but he hangs stuff; it's messy in there. Things are falling down, he's got art all over the place and it's so crowded it's like an attic or something. I thought my paintings needed a really clean, spacious kind of place, which wasn't the way he ran a gallery. And so I finally decided to leave and see what might happen.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I have three shows down here as possible solo shows with Ruth Schaffner coming up next, '74, '75, and '76.

ALDEN MASON: One of them was a one-person show; the others were group shows.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How about Ruth Schaffner? How did you come about meeting her?

ALDEN MASON: I actually took my work down there and showed it to her, and she liked it and gave me a show. That's the time I had about five or seven major shows in one year, 1975 or something like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, it would probably have been the year after you were shown in Denver.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, it was at PCVA, Portland Center for the Visual Arts.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Right.

ALDEN MASON: And at William Sawyer Gallery, and at Ruth Schaffner, and at Eastern Washington University.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, you had another show at Friedlander's in '75.

ALDEN MASON: And Friedlander and then the show at the [Frederick S.--Ed.] Wight Gallery at the University [of California--Ed.] in Los Angeles also ran at the same time as the show at Ruth Schaffner.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's go back and just talk for a jiffy about Ruth Schaffner. Do you have any comments to make about her as a dealer? This was not a long-term relationship.

ALDEN MASON: No. She actually, I think was ill [for one of the; among other] things. She had an apartment right near the gallery, and she had a separate apartment for the artists or friends that came there, so I had two cars at my disposal and this place to stay. It was royal treatment was all I can say. It was really very nice. And she sold quite a few paintings for me. In fact, the paintings that were at the Wight Gallery and show.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That's '75.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, the Frederick S. Wight Art Galleries, the University of California, is their sort of gallery for the university. She sold two of those paintings to corporations in Los Angeles. That show was arranged through her.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: The show at Frederick Wight?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. The curator came to the gallery and saw the paintings and so he put me in that show. It was 14 abstract painters; it was a national show he had arranged. So she did some very nice things.

[Break in taping]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now who is the curator of that exhibition?

ALDEN MASON: Gerald Nordland was the director of the gallery and curated the show.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Of the Frederick Wight Gallery.

ALDEN MASON: And he wrote a little thing there.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay.

ALDEN MASON: But he also asked to buy one of the smaller paintings, and then Ruth, I guess, gave him one of the small paintings, which he has now given to the San Francisco Museum of Art.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Where he was the director later.

ALDEN MASON: It was in their collection. He's now at Milwaukee Art Center someplace. Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Um hmm. He was at San Francisco Museum for a long time.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, about this same time you had a show with William Sawyer? Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. That's all the shows that happened that one year. I think there were about six solo shows.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: William Sawyer was in San Francisco. Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Right, yeah. He still has a gallery. Ruth Schaffner I think became ill and she closed her gallery in Los Angeles, and then she later reopened a gallery in Santa Barbara, where she actually has her home. That's the reason that that relationship ended. She just actually closed her gallery. Same as Gerrard Hayes closed his gallery in Los Angeles.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's go on with the dealer types of shows, and then come back and talk about a couple or three of those very major museum shows.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: In 1977, the Braunstein Gallery?

ALDEN MASON: That was only a group show.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How about the Kiku Gallery [Seattle--Ed.]? Did you only have one exhibition with Kiku?

ALDEN MASON: I think so.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And that was when she opened her new gallery up on Pike Street?

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Or Pine.

ALDEN MASON: Right, and actually the show was kind of interesting because that was the last show of the oil paintings that were left. I mean, at Polly Friedlander was sort of the last show of the oil paintings, and it was a very traumatic time, knowing that the gallery closed and I lost all that money and all that. Every artist dreams of having a show that sells out, and I've all these years been waiting for it, and then what happens: the gallery goes bankrupt and you don't get it?-- or a lot of it. But also shortly after that the divorce thing was coming out, and I couldn't paint with oil paint any more because the fumes were making me ill. My body was telling me something and I had to listen because I was getting migraine headaches and aches and so on. The way I used the oil paint was so thin, like watercolor, and with all the medium in there and so on, it became, you know, you breathe the fumes; you could smell it two blocks away from my studio when the fans were going. So I had to quit using oil paint. So that, the divorce, and the closing of this gallery going bankrupt all happened about the same time. Everything came to a halt, and I had to find a new way to paint. For a year I just did drawings and then finally started a new direction of painting. But at the Kiku Gallery was interesting because there were still some oil paintings left in the studio that I had. So what we did is we had a show of the final oil paintings, and then some of the new drawings. And when Dee Tarzan [Seattle Times--Ed.] wrote a review of the show she talked about the new paintings. They really weren't; they were the drawings. But she assumed that that's the direction the paintings were going to go. Those were the first drawings on a black paper background, which foreshadows what happens now, actually, in my work.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: In 1979 you began a relationship with the Diane Gilson Gallery, which lasted through, I believe, 1983, when she went out of business.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And it looks to me as if you may have had as many as five shows there.

ALDEN MASON: Probably. I \_\_\_\_ show there almost every year.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Was she a fairly new dealer in Seattle?

ALDEN MASON: Well, she'd had a gallery for five years or so before that, but out on Madison or somewhere, a

smaller gallery. She showed a lot of prints by Frankenthaler and people like that. A lot of people from New York, and mostly prints or small paintings. Then she moved into Pioneer Square area and then she started showing a few local people and larger work. Actually I opened with a show there quite soon after she opened this larger gallery space.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And with Charles Cowles there's been one or two?

ALDEN MASON: Just one.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: One show in 1981.

ALDEN MASON: Right. In New York. He was the director of the museum here when he first came out here, and he bought one of the oil paintings for himself.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You mean, when he was the curator at the Seattle Art Museum?

ALDEN MASON: At the Seattle Art Museum, right. And he bought one of the large oil paintings for his own collection and it was very nice. He wrote the forward for the last catalog at, at Polly Friedlander, I guess it was. So he was very respectful of my work, very good to me. Then when he moved to New York to open a gallery, I called him and asked if he wanted to come and see the work before he left, and [it's funny], but Diane Gilson had just been in New York trying to arrange a gallery to show my work. The Milliken Gallery had agreed to show my work and they just called her about half an hour before Charlie was coming to the studio. So she came over to the studio and he came and looked at the work and he said, "I'd certainly consider showing your work in New York. I'll have to think about it." And she said, "Well, Milliken Gallery just called and they want to show Alden's work, so I guess it has to be yes or no now." That was brilliant timing.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: Entirely accidental, of course. And I always liked Milliken Gallery; I met him in New York once before, at Chuck's studio. I had had a painting there, and he came over and looked at it, and he didn't know. But this new work, his director liked it and wanted to show it. And I think I should have said yes. But Robert Sarkis and Diane thought it'd be nice to show with Charlie, because it's such a?-- he took over Andre Emmerich's gallery space in SoHo, and it's a beautiful space. Andre Emmerich had a gallery uptown and one downtown in SoHo, and he closed the one downtown. So I think Charlie took over that space.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I see.

ALDEN MASON: It's one of the finest gallery spaces in New York. And it's so funny, because years ago when I was there going to galleries, when Allan Stone gave me the show, I walked into Andre Emmerich's space, thought, "Boy, wouldn't it be marvelous to see your paintings hang on this wall! I'd give my right arm to do that." It seemed impossible. And then here all of a sudden there were the paintings hanging on this same wall, even though it wasn't Andre Emmerich anymore. (chuckles) It was beautiful space and certainly beautiful show, but the acrylic paintings that I was doing now I changed to after all the troubles that I was talking about, I spent a year just doing drawings, not knowing what I wanted to do. And I finally started doing drawings with acrylic paint on black paper. And it finally gradually got closed in and got bigger and bigger and became the acrylic sort of squeeze-bottle paintings I'm doing now. That's what I showed at Charlie's. It was one of the first shows. Well, I showed at Diane's?-- but they were the early things. I hadn't really got them together yet. I think the show was a perhaps a little premature. But anyway, that was the only show and Charlie and I?-- he's changed his ideas in what he wanted to do in the gallery, so that was the end of our relationship.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh. In Denver you have a dealer, Carson-Sapiro?

ALDEN MASON: Yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now, has there only been one show there? 1982.

ALDEN MASON: Right. They have my work there still, and they show it in group shows and so on all the time, but I haven't had another show there.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And the Fountain Gallery [Portland--Ed.] in 1983. Is that a solo show?

ALDEN MASON: I showed my work there for a long time. And never had a one-person show.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I see.

ALDEN MASON: That year I had five shows in a row. I was supposed to have a show there too, and I canceled just two months before the show. They didn't like that very much. Obviously that wasn't... But I had told them I was

just so exhausted I couldn't do it, so we canceled it. They've handled my work for years and years, and sold a lot of things for me. But I didn't have an actual show there till 1983, which was not their fault; it was my fault, because I just couldn't agree to a time to do it. It was interesting too, because Louis Bunce, who was sort of the Mark Tobey of Portland, or whatever you call him?-- he's the grand old man of painting in Portland. He came to the show, but was on his way to the hospital. He's had heart attacks and so on. He stopped by at the preview and said, "You know, Alden, I gotta come and see your show. But I'm on my way to the hospital." After he looked at the paintings he went in and sat down in Arlene's [Schnitzer--Ed.] office for a while. And, oh, about a week later, he died. So maybe my show was the last show that he ever went to. That was kind of fascinating. I always liked Louis. We've been friends for a long time.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It was an amazing thing to know that he was gone, because he got along in years, actually, but he was so energetic, wasn't he always.

ALDEN MASON: Oh, yeah. He never, never gave up. They'd tell him he'd have to quit drinking, he'd have to quit smoking, he'd have to do all these things. And he said, "No way." As soon as he got out of the hospital he just went ahead and did what he always did. He said, "I'm going to enjoy myself the way I meant to, and that's it."

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And he did.

ALDEN MASON: And that's what he did. So he had no regrets, I guess.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now, in 1983... What's the gallery in Los Angeles? I have never heard it spoken before. Is it Tortio?

ALDEN MASON: Tortue.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Is that one show only there?

ALDEN MASON: I've only had one show there, but I'm going to have one I think probably next year. They now handle my work in Los Angeles. I think Tortue means turtle, which doesn't seem to be a very good name for a gallery?-- shouldn't be slow; it should be fast. (laughter)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But it's a romantic word.

ALDEN MASON: I guess so.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And after Diane Gilson closed, then you've gone over to Greg Kucera's gallery?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, it's a new gallery. He's been open about six months is all. And he's doing really very well. He's a young man. Actually the strange part of it all, he was in a class of mine at the university. He took art and art history.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: As a painter himself.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. In fact he's had one show at Francine Seders just recently also. But his main interest is in running a gallery and not in being a painter himself. He's real energetic and I guess the kind of gallery I've always been looking for: someone who really believes in you so much that they'd just do anything for you because they believe in your work. That's the relationship we have, and it's really very nice. He calls every day and tells me all these wonderful things that he's trying to do and what's going on. And he's going to the Corcoran Biennial and Western State Show that I'm in right now. It's going to be in the Brooklyn Museum in March. He's going to fly back for the preview because I'll be in Costa Rica, and he's going to some galleries to try to get me a new gallery in New York. He's just doing real well?-- financially and every other way.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Did he work for Diane Gilson?

ALDEN MASON: Well, he did, but he worked for several galleries. He'd act as a sort of a pre-agent, selling art or...

[Tape 6]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It's like group exhibitions. What I mean is in museums rather than at galleries.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, uh huh.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I wanted to ask you just one question, and that is in this long career of having dealt with the market, with dealers, do you have any comments about what effect the market has on you as an artist? If any.

ALDEN MASON: Well, yes. Some of the people [at] school talked about it and they always said, "Well, dealers are out to make money and, you know, I don't want to show; I just do my own thing and all that," and so on. And that's true. Obviously dealers gotta sell paintings. And people say, "Well, you know, if you're going to start doing a lot of paintings that will sell that's not good for you." But in my case, it's really nice because I do exactly what I want to do. And I've been fortunate in that?-- the last ten years anyway?-- people are buying the paintings. I'm painting probably ten times as much, because it used to be that the studio would get filled up with work and then you'd say, "Well, what am I going to do with it? Here are these paintings sitting around there." It really isn't conducive to doing a lot of new work when you see paintings stacking up in piles in the corner. You either have to self-destruct and destroy all the things or it's a different situation. When the paintings move out of the studio and you see them in collections or wherever they may be, it makes you want to keep painting. It's true it becomes kind of like a business or something, but that's in a sense what it is; you're turning out paintings. But you're doing exactly what you want to do, just the same.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You are doing what you want to do.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It's possible that certain artists don't do what they want to do.

ALDEN MASON: That's right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But with you, it's been the perfect situation, hasn't it?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, sure. I never painted anything that I thought, "Well, gee, I should do this because it will sell." I just painted what I wanted to paint. And it was fortunate in that it also sold. That doesn't happen to everybody, of course. So for me it's been a means of turning out a lot more work, which is the way that you do better work.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So you hit those deadlines?-- they're probably good for you, actually, with your particular personality.

ALDEN MASON: Right, and you're painting for something, too. It also pays for all that paint and studio rents and all the things that you have to have.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's just hit here and there on the exhibitions that meant the most to you, perhaps, non-dealer exhibitions, museum exhibitions. This one in 1962, the Seattle World's Fair invitational. Would that be one of the first non-gallery shows? Well, these are group shows, aren't they?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, these are group shows.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What do you remember about that show of contemporary European and American painting at Century 21 [the title of the World's Fair--Ed.]? Did that mean a lot to you?

ALDEN MASON: Well, I'd seen a lot of those things. I'd been to New York and so on, so it wasn't all that new to me. But it was fun to see it in Seattle in a World's Fair situation, and seeing all these hundreds of people going through the show. You know, the remarks that people make and all that. So it was interesting from that standpoint. It was good for Seattle too. A lot of people saw things that they had never seen before.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So you were included then in the group show that was held there. And in 1969, you were in an interesting exhibition called Spirit of the Comics, at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania.

ALDEN MASON: Um hmm.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: As I think back in your career, it seems to me that that was a rather important exhibition for you.

ALDEN MASON: It was, except the paintings I was doing for that was?-- That was a very short time. Less than a year I was doing paintings that were flat, rather bright color, and sort of black outline shapes. It's not the way I usually feel like I should paint. It was a sort of a flirtation with, not pop art, exactly, but with forms more related to that. The forms are still the forms that I use and the head shapes appear, which are in the new show. But the application of paint is flat, rather bright color?-- not the way I would usually paint. So it was a really good show, except that I got in this show with things which didn't quite represent the way I usually paint, I suppose.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Except that those things did probably fit then much better than anything else you've ever done before or since.

ALDEN MASON: Oh, sure. Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: This idea of the spirit of the comics.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, of course. That's why I was included in there. The drawings of course are like that still, and always are, I suppose, to a great extent.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And that traveled extensively, did it not?

ALDEN MASON: It traveled all over the country; I don't remember the places.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Had a wonderful catalog that was quite large and well illustrated.

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's see, then, what would be...? One of the earliest group exhibitions of paintings from the Northwest was in 1974. There had been some other group shows around the country, but this was that Smithsonian Institution [show--Ed.] called Art of the Pacific Northwest at the National Collection [of Fine Arts--Ed.]. And that had a catalog.

ALDEN MASON: Right. Very beautiful catalog.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Traveled, did it not?

ALDEN MASON: It was at the Portland Art Museum and the Seattle Art Museum, that I know of. That's the only two places I think it went.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Um hmm. And then you discussed a few minutes ago the Fourteen Abstract Painters in 1975 at the Frederick Wight Art Gallery that Gerry Nordland put together. I would assume that that was a fairly prestigious show in your mind?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. The fourteen people were invited from the whole country, so it was a very select show. It had a very beautiful catalog and it was displayed just wonderfully. They had my three paintings in the main wall just as you come in, right on the entrance wall. So I was very impressed when I came in the door. (chuckles) Ruth Schaffner took me over there and we walked in together.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It's an impressive space down there too.

ALDEN MASON: Yes, and I was in the best place you could have. He treated me very nicely.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Uh huh. You also had a show at the Denver Art Museum: 1971, Denver Art Museum Inaugural Exhibition. That would be when they opened the building, is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Right. Actually that was a drawing that was in that show. It was an invitational show to open the museum.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay. Then you were included in the Denver Art Museum exhibition that was the Ten Artists from Around the West. Is that not right?

ALDEN MASON: Um hmm.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And you each had a solo show in a way?

ALDEN MASON: Right. Because there was about?-- oh, I don't know?-- six, seven, real large, eighty-inch paintings or something like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Of your own work?

ALDEN MASON: Right, of each person. And you each had a separate room, so it really was a one-person show, even though there were ten artists chosen from the western states.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And that had a catalog.

ALDEN MASON: That had a catalog. In fact, you wrote the...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, I did.

ALDEN MASON: Very beautiful.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And so as you look over all these exhibitions in museums, you were beginning to be represented in a lot of catalogs.

ALDEN MASON: They [Denver Art Museum--Ed.] also purchased a painting for their collection, just previous to that, I believe.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: This 38th Corcoran Biennial of American Painting?-- Second Western States Exhibition. This is being circulated, maybe, by the Corcoran [Gallery, Washington, D.C.--Ed.]?

ALDEN MASON: Yes, it's going to go to San Francisco Museum of Art and it was in Scottsdale, and right now it's going to be opening at Brooklyn Museum. And it went to somewhere in Iowa and is going to Long Beach, lot of places. It's going to be circulating all over the country.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Only one, one painting each?

ALDEN MASON: No, three. Three big paintings about eighty-by-eighty or something like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You've had a very long, distinguished career or showing, actually, not only in the Northwest, but all over the United States, what with the circulating exhibitions. You've had quite good coverage it would seem to me, as an artist. Someplace you said that some things that you like a lot are painting?-- you like to paint.

ALDEN MASON: (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You like to fly-fish.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You like to boogie dance.

ALDEN MASON: I like to birdwatch.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And you also like to travel.

ALDEN MASON: Karen and I are going to Costa Rica in March, birdwatching; we're going to look for bird of paradise, quetzal. There's a place called Monte Verde?-- it's a rain forest park in Costa Rica?-- and there's supposed to be nesting in March and you're supposed to be able to see them. They're an endangered species; they're becoming extinct through Central America through hunting and other pressures. So we're going to try to see those, among other things, of course. We're going to try to get into Cuercovado, which is also national park. It's hard to get into, and there're still big flocks of scarlet macaws and tapirs and all kinds of wonderful things there.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Is Karen learning about all of this from you, or had she been interested in birdwatching?

ALDEN MASON: The birdwatching, no; that's something she picked up from me. Her father does a lot of fishing and so on, but the birdwatching was something new. And of course, Karen paints also; she's having a show at Greg Kucera in May or something like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: A solo show.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: She does rather powerful abstract paintings, doesn't she?

ALDEN MASON: Yes. We were in San Francisco just now, trying to get?-- Well, I mentioned Jeremy Stone, Allan Stone's daughter, has opened a gallery in San Francisco. She showed an interest in her work, so we brought a couple paintings down to show her. She's thinking about maybe showing her in a group show.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You were married only, what, two or three years...

ALDEN MASON: Almost four years now. Three-and-a-half years, something like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: She was a student in painting at the University of Washington?

ALDEN MASON: Right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What about the fly-fishing? You like to do that too?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Where do you do that?

ALDEN MASON: Oh, I climb in mountain lakes and go up to Canada, secret places and so on. (chuckles) It's always trying to find that magical place, you know. Somewhere over the horizon there's this place where there's this perfect lake or perfect island or something that's got birds and tropical fish and all these wonderful things. It turns out usually that there are lots of mosquitoes or there are gnats on the beach or there's always something wrong, or the people have shot all the parrots or something.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: But you keep looking for this wonderful magical place.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But somehow with all the mosquitoes, you never seem to have become disappointed in this, and you just keep trying.

ALDEN MASON: Sure. Just like the painting, you're always trying to get one just a little better that you really feel very happy about, and I guess the traveling and so on is the same thing. You're still gonna find some secret magic place where it'll all be perfect.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So much of this that we're talking about has to do with movement within you, it seems to me. You know, the traveling, the fly-fishing, the boogie dancing?-- we didn't really?--

ALDEN MASON: [I guess the energy is...]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Do you think about the boogie dancing?

ALDEN MASON: No. I don't do as much of that anymore. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You do that when you can't get out, perhaps, to do some other thing.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I read through just dozens of reviews of your work, and I find things like, "Explosive transmission of energy," "spontaneous fantasy," "wild voyages of experience," "alive, emergent," "nervous linear quality," "surfaces wiped over and out in broad quick strokes convey feelings of continuous movement," "images flirt." And there're words like "child's nightmare," "invective," "horror," "destruction," "creation," "rich subconscious reservoir," "struggle," "playful," just all kinds of words?-- "pulsating life that oozes out across the canvas," and another one that says, "What is constant in these works is their shared dynamism flows from one canvas to the next. This quality of energy is probably the most important thing Mason inherited from abstract expressionism," "work which vibrates with life," "explosions on canvas." Those are examples of the kind of comments that critics have said about your work over all the years.

ALDEN MASON: They've said some bad things too.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs) Well, I didn't pick out the bad things. I only picked out the words?-- and there are so many of them that do have to do with movement and energy.

ALDEN MASON: Well, I think there's always been kind of a dichotomy or a separation in a way, because I always loved to draw. The drawings are always spontaneous and fast and energetic and full of movement and energy. They [are] also full of kind of fantasy, surreal images; they come from figures and still lifes and a lot of things?-- insects and whatever?-- but that kind of drawing has always been there all through the paintings. The big oil paintings that I did for such a long time still have that quality, but they're probably more like, in a color-field kind of experience in a way. The brush stroke and all those things are in there, but they're more like watercolor. But the drawings always continued, even through that, and the head shape and a lot of these things that have appeared keep reappearing, and finally in the last show right now, it's kind of nice for me because the drawing quality that I've always liked and the painterly quality and so on have come together. So that in the last show they're mostly of big heads and as containers for?-- you can put anything in the head you want, a landscape, or the ideas?-- whatever a head thinks, you can put in there. These big heads kind of encompass all these other ideas that I want to do, so you can put them together. The drawing is there very strong and yet the color shift and the energy, the surface, all those things, are still there too. But they're much quieter and the drawing and the painting has sort of come together, which, I think, all my life has been a big struggle, this kind of separation from the drawing and the painting. Now I think they've sort of come together and I feel very excited about it. Well, not only that, this show, which I think is one of the best I've ever had, but also what's going to come out of this show in the future ones. There's a million paintings that (chuckles) I want to do now to make this keep going.



LAMAR HARRINGTON: While you're doing these paintings, with all this tremendous energy that seems always to have been within you, when you're in your studio working, are you feeling terribly excited all the time? Or not necessarily?

ALDEN MASON: Not really, anymore. I used to.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You're working.

ALDEN MASON: I used to have a record player on and lot of sort of rock and roll music and all kinds of energy things going on, the television going on there and so on, but lately it's sort of just the drawings, all those activities there which take place, sometimes not in the studio at all, but here, I mean watching television or whatever you might be doing. The energy sort of goes in the drawings and the painting kind of is a more of control. You take these drawings and improvise, but in a more controlled, perhaps, experience. So that energy level is sort of pressed into the painting now, not out there floating around.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: We were talking about travel a few minutes ago, which I feel really works right into all of this talk about energy.

ALDEN MASON: The paintings are about movement and space and this kind of thing, and the moving of your body, driving, or an airplane, or going to a jungle, or snorkling are all things I do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It's the same thing, isn't it?

ALDEN MASON: Birdwatching is sort of the same kind of nervous energy, I suppose, in a way, but it's more controlled because if you don't find that right bird you can wait till tomorrow, or if you don't get that five-pound fish you can enjoy what you're doing and maybe tomorrow will be okay. I used to get really upset because I want everything to happen right now. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, that's the impatience of the young man and you obviously are maturing and getting this...

ALDEN MASON: Well, no, it was always that way, pretty much, until maybe (laughs)... Maybe it still is here right now; I don't know. (laughter)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Tell me about the trip that you took on, I think it might have been the Ford Foundation in 1978. You had a grant, and did you go to Trinidad and...?

ALDEN MASON: Tobago. With Fred Anderson.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, with Fred Anderson!

ALDEN MASON: Who's been a friend of mine for a long time. Fred stays in his studio, stays in Seattle, doesn't go anyplace very much, and I sort of talked him into going on this adventure. I was going because I wanted to do a lot of drawings from natural forms. I had this idea I wanted to try to draw from more things?-- I've drawn from still lifes, from people, from things like that?-- but I wanted to draw from things that I looked at birdwatching and that sort of thing, crabs and tropical fish. And I did some of that. Mostly it was, however, like always just looking and feeling and experiencing, not actually doing a lot of drawing, although I did?-- this is the first time I really tried to draw at the place. There were some beautiful crabs with strange parts and pieces and I did drawings of a lot of stuff like that, flotsam and jetsam on the beach, with parts of these things. And we saw wonderful birds like the scarlet ibis. It's a great place for birds and so on, too.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Over all the years?-- it's important for us to get down talking more about your paintings, but as far the travel goes, would you say that there are any other trips that you took that really stand out in your mind as having influenced your painting or...

ALDEN MASON: Oh sure! I've gone to the desert country and a lot of things for the landscape, but probably one of the things [that] really did the most for me, I went to Europe, the only time I'd been to Europe. I was only there about six weeks, but I saw all the Bonnard paintings in the Paris \_\_\_\_ Museum and the Tate and a lot of places. And I think?-- before that I'd always use a strong dark and light value things. I always liked El Greco and Marsden Hartley and people that are really dramatic dark and light. And Ray Hill, who was my teacher, used strong value things. Then I saw the Bonnard paintings in Paris and so on, and here was all this open, drifting, sensuous color, related colors and cool and warm colors, all this kind of thing, which I'd always used a little bit of, but I'd never realized that it could be the central focus of the painting so much. I think my whole attitude toward color changed after seeing, especially, his painting. Matisse too, but especially Bonnard.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Bonnard and Matisse. Now there's something very interesting about what you just said. When you were in school at the University of Washington, with Walter Isaacs and other people out there who

were teaching, there was a great deal of emphasis on the dark and light, not the [modeling, mottling] but the dark on light...

ALDEN MASON: Yes, yes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: ...which was Ernest Fenollosa and Arthur Dow's way of looking at art. That probably had quite an effect on you?

ALDEN MASON: It did, but also I just liked the mood. On the farm, the dramatic evenings, the dark and light in the mountains and all these things. You see it in this kind of light in the valley up there.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I see.

ALDEN MASON: And El Greco's paintings I liked because they had this theatrical dark against light, light against dark, and so on. So, yeah, you got it at school, but also it meant more to me because I felt the emotional response to it, from seeing work like El Greco, as I've mentioned, or things of watercolors I'd try to do up in the valley up there, Deception Pass and so on. So it was a means of making the painting expressive, and probably in some ways they were more expressive than the things that I did since with the color, because the color in a way can be more decorative in the good sense of the word. Who knows? I also saw a lot of the things in Italy, the Byzantine mosaics and the Ducchio Maesta and a lot of little formal things that had lot of structure, but also the light in the mosaics, and the light coming through the alabaster windows and so on. Which is the same kind of color and softness. It had a great, great impact, of course.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That was all in this same trip you were talking about earlier?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, right. I also at the same saw a big show in the Venice Biennale. It was just by accident; I didn't know it was there, and walked in. It was a retrospective show of Gorky's work. I'd always liked that kind of drawing that you see in Miro and you see in Gorky and so on. Here was this whole big show. And that impressed me. So here I was obsessed with this color thing I'd saw, and then I also saw this drawing of the intimate details of flowers, you know, the sexual part of the flower that the bee sees. You see all these little forms and things that?-- different way of looking at landscape, so to speak. And that really impressed me.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Do you remember which year that was?

ALDEN MASON: No-o-o.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay, don't worry. I'll look it up. Were you in New York for a bit when you came back from Europe that year?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, we stopped there briefly. But I only stayed in New York that one time that I mentioned.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: The subjects of light and color in your work are very important. Cowles talked about the earth, he talked about the luminescence, and of course a lot of people talk about that with reference to your work...

ALDEN MASON: The oil paintings especially, I suppose, because they were done like watercolor. And over about ten coats of white gesso, sanded and so on, so that you got this thin paint with a lot of medium gloss and \_\_\_\_\_ over this dense solid ground, so they did become very luminous and very light saturated, lot of reflectivity of the surface.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now, so much of this has to do with your emotional response to these things and not perhaps so much to do with theory, except that when you were a student, you probably learned a lot about color theory and so forth at the university. But I rather doubt that you actually taught color to students as a theory, the way certain artists who might approach it in a more intellectual way than you would have done. Is that right?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, probably. You talked about the basic things that everyone does about color, about what it would do spatially or what it would do structurally or what it would do emotionally. And how much color, where you put it, and all these things become more important. And theory about related color, triadic color, whatever it is. You use it for sort of painterly reasons or emotional reasons.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You were working, I suppose, mostly or entirely with color pigment, not with colored light, for instance.

ALDEN MASON: No. It's just what the pigment would do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Everybody always wonders about the weather in the Northwest and artists and what that does to them, the cloudiness and grayness, and here you are with all this light and color. I suppose it could be a

reaction to the surroundings?

ALDEN MASON: Well, people say that, but the Northwest?-- You think of cloudy days as being real dark. Or the sky as being dark. Actually, on a day when the sun is shining, you can look straight up above you and that blue sky is so dark it's almost black. But on a cloudy day, it can be very white and the light coming through that?-- it could just be very luminous here, actually. Not maybe a lot of color, but it certainly can be very luminous in the Northwest. But of course I've been to Mexico eight times and I've been in desert country several times and I'll enjoy that, see that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: So you're very sensitive to it, of course.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's discuss the drawing just a little bit more. You've talked quite a little bit about it as we've gone on, but you may have some other comments to make about it. One thing I was wondering, did you ever do classical drawing as a student?

ALDEN MASON: (chuckles) Oh, yeah, sure you did. When I went to school you drew from casts and all figure, and you had to measure and do all those things that...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: The Golden Mean and all that.

ALDEN MASON: Right, everybody did, although when you got into Walter Isaacs's class, he talked more about structure, how you relate one thing to another and to the rectangle and to the space and to all these things. So that it very quickly got into a more painterly idea about drawing. But sure, I did those things in the first couple years. But the drawing I liked is the improvisational. It's like, you know, you dance and you just do it. I like drawings that are improvisational which you try express or feel or distort or change?-- not just to be changing but to make your own particular statement, or whatever. It's really the surprise of?-- well, even children's drawings were, they do these... There's a wonderful children's drawing that I'd had around the school for years a five-year-old did. It was a apple tree. And he drew the little tiny kid under this huge apple tree. The arm was about 15 feet long and the hands were big talons like a eagle's claw. And all the little green apples were all over the tree and on the top of the tree were these three huge red apples, giant apples, like pumpkins. What he was drawing was the idea that the most difficult things we want are sometimes unattainable. Or if they are, they're way up there almost out of reach. But if you try hard enough you can get 'em. And here was this kid saying all this with this drawing, with this exaggerated arm, the fingers trying to grab?-- in fact, the red apples were always on top of the tree. If you lived in a farm, like I have, that's where they were, especially these old trees. That was a wonderful drawing. The hand was just like a Picasso hand of Guernica. I'd always remember that drawing and I like to draw things that have that kind of meaning and feeling and yet be improvisational and fantasy and all these other things as well. So the drawing has always been more figurative, I suppose, more linear than the paintings. And that's why I'm talking about it in the last show; they're trying to bring these things together a little bit more, finally.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You've talked some about artists whose work you admired over the years. You talked about Gorky, for instance, and, and Miro in terms of more in the drawing area, probably.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Although I guess you admire them for other reasons too. Are there other artists, particularly in the drawing area, that you appreciate a lot?

ALDEN MASON: Well, yeah, Miro and Gorky would be certainly two people, and there's Altoon.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Altoon?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. In California. I mean, I didn't do what I was doing because I saw his work; he was concurrent I suppose. But all of a sudden I saw Altoon's things and I thought, "God, here's someone who'd doing the same that I've been trying to do all the time." And of course, I enjoyed seeing those. In fact, when I had the show at Tortue Gallery just last year he had?-- oh God, it must have been about 40 Altoon drawings there on those illustration board, untrained just stacked in a corner. So I got to sit down and just went through them all. That was really a lot of fun, because I enjoy his drawings.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You know, that's amazing that there were all those drawings still there, this long after his death. Because he was a very popular artist, was he not?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, but he was so prolific. He'd just do these drawings and go boom! Just like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, I see. I can't believe that you do a sketch before you do a painting. (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: Well, you don't follow it. I mean, it's all improvisation.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yeah.

ALDEN MASON: The painting too. But there are drawings that have a general format. The ideas are there, but you improvise. If you don't improvise as you go, the way I paint, then the thing would die. It's very strange. If you try to force something, it doesn't work. It has to just appear magically out of your self. You try to force that to happen and it becomes stiff or stereotyped; the good things happen with the more freedom you have to really just improvise. And hopefully that'll happen. It happens in the last two paintings in the show, that were the most improvisational and worked the best.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: In the present show?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Which two are they? Can you remember the titles?

ALDEN MASON: They're two big white ones. One is called Napoleon, and the other one is called?-- I don't remember the other one.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What did you call the first one?

ALDEN MASON: Napoleon. Napoleon Bonaparte. (chuckles) I don't know; the title came afterwards. The head was so massive and was red, white, and blue, sort of and \_\_\_\_....

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, it would be interesting to know which ones you feel really did come together so well.

ALDEN MASON: The one on the announcement I like, and it was very improvisational too. Sometimes the first ones of a new series do that for you. Sort of figure out all the things you should do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How about William Wiley? Have you followed him very much?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, I know his work. I like some of the things. It has never influenced me especially, I guess.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Or [Roy--Ed.] DeForest?

ALDEN MASON: Or DeForest did for a while in the early things. It's so funny?-- I'm drawing now with the squeeze bottle and so on, but some of his early things... I saw a show of his, the more abstract ones, about fifteen, twenty years ago, which had this kind of candy kisses?-- that was an insulting thing to say, but they were little kind of squeezed dots all over the surface. And there's a sense of pattern there which I guess a lot of my more recent paintings become kind very strong patterned feeling to them. And those paintings had a terrific pattern sense. I wasn't conscious I'm doing what I'm doing?-- thinking about his paintings?-- but afterwards, looking back on one of his books and so on, there's a lot of sort of similar idea or feeling about them.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: How about Dubuffet?

ALDEN MASON: Not really; you'd think so sometimes from the drawings of the heads and things, but no. I've looked at them, but I never consciously thought about them or got excited about them that much, which is kind of strange. They are childlike, I suppose, almost, and I like the drawings to do all those things, but be very witty and full of invented shapes and things. And in a way, his are sort of a brutal child's head or something. They're more simplistic in a way, too, I suppose. And I guess the drawing not so much looking like, but the shapes in a Miro?-- they're so inventive, hundreds?-- in the good Miro's. Some of them I dislike entirely, but some of the early Miro's are like a primer of how you would invent or design shapes from objects. And I think that probably excited me. Not that I wanted to draw like Miro, sometimes they got very easy and designy or whatever.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Miro's?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. But there were ideas in some of those things that were really... There's a wonderful one I can't remember the title of; it's a torso. The torso becomes a table, still life, and the head becomes a bouquet. You read it all of these different ways as you look at, depending upon your frame of reference. And that always intrigued me too. Not the idea of just surrealism, but abstractly the way these shapes could be read and changed.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I wondered also if you'd ever looked at very much Rouault?

ALDEN MASON: No.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Doesn't mean a lot to you?

ALDEN MASON: Way back when I liked the dark/light things, El Greco and that sort of thing, yeah, I looked at some of them...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And the dark line around the outside.

ALDEN MASON: ...because they had strong dark/light and sort of a mood to them that I responded to.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Going back to another show that we had in Seattle that was influential to certain people for sure, do you remember the van Gogh show that was at the Seattle Art Museum [1959--Ed.]?

ALDEN MASON: Yes I do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Did that mean much to you?

ALDEN MASON: Well, yeah. The funny thing is, when I saw the show I was let down. Because you always heard in art history classes and looking at books when I first went to art school, you know, here was this sort of madman who did all these emotional vigorous things, and all that raucous, strong color. And then I went to see the show, and it all looked very bland and peaceful. The color wasn't very bright and it all seemed very charming. Somehow, after all the reading you'd done about his work, you didn't expect this. It's partly because of when we were looking at the show. If you'd looked at the show when he painted it, that would have been true, but after seeing DeKooning's Woman series and things like that, and then looking at the van Gogh show, it seemed very? - I liked the paintings, I don't mean that, but it seemed very mild and almost dull. (chuckles) And that was a kind of a funny response, because I didn't expect that to happen at all. (both chuckle)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You said one time, "For me, the birth of a painting is the improvisational use of energy to expressively pattern a surface with paint, which in turn is suggestive of the delicate balance of the interrelationship of all living things in the ecosystem." I wanted to discuss a little bit more, although you have touched on it some, pattern and decoration.

ALDEN MASON: Well, it refers to that, but it also refers to my interest as a birdwatcher, which refers to the fact that I belong to the Audubon Society, which refers to the fact that I believe in ecology, the, somehow, saving of this planet for something other than people. For people too, but I mean, cutting down the jungles in Brazil and destroying of complete habitat of animals and birds that we don't know even exist. It's just so frightful. Or the loss of the largest mammal in the world: the blue whale. The whales which are disappearing. All of these things offend me, you know, very much, the destruction that we are doing to this planet Earth that we all live on. I feel really, really upset by that. So what I'm saying there can be seen in a broader aspect, but that also happens in the painting. Everything has to coexist and work together in the painting to say what you want to say, and you go into the jungle in the Upper Amazon someplace and everything coexists in this wonderful way too and it works together. There are disharmonies in there and things eat each other and all that, but it all works together and it works nicely. Then as soon as man comes in and starts chopping down everything?-- There was a gold strike that happened when I was in the Upper Amazon a couple years ago. Everything was getting ruined and destroyed because of man's inability to enjoy or understand these. \_\_\_\_ people are starving to death; there are too many people. And of course, if there's a monkey out there, they shoot it. And you can't help but feel, you know, to that person that's necessary, but man is... It's frightful that we're destroying whole species and whole groups of animals and birds and things, and sometimes you're less worried about people dying than you are whales dying, which is a terrible thing to say, but there are more of us than there are whales left. (chuckles) Anyway, that refers to that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I just lost my cat this week. I've always had a very profound feeling about animals, similar to what you're talking about, but I don't think it's ever been as strong as, until just recently. Now, my cat doesn't compare with whales because there are plenty of cats around, God knows, but...

ALDEN MASON: It was important to you.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But the whole business, when you think about how all of this fits together, it's a quite a mind-boggling subject. And I suppose that for you, rather than to be out there on the ramparts or on the soapbox or whatever, you're doing it through your paintings?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, I contribute money, of course to the Audubon, all these groups, to them, to try to do what I can. But I don't make lectures and speeches and things about it, because I'm emotionally and physically not able to do that. But I believe in it that strong, how important it is. Maybe it's too late, but certainly we gotta keep trying anyway. The one thing that's strange about all this is that it seems an ego trip to say that even, but a lot of the artists I know seem to be the most sensitive people in the world. Even if they're not birdwatchers or things that I am, they believe in this kind of love and sharing and saving and getting along with people, and so all these

things that we've talked they're so necessary. And which are disappearing in the world. But artists seem to have a great feeling for all these things, and they have a sense of freedom and a challenge to try new things, but they also have a sense of enjoying and loving and sharing things that are here in [my] work. There should be more artists around. Reagan should have been one. (both chuckle)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: He thought he was.

ALDEN MASON: He thought he was, yeah. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Okay, let's go on now and talk some more about this style of your painting and other paintings, and about what's been going on over maybe the decade of the seventies and into the eighties, as far as what I mentioned earlier: pattern painting and decorative painting, or pattern and decoration. I can remember, during all the years when I was on the campus, that I used to try to get all of these pronouncements that various authorities made, especially in art history, about what things were qualified to be called art and what weren't qualified. And there were certain words that had a kind of bad connotation, for instance, decoration and pattern?-- in a way. And still, all of these abstract paintings were coming along in the early part of this century, becoming more abstract all the time, and they had, rather they were overall pattern, a lot of them.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Some of these were accepted to be fine art and others seemed to be more decorative. People seemed to think of them as being more decorative in a bad kind of sense. And I just wonder if you have any more comments that you'd like to make about that? For instance, attitudes about these subjects as you and others on the faculty developed. Do you have questions about all of these words flying through your head as you heard them, during those days?

ALDEN MASON: Oh yeah. I mean, just the word decoration, you know, what is...? I mean, some of the finest paintings that I like, like Matisse, for example, you can say, "Well, gee, that's really decorative painting in the good sense of the word." And the last paintings I've been doing, there's been?-- [Rudy--Ed.] Autio was talking about it being overly decorative, but they're still fine art, or whatever. It's a very difficult thing to pin down. But if you really believe in what you're saying, or doing, and it's important to you, somehow it transcends that decorative quality. If you're doing something as a bathroom shower curtain, you want to just decorate it with some interesting shapes and they run across the surface endlessly without anything being other than titillating to the eye, that's one thing. But I think people that try to use pattern, for example, it goes beyond that; it's an obsession with pattern or it's taking together all kinds of pattern you've seen and making them transcend themselves so that they say something else. And so-called decorative arts, like pottery and other things, you can say, "Well, gee, that isn't like painting or something," but in the best things, it does the thing. I mean, the New Guinea pieces right there on the wall are powerful things, and yet they're certainly decorative too.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: They're decorative. They're patterned, definitely.

ALDEN MASON: Especially if you take them out of their place. Or Dale Chihuly's new pots I just saw in San Francisco. The Braunstein Gallery had some of his new things and they're much stronger and better and they transcend glass-blowing as being kind of a decorative thing. They're really powerful, the new ones. They transcend just being craft, if that's a term that some people want to use.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You're talking about the Machia, or the spotted series with very bright...?

ALDEN MASON: No, no, you haven't seen these. These are just new things, and they're quite opaque and brighter color.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yeah, well, that's what I mean.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, but I hadn't seen anything like these. The show is up right now. They're new things. So it's awfully hard, you know. It gets confusing for people. People say, "Well, is that art?" or "I know what I like," and it gets to be a real complex question.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: We talked some about drawing, you might say versus painting, and your work in bringing these two things together more satisfactorily. What about your thoughts and feelings and struggles over the years over the formal aspects of the work that you're doing versus the figure, for instance? By formal, I mean, formal abstract, versus the figure.

ALDEN MASON: Well, when I think about?-- If I had it to do all over again...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What would you do?

ALDEN MASON: ...what would I do? Yeah. I think one of my problems all my life of painting...

[Tape 7]

ALDEN MASON: ...just to believe in what I was doing, that I should just keep pounding away and do it bigger and better and stronger. I'd sort of run out of steam and think, well, maybe I should do something different. I was brought up as a kind of a scared kid. I skipped the second grade and I got into advanced math and so I didn't know how to deal with it. I didn't know that I couldn't see. I went out in the grade school to play baseball, which everybody did. Maybe I wouldn't have been a birdwatcher or painter, you know; maybe I'd be playing football. (chuckles) I doubt that. But I went out there to catch a ball and the ball would come way up in the air and it would disappear?-- I didn't know where it was?-- and all of a sudden it would reappear suddenly and would hit me on the end of my finger, almost broke my finger. One time [it] hit me on top of the head and bounced off. And of course all the kids laughed because this dummy couldn't catch the ball out there. Actually I had very good physical control. I could run and I could compete in that way very well. But I looked very inept and very stupid out there, and I was so naive coming off the farm I didn't know that I couldn't see. I never knew I couldn't see until about the second or third year in the university, if you can believe that. I'd been painting all these paintings with streaks like van?Gogh's lights around lampposts, all these soft kind of colorful things. And I went down and got a new pair of glasses! And I walked out of that place on Third Avenue, looked up the street, perspective made easy, going back ten miles. Everything was so hard and cars were coming at you?-- scared the hell out of me. And I went back and started doing these real hard paintings. It was in Ambrose Patterson's class, and he said, "What happened to you?" he said. "You're doing terrible paintings." (chuckles) And I said, "Well, I couldn't see before! The lights out there all were shimmering and they looked just like van?Gogh's painting. I thought they were very, very real." It took me ten years to get back to where I was before I got the glasses.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: But also it did something to your personality. I was kind of a scared spooked kid all the time. Partly because of that and other things like that?-- My mother kept saying, "Geez, I don't know how you dare do that," and so I didn't get any reinforcement at all. I just got mad and struggled to get where I am. But my personality was, I couldn't even talk, you know. First day I taught class I was one big glottle stop.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: And now I can't stop talking. So, maybe if that hadn't happened to you, maybe you'd gone on and been playing football or doing something else. Who knows what effects things have on a person; it's kind of mysterious. The only art I ever knew all the way through high school was Sears-Roebuck catalog in the outhouse or the End of the Trail, I think it is?-- the Indian on the horse, standing on a cliff?-- that was the only painting I had in my bedroom. I kept waiting for the Indian to jump over the cliff and he never did. And the funniest part was coming back up Highway?101, there is a big sculpture carved out of wood in the redwoods, the End of the Trail. It's not the painting, but it was a take-off on that painting. I just saw it when we were coming up there and I started to laugh and I think I finally got rid of that hangup. (chuckles) So the paintings are going to be much better now. (laughs) I'm going to get new glasses, too, next week.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: Things are getting softer again. So that brings us kind of up to date, doesn't it?

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs) Well, you were telling me that with reference to this subject of talking about your work with abstract and with the figure.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, well, I don't know, I was avoiding that subject for \_\_\_\_.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs) You don't want to talk about it?

ALDEN MASON: I like paintings, of course, which have feeling and say things and have emotional response and suggest complexity and imagery and feeling. I don't like things that are minimal or simplistic to that degree, or that are nonobjective to the point that?-- well, even Alber's things, not that he's trying to do things with these squares and color spatially and the color effect and a lot of things that happen we know?-- but I don't respond that much to that kind of thing. I like things that are?-- well, you can look around the room. There're Navajo rugs and patterns, things that are sensuous and I suppose romantic, but also that are complex. I like to go to the tropics because there're hundreds of kinds of birds, beautiful tropical birds of all kinds from parrots to parakeets to toucans, to whatever, and there are tropical butterflies by the thousands, and you go snorkling and there are tropical fish of every color or size or shape, and coral and so on. And I love it here. You go up in the Cascades, but you don't see a lot of life. You just walk up there into lake fishing and it's very beautiful, but you may see, you know, a chickadee or you may see a winter wren or a couple things, but it's not the prolific spread of life and color that you see in the tropics. I guess that's why I still go to the tropics, because I like that kind of activity and complexity. That's just my nature, I suppose.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I have some examples of some of your work here, over the years, and I thought we might go through those now. But before we do it, although you've already touched on a few of the changes, especially in your use of medium and perhaps in the use of technique, I wondered if you could talk about what you started in as far as medium and then how it went along. For instance, in the very first place you were working especially in watercolor, weren't you?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, well, I came straight off the farm, as I told you, and didn't know anything about art at all. And here was Ray Hill who painted landscapes essentially of Deception Pass, the ocean beaches, of hills in Eastern Washington, things that I enjoyed myself. Of course that was wonderful and I was like, you know, here was a god. Nowadays people don't think about going to an art class, they just wonder who that old guy is going to be who's going to tell them stuff today. But I went in there like, God, here was this marvelous person that did all these wonderful things that I'd like to do. It was really exciting to me, and of course I had majored in zoology and entomology and so on the first year I came to the university, before I went up there. So I was interested in the landscape and all that, the things that inhabit the landscape. Here was Ray Hill who painted these things, and that was my first big interest, so that became very important. So he did watercolors and I liked the fluid, spontaneous directness of it. And I did it easily. I probably should have never quit because I painted watercolors so easily, and everybody else has so much trouble with watercolor. Maybe that's why I quit, eventually. But I did watercolors for a long time.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And those would have been transparent watercolors, probably?

ALDEN MASON: Real transparent, really wet, splashy sort of paintings. A lot of the paintings I did after that were sometimes real thick, but trying to make it move like that, in a way, sometimes quite thin, wiping paint off, until finally those seven, eight years of those big oil paintings which were done just like the watercolors, like you returned to where you were in the beginning. I started doing some big abstract watercolors, and then out of that came the oil paintings, because I wanted to do them bigger and you couldn't do watercolors 80, 90 inches high. So then I started using the oil paint very dilute and thin with [Demar] varnish and, and [stand] oil and dryers and turpentine and a lot of stuff in there, and diluting the paint down very, very thin. And yet a lot of medium so that it didn't look thin. You'd put it on just like watercolor and I'd wipe it out, put it back, and use brushes and sponges and all kinds of stuff. So they were like, like glorified huge watercolors. So, that's seven, eight years of that big series of oil paintings were in a sense an extension of what you did in the very beginning, you kind of came back to in a very different way. And then after that...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Now wait. Just before that, what about that painting on the wall?

ALDEN MASON: That's Karen's painting.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh-h-h.

ALDEN MASON: But, yes, I did some paintings for a while like that. Not as good as that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: That's true.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That is a fantastic painting.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, it is.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But this would have been before... Those heavy impastoed abstract paintings were before what you were just talking about, weren't they?

ALDEN MASON: Right. They came between. At first, like I was saying, I did the watercolors and some thinner paints and then I tried to do some of that sort of thing with thick paint, letting it move around like that. DeKooning and people like that were painting abstract expressionist paintings at this time too, although I wasn't really trying to do that; I was trying to do things that still related, in a sense, to the landscape and to these forms that I'm talking about.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Although they were quite abstract looking, weren't they?

ALDEN MASON: Oh, yes. But they're still related to figure and landscape sort of things somehow. And they occurred for quite a few years there, but finally I started to go back, as I said, to the watercolors again, but only abstract. They were landscapes still, but they seemed to the lay person abstractions, I suppose. But they had real sense of place, or at least sense of landscape feeling and mood?-- the same mood certainly anyway, as the early watercolors from Deception Pass, dark/light things in a way. And then they, as I said, led into the oil paintings which became the work that probably that people knew about the most, and were exhibited the most



and so on.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And would have been those, for instance, that year when you had so many shows.

ALDEN MASON: Those were the oils. And all these collections here and so on, are almost entirely those oil paintings, except for the new things I'm doing right now.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And then that closed because of this problem you had with the fumes, and you turned over to acrylic.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. But first I spent probably a year or so just doing drawings, because I didn't know what I wanted to do. Then I finally got doing a lot of drawings and I wanted to make the drawings bigger and more important as the paintings, and so I did some huge paintings, thick white paint over the whole painting and then drawing into it with a brush with enamel-like black paint and a little bit of color. There are only one or two of those left, I guess, but I did some of those. Technically it's so difficult and gradually it moved away from that into drawing with the squeeze bottle. I'd done some things like that, and then I did a lot of drawings like that, and then the drawings got bigger; in fact they got 80-inch canvas size or something, drawing with the squeeze bottle and then putting washes on a black ground?-- the drawings for a long time had been on a black ground. And then I actually saw?-- well, Robert Sperry did some things with, in fact I did some things on some of his pots. We decorated some pots at a party one night. He had a squeeze bottle and he used that to...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: On his pots?

ALDEN MASON: Sometimes he used it on some of the pots, so I'd used it there.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Did you draw on his pots?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. My mother still has one. He gave it to her when she came down. Anyway, we used this squeeze bottle thing, and then also there was an artist in New York?-- I can't remember his name now?-- that paints with a squeeze bottle. It's nothing new. There's a girl in Portland uses squeezes bottle too. This guy in New York does some very soft things with a squeeze bottle. But anyway, I liked it because it would go fast and would move with this energy we've been talking about. I gradually became more obsessed with it and more obsessed and then gradually covered the whole surface. So it changed from a drawing into a painting. The drawing part was there but it disappeared into this sort of all-over pattern, kind of textile-like look, I suppose. Then gradually now in the last paintings, the drawing has reappeared in these heads and figurative things, and the surface is much quieter and more subtle and controlled and not so many kinds of patterns, so the drawing has become more important; they become more monumental and probably better paintings in some ways?-- at least, you gotta think that because you're doing it. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Once you got through that really difficult time when you had to change over from oil to acrylic, you seem quite happy with almost all the media that you've used. Is there one that just sends you more than anything else?

ALDEN MASON: Well, I don't know. I like what I'm doing and I think it's better for me, because the oil paintings got to such an emotional intensity. You had to do them in about 12 hours. I'd start at nine o'clock in the morning and sometimes wouldn't be through till two o'clock the next morning. You had to do the whole painting at once because it would set up the next day so hard that you couldn't change it. You could add a little bit maybe, but you couldn't really essentially change it. So it had to be done in such a long period, and then the fumes and the energy and emotional intensity of not knowing what it was going to look like till it was done?-- and how would you recognize when it was done? And if it wasn't right, you'd have to cut it up. You'd be so exhausted and so emotionally exhausted, that it was killing me off, actually, aside from the fumes. I couldn't keep doing that. I'd get too emotionally involved in painting to the point that physically you can't do it. The way I'm painting now you can work on it slowly and the drawing is improvisational and all that, but you can stop?-- or start again?-- or go away if you want to. You like to keep going, of course, but you can stop. It's a more controlled thing, and physically and emotionally it works better for me. But I look at Karen's paintings and I think, "God I wish I could paint that way!" (chuckles) It's so much energy and such a rich traditional painterly paint surface?-- which I always liked. And it's so funny, because she never ever saw my paintings I used to do a long time ago like that. She never really saw an abstract expressionist painting. It's just her nature to paint almost the same way. It's like looking at yourself starting over again or something; it's very spooky. She first did watercolors, and I think Regina Hackett [art writer for Seattle Post-Intelligencer--Ed.] said something about, "Well, they look so much Alden's watercolors." She never saw my watercolors! That's the way she did them in class. It made me kind of mad; I wanted to call Regina and I never ever did.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Then it's not so unusual that I looked at that a while ago and thought, "That came from that period."

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, but they were much dryer and separate.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yes, I agree.

ALDEN MASON: These are so much juicier. And this is acrylic paint, of course, not oil paint. And personally, they're a lot better. And I'm not saying that?-- they really are. I think what I'm doing now and the oil paintings were better and more mature. But those things never did quite become as mature as that is, and she's just starting, which is really precocious. But sure, you can think, "God, I'd like to really do that again, because that's my temperament." But at the same time I just couldn't keep that up, and so I feel much better about what I'm doing now, despite the fact I see all these other things going on. (chuckles) And I, sometimes like, "God, I'd like to do watercolors again," when I see people. When I was teaching the watercolor class I'd work on someone's painting, I could do it so easily, and it was so much fun, I thought, "Yes, you go back and just start painting landscapes in watercolor." And I could do it, now I could do all the things I couldn't do then. Now I know I could do it. I could paint those big marvelous landscapes; I could do all those things that were such a terrible struggle. Now I could do those things, and yet I can't, because I'm doing what I'm doing. You can't go back and change and you wouldn't want to really, but yet you know that you could do all those things that you struggled so hard to do and at the time were almost impossible. I did a watercolor?-- I shouldn't say this?-- but I did a watercolor for Karen's mother for a birthday present, of Deception Pass, that I did 30, 40?years ago. It's beautiful watercolor. You should see it; it's just really so much better than anything I ever did at that time, but I did it in the same way I did then.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But for some personal reason...?

ALDEN MASON: But what could you do? I'd like to say, "I'm going to jury a watercolor show and they want to have you put a watercolor in the show," and I'm probably going to borrow one of the big abstract ones of Robert Sarkis.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (laughs)

ALDEN MASON: But I'd really like to put that [the gift for Karen's mother--Ed.] in the show, because it would be so much fun to see this, how you could do that subject, paint it that well, and yet how would I date it? I couldn't date it now, three years ago, and I couldn't cheat and date it 30?years ago, so I guess it's just going to sit there and no one'll ever see it, probably.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Part of that has to do with this wonderful revelation that we have as we go along and mature. So much experience is piled on so much experience and pretty soon you understand it all, but you can't go back; you wouldn't want to.

ALDEN MASON: And you keep trying to do something else that you can't do, that's harder.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Right. Which is the only thing that really keeps us alive, actually.

ALDEN MASON: Right, right.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You know, just for a little byway, did you ever get interested yourself in doing anything in three dimensions?

ALDEN MASON: No. Well, Bill Hixson and I for just a year, started doing some things with a bandsaw. He did most of the cutting, but we cut out some shapes and people liked them. And we were thinking, "Gosh, we should do these things commercially," you know. You could do all these decorative things with bandsaw. But I dropped that very quickly. But, you always think, you know, "I could do sculpture; it seems easy," because you manipulate actual form instead of trying to do intangible things on a canvas to suggest space, suggest this, suggest that, and none of it's real. But in sculpture you could take actual things and put them together, real things. It always seemed like that would be so much easier to do. Now I'm sure it probably isn't, but it seems like it would be. And I always kind of wanted to, but I never did.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: When I was reading over these dozens of articles about you, about your work, I of course ran across all these paradoxes where the critic would talk about control and about spontaneity in your work. For instance, somebody spoke of destruction, and this would be related to some of the heads, versus creation, which would be the landscapes. And someone else talked about, "chaotic but unerringly ordered." And someone said, "naive but sophisticated." "Funny but deadly."

ALDEN MASON: Well, it's like when do you laugh and when do you cry?

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, right.

ALDEN MASON: You know, they're very close. The best humor is sometimes humor which is very satirical and

sometimes very grim. And I think painting, the best painting has to do that. It's a very dangerous thing. If you make it too cartoonish, you know, it doesn't mean anything. And for me, if you make it too ordered or too whatever, then it becomes just a design and becomes stylized or decorative or stereotyped or something. It was a very hard line to run between these things, especially if you use imagery at all. And that, I think, is maybe what they're talking about also that [in] the act of painting the oil paintings, you wipe them out, you put them back. You've found what you wanted to; you found the images, the shapes, the things that you wanted through the discovery process of destroying and then finding again. Sometimes the nicest thing you had to destroy in order to make it all work together, or to find out what you really wanted to have happen there. The destruction is a technical way of making the work for people who paint in this way. I mean, like Francis Celentano has everything measured and ordered and he pretty much knows what he wants to have happen. That's another way of painting?-- or of ordering your life too.

Well, there are people who work intuitively; you have to work out of your subconscious and out of your intuition and make something intangible tangible. And that's why?-- one thing we didn't mention, and we probably should before we close here, is that I did the mural in the Senate chambers, which is 86 feet of this squeeze bottle stuff, and twelve-and-a-half feet high in the middle. It's obviously the biggest thing I've ever done in my life. It looks like the Sistine Chapel when you get in there, I mean, size-wise, these huge things up there on the wall. And then to get them in place up there and the TV cameras are down there and people yelling and all the furor that went on (chuckles), both pro and con. It was kind of the same kind of thing: some people wanted it there, some people want to destroy it, and the whole process was so big in scale that it's something new that you'd never done before. That was an exciting (chuckles) and terrifying sort of thing to do. And having to do it in three months when it's supposed to be done in two years, because they closed the time off as a means of?-- The new legislature met as a means of getting rid of the mural altogether.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Cutting off the money for it, right.

ALDEN MASON: Right, cutting off the money. And we got it up before the deadline, on the wall. Which is kind of part of that same process in a different way.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And also when you talked about destroying, taking out, to make better, or whatever...

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It takes a lot of courage to do that, too, I think.

ALDEN MASON: Oh sure! I mean you get all these nice things. And, you know, people that paint in that way that could, at school in class, would paint badly if they always wanted to save everything. Every mark you make must be so beautiful that you have to save it.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Um hmm.

ALDEN MASON: And you can't do that. The same way with your paintings: you have to destroy them and cut them up and say, "I'm going to do something better." To save and to hang onto the past just doesn't work. That's one of the reasons it's hard to document my things, or when I show a slide show and so on I don't have a lot of things, because I destroyed so much. Sometimes you wished you had kept a little more.

The only way to grow is to change and to evolve. Otherwise you die, just to stay in the same place with the same ideas, the same attitudes.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's look at a few illustrations of some of your work here and see if there are some more comments you'd want to make about it. First, as early as 1954, Art News had a review of a show that you had, probably in New York City. Do you remember that show?

ALDEN MASON: Contemporary Arts Gallery, probably.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Right.

ALDEN MASON: I had a show at the Contemporary Arts Gallery and also the Artists' Gallery, I think it was called.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, there was a review in Art News, which was an early national coverage for you. But it was interesting that it spoke of the "rectangles of color, always imprisoned in their own black outlines."

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, but that's when I was using thick paint again. I kept vacillating between thick and thin paint a lot. These were quite thick paint and there was a lot of black in there. Again, there was a black ground like I'm doing now in a way. There was a pretty dark ground and you put the lighter color with the palette knife and this dark paint would kind of squeeze between. So it looked like it was kind of a black line; sometimes probably there actually was, even on black. Linear quality there. And that's what they were referring too. It was

strange, because that's one of the problems we've been speaking of a little bit, I guess, is that the Contemporary Arts Gallery, it was a nonprofit gallery in New York?-- Mark Tobey showed there in one of the very first places he showed in New York; at least his name was on the roster...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, that list of their artists?

ALDEN MASON: But I did couple of years there, and I did this real thick paint and then I shifted to the thin paint, which sort of was going to happen eventually in this long series, and they didn't like that at all because here they were struggling to introduce this person with this thick paint. In a way, I was painting things way beyond, I was doing something really far out, so to speak: broad, flat, abstract, heavy troweled areas of paint. So I was a real avant garde artist.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And they wanted you to stay that way.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. And I didn't continue it, and so eventually I dropped out of the gallery because my work changed so completely again. It took me a long time to mature.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: (chuckles)

ALDEN MASON: You know, I kept growing till I was 21 years old. Most people, kids on the farm \_\_\_\_\_ were all full grown at 16, were getting married at 18, some. And I just was this funny little pale kid who kept growing, growing, growing. I was just always the little kid that everybody pushed in cowpies and stuff at school, and then by the time I was 21 years old I finally got a lot bigger.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's talk about this painting, for instance, that was in Century 21 [Seattle World's Fair]. It reminded me of DeKooning. 1962. What can you remember about that painting?

ALDEN MASON: Well, that's a little thicker paint, and it's figurative too, to some extent. But it's also a lot like the things we talked about. There's obviously expressionist feeling that you find in DeKooning, people like that. But it also relates to children's art. The forms, the head, and also the improvisation of the drawings. The head, the buttocks, the legs, the arms, and the running quality and all that, it's got a lighter, different feeling. It's got a surreal quality, it's got a humorous quality, it's got a children's art quality and a lot of things in there that don't happen probably in abstract expressionist painting?-- or in DeKooning's painting either, although it's more in that than other people like him. But the paint too is, a lot of medium in there. Like the paintings I'm doing now, about 50 percent gloss medium, acrylic medium, and this had lots of medium in too. Even though it's thicker paint, there was a lot of medium in there; it was like it was slurped on, or pushed around. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Um hmm.

ALDEN MASON: A lot of the people who are abstract expressionist painters used much denser, thicker paints and they'd scrape it. Bill Ivey, in town, scrapes it, puts it back, and scrapes it, so... This is really still that watercolor-like, instant sort of thing. It would move and very liquid sort of way, even though it was thicker paint. I had to put the paint in cans, and so on, not on a board or a palette or anything.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Why don't we, as we go through these, you make any comments that you want to about them.

ALDEN MASON: There probably isn't anything that we haven't already said, I suppose.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, possibly, but there may be some things.

ALDEN MASON: That's the kind of drawings that I've always done, this fantasy kind of drawing, which is figures and insects and butterflies?-- it's all there, they all are.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That's from 1965.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, that's a drawing for the brochure. But the drawings, of course, in some of the paintings were a lot like that too. That's a kind of a nice drawing; I forgot about that! (both chuckle) It's a real cuckoo drawing I'll say.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: That was at the Gordon Woodside Gallery.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah. Then I was majoring in entymology?-- you can see it. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Really.

ALDEN MASON: This metamorphosis of an insect flying like a spaceship or whatever.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You know, you have had a lot of coverage in national magazines, it seems to me, as compared to many artists in this area.

ALDEN MASON: That's true, but you always...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You can never get enough.

ALDEN MASON: You always think... I wanted something terrific to happen, like you could be the most famous artist in the world or something. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, you aren't dead yet, Alden.

ALDEN MASON: Somehow those things sort of never happen, and then you talk to other people, or your peers or friends or something, and none of those things ever happened to them and you thought, "God! Why am I complaining?" But I guess because you always wanted more, you're never satisfied, is why the things that happened to you have happened.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: But also, you're developing constantly. I have never known a period since I've known you that you haven't been developing artistically.

ALDEN MASON: Well, I shouldn't say this, but, you know, Fred Anderson [is] one of my friends, but one time I talked him into sending to a couple of shows. He said, "I always had the feeling if I'd never entered anything, I'd never get rejected." (chuckles) And I said, "Well, Fred, that's true, but then if you never enter anything, you'd never get anywhere either." So you sometimes have to make that plunge. But I always remembered that, because Fred's attitude is that way. And it's not necessarily a negative one, because he relaxes within that format. He accepts that and he's happy that way, and [you] would be, maybe be better off if you were happy and accepted the Oriental philosophy of, you know, I accept what I am and where I am and I'm happy in this place in the universe. I always want to change everything; I want to make that canvas do what I want it to do.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, and I think many of those people who say they're happy that way are happy that way too.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, sure! In some cases they're not, of course. Obviously they're, obviously very frustrated people, but Fred seems to enjoy what he's doing and that's great.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: I ran across this very cartoonish-looking painting from 1967. Is that one called Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall?

ALDEN MASON: Probably. That's that short period we were talking about when they were flat colors. Sort of became?-- I hate to say pop influence, because it's the same old thing I've always done, except that the color was flat and bright and it had this outline, which I've used a lot, but the drawing outline became part of the painting again. In a sense, the drawing and the painting came together there too. But it's not the kind of painting that would be natural for me, because it's very controlled, flat areas of color, which I never used and don't respond to personally that much I suppose. It's interesting because there's the heads in there, these big monumental heads, which is in the show right now, but painted technically very differently and yet it's still there. Here's these two little eyes that's on the one in that announcement over there that Greg Kucera just sent out. So, people think that there's an awful lot of changes in your work. You jumped around too much is one your problems perhaps, and that's probably true. But at the same time, when you look at the whole body of stuff together... Robert Sarkis told me that once when he was trying to make me feel good. He said, "I'm seeing your work as progressed for a long time. They keep reoccurring, these same symbols, the same shapes. Technically they may be put down differently, but, they're all there, they're very much alike..."

LAMAR HARRINGTON: They are.

ALDEN MASON: "...much more than anybody thinks, and more than even you think." That was interesting and made me feel kind of good, actually.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Those paintings that you were just talking about here, especially with the big heads, I remember them very well. I remember them partly because they were the ones that [Pete--Ed.] Steefel wrote the long article about. [See page 28--Ed.]

[Break in taping]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Some people say the artist has to be uncomfortable to produce powerful work. How do you feel about that?

ALDEN MASON: (chuckles) I don't know. I was telling you about the glasses and things and I suppose, you know...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yes.

ALDEN MASON: Maybe that's what happens to people that?-- Why do you do what you do? What you are good at or something, maybe that's what you start to do. That's a hard question to know why these things happen. I was always nervous and emotional and all these things, maybe too much. I would have got along better in this world if I had been calmer and quieter. But then would I have painted the way I paint? Or would you have painted at all? Who knows the answer to those questions?

People have said, "You got the chance to teach right away, so you didn't have all these problems of earning a living." Or I would have probably gone to New York. I was going to when I got out of school. Get in there and paint, you know. And then I got offered this job to teach at the university. So then people'd say, "Well, you had it easy." But I don't know. I painted all the time, anyway; some people who teach and have it easy don't paint, but I always painted. Was it because of the frustration? Because there was no other way to say what you wanted to say? Or did you feel lonely and alienated, this is the only way you could make your mark on the world? I don't really know. Nobody knows, I don't think, really. But I think some people just paint?-- and it doesn't matter whether you're poor or comfortable or uncomfortable or whatever?-- and some people don't. Some people are obsessed, and I guess I think to be an artist, you have to be obsessed. You have something to do or say and this happens to be the way you want to do it. Some people might?-- that guy wanted to go to Alaska in a bathtub, I mean, he was obsessed. He had an outboard motor and a bathtub. He got from Seattle to Port Townsend or something, and the plug wouldn't fit and \_\_\_\_\_ sunk. But you know, that's a great guy! We need more people like that. You know, maybe we should stop making all our nuclear weapons and just say, "We're going to quit, and we're going to be wonderful people," and see what the Russians did. That's a frightening thing just to say, but maybe that's what it takes to change things in the world. You can't just keep going on and on the same. And that's how you paint. Maybe that's how you have to (chuckles), to make things happen in the world itself too.

[Break in taping]

LAMAR HARRINGTON: You know, this was such an important series. Do you have any more comments to make about the Burpee Garden series? I'm talking really about the big ones.

ALDEN MASON: They're certainly very organic paintings. They're cellular, and the way the paint formed, moved together, they look like pieces of the landscape. It says right here (both chuckle), "These paintings suggest landscape and garden and the interrelationship of all living things," that you were mentioning, quoting a little bit ago. "A universal garden whose delicate balance is subject to man's interference and destruction. Intuitively and improvisationally I paint this vision." Well, we're back to that other thing we were talking about, ecology and all, but in a way that's what you feel in a landscape, how all these things flow, work together. If you watched a thistledown blow across the sky, you watch the surf beating against the shore?-- this constant kind of relationship of things?-- or looking at the parts of a flower. I was trying to paint that. The Burpee Garden series came from that seed catalog, which of course refers to all that. It shows a picture in there of the guy that grew a 50-pound squash and all these wonderful things. That always fascinated me, the seed catalog thing.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh. I thought an interesting article was by Steven Winn, in Art News in 1979. I think he must have been talking about the time when you moved over from oil to acrylic. Is he speaking of that when he says, "Mason turned the apparent limitation into a bracing advantage. The best of the new works mark a sharp departure from the overlaid, sometimes clogged pools of color that flowed across his large square oil paintings"?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Can you just say a few words about the changeover? About your personal feeling at that time. I mean, that was a devastating thing, was it not, to you?

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, it sure was! Well, as I said before, because of the changes in your life, your marriage, the gallery going bankrupt, you had to quit painting things, paintings that technically worked for you even though it was horrendous to do, and that were being exhibited and were being sold and being collected. And then to have to sort of start over. It's like going back in graduate school or something. You say, "What are you going to do now?" I tried to use acrylic paint like the oil paint, and that sort of worked but it didn't work. Then I gradually started doing all these drawings until as I said the paintings that are happening now. And they aren't, in a way, that dissimilar, because there's these areas of shifting color in the acrylic paintings now, which do a lot of the same things that those oil paintings in the Burpee Garden series did. But in a way there is a limitation in those paintings. They're organic and they flow and so on, but it was hard to control specific shapes. Whereas now with the drawing quality back in there you can make very specific shapes. And I guess I kind of enjoy that because I always have drawn, all my life, those kinds of improvisational drawings. And I couldn't do that to that extent in those oil paintings, although there were edges where the color would collect and so on. But now you can actually draw this, and make the drawing part of this total surface of the painting, because it's done in the same way, the same tool. And so in a sense it's kind of nice, as I said before, because the drawing and painting are sort of

brought together. But it still has the painterly look and the sensuous surface and things, which those short-term flat, bright-colored things, in which the drawing came together too, but they didn't have any of that rich surface and shifting color and sort of somewhat traditional painterly look, although it's applied and done in a very different way.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Let's go back for just a moment to that Senate Chambers painting. There are a lot of things that have to do with public art that must affect the creative impulse, I would think, in an artist. You mentioned some of them a while ago when you were talking about all the chaos that went around even the installation of the works. Did you enjoy doing that painting?

ALDEN MASON: Well, first of all, I guess, I wouldn't have done it except for Karen. She entered it for me. (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Karen entered it?

ALDEN MASON: They ran a competition. You had to send in slides and so on. They were picking people from all over the country, actually. And we talked about it and I said, "Well, I don't really think I can do anything 86 feet long." In fact, they wanted [all four] panels. It would have been, you know, endless, huge thing. And I said I couldn't do that with a squeeze, "the way I'm painting now, technically. My elbow is giving out as it is!" I just couldn't fathom doing anything that big in the way that I was painting. And I didn't want to try to do it in some other way, because that would not be proper for me. So I decided probably I wouldn't want to do it, and she kept saying, "Well, I think you should try it." So she said, "I'm going to enter it anyway. You can decide whether you want to accept if something happens." So she wrote out the proposal and sent the slides in-- what she knew I wanted to do, because we talked about it-- and we got this letter back saying, "You are a finalist." (both chuckle) So she said, "Well, now you're committed." And I said, "Well, not necessarily." So I did a little proposal, and it was just on typing paper. I did it in about half an hour. I wrote up something real quick and then she typed it, sent the slides down too. I had to do a little painting, about 40 inches, I don't know, square, some small painting that they would keep. That was part of the proposal; you got paid for doing this.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh, I see.

ALDEN MASON: So I spent some time on that, quite a bit of time actually. Then they had a finalist and there was five people. And then two people dropped out. I think it was Guy Anderson or somebody dropped out, said he didn't think he could do anything that big or whatever the reason was he dropped out. So there were three of us, I think, left. We had to go to the Senate, down to the Capitol Building and there was a huge desk and the jury, these people sat behind there: it was Bagley Wright and I've forgotten just who they were. Parks Anderson...

[Tape 8]

ALDEN MASON: ...[easel] and tell him why you wanted to cover this whole wall with of the Senate Chamber with your stuff. It was really a strange sort of experience. And it was funny because Michael Spafford was there and I think [Norman--Ed.] Lundin, for the House of Representatives which they were finalists for. We were all standing out there on the steps waiting for our turn to go into the inquisition so to speak. Anyway, they chose me to do the pieces in the Senate Chambers and, and so we did. And it's a big lunette so we had to make these very special five-foot pieces. We did them on canvas on stretchers and they had to be put together and then they're installed about 30 feet, 35 feet up in the air. Huge scaffolding just to measure the wall. The installation was just terrible, way up there-- I had Artech do it for me, but I was there too, climbed up the ladder, and we had a terrible time, because they wouldn't fit, they wouldn't go in, and we thought it wasn't going to work and scaffolding was swaying back and forth way up there. And the TV people were down below taking pictures and yelling and congressmen were... It was just a madhouse; it was a bizarre experience.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And were there people around at the time it was being installed...

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, right there!

LAMAR HARRINGTON: ...there, who did not want it to go up?

ALDEN MASON: Oh yeah, the TV people were there too, taking pictures. In fact, I come home and I turned the TV screen and it was filled with the detail of my painting, and this beautiful little rippling lines of color filled the whole screen. It was just beautiful! I was very impressed! (laughs) It was really kind of wonderful.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Alden, I wish we had more time to talk about your paintings, but I know you have to get away this afternoon. I'm really sorry about that because I think your comments about your paintings have been very revealing today. But one thing I wanted to ask you-- you've been retired for some time now. You did make some comments a while ago about your excitement over the new paintings and how you have a lot more to do...

ALDEN MASON: I want to cover the earth with them.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: What do you see in the future?

ALDEN MASON: Well, I like what's happening now with the drawing and the heads. I don't know if they'll always be heads or not, but there'll be images certainly. What I'm doing right now, something like that would be continued, I'm sure. They'll be better, because they're just resolving themselves and going where they want to go. And I shouldn't say this because I don't know, but there's talk of having a retrospective show at the Seattle Art Museum, probably in the next year or two and I think that's probably going to happen. I don't know whether it'll be 1985 like they suggested or not, but it probably will be happening soon. That will be exciting and I want to really get the best things I can possibly do for that, for the end of that show. It'll probably take in some of the oil paintings and so on too, but... And the next show at Tortue, I want to do this. And for the Summer Olympics the Koplin Gallery is putting on a show in Los Angeles, invitational show, and everyone has to do something relating to the Summer Olympics. The gallery is only this one gallery, and I suppose, if you invite people all over the country in a commercial gallery, there can't be more than I suppose ten, fifteen people. So, I'm going to try to do something really [smashing] for that, if I can, because there'll be a lot of people probably see that show. So, yeah, I have lots of things going. I could go back to Allan Stone perhaps, because he said to ask him again if I wanted to... Greg [Kucera--Ed.] is talking to some people in New York, so there might be a new gallery in New York. I'm going to try to keep the galleries that I have now and stay there for the rest of my life. (laughs)

Greg Kucera's been really fine and I'm going to stay there, and Tortue, I think, we get along well, and I'll stay there. And I hope maybe to get a gallery in San Francisco; there's some I've been sort of talking to. But certainly in New York I'd like to have some gallery affiliation again and some place that I could stay and would be happy with. Who that's going to be, I don't know. It's a difficult time, at the moment, because the sort of brute abstract expressionist figurative thing, whatever you want to call it, that's happening in New York right now sort of precludes my painting in a way because these things have a decorative romantic quality about them, or they have an elegance, monumentality about them...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Especially the most recent ones.

ALDEN MASON: Right, and what's happening in New York is very opposed to that. In fact I just got the letter from Jackie Buechner, at whose place I met DeKooning, and she mentioned what's happening in New York. She said some of it's very exciting and powerful and some of it's really self-indulgent?-- and scruffy, I think is the word she used. And she's been around there a long time. So it's a hard time to show the kind of work I'm doing. I think that's why we went to San Francisco with Karen's work. I didn't go there with my work at all; that was not the intention, but we were going there showing her work. And they were really excited about it.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Were they?

ALDEN MASON: Because not only is it good, but it's the kind of thing that people are doing now. Thick paint and the energy and so on. They were all filled up, but they want, maybe she'll be in a group show. Something may happen there. Because they really liked it very much. So you can see, the trend and styles change and if you're there at the right time with the right product... Not that you're painting, I mean, I wouldn't want to paint the way to get in that show at this time.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: For the market, yeah.

ALDEN MASON: For the market. But if you happen to be doing that kind of thing, and it comes along, like she is, that's great. So I don't know what'll happen in New York at the moment, but we have some people that are interested. I hope that it's someone that I'd be happy with. Charlie Cowles was a beautiful show, but personality-wise we didn't get along that well. He was good to me and all that, but it wasn't the kind of thing that he probably likes that much anyway. He never liked the drawings, for example, even though he liked the paintings. And most people, artists especially, think the drawings were always better than the paintings, because they were really what it was all about. So it wasn't that sympathetic a situation perhaps anyway. You gotta be someplace, even if it isn't the best gallery in the world, where someone really likes what you're doing and responds to it and wants to really go all out to do something for it, like Greg is doing here in Seattle.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And also, I think the chemistry between the people is so important.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, that's true.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: And it looks to me as if your life at this point with Karen is very fulfilling for you.

ALDEN MASON: Well, I must say, maybe I couldn't do a lot of things that I've done if wasn't for her. Like the Senate Chambers thing. She's very skillful and can kind of mimic what I do very easily, so she worked on the Senate Chamber thing with me.



LAMAR HARRINGTON: Oh she did.

ALDEN MASON: I set up the pattern and drawing, and that sort of thing, but she and Gene McMahon helped me work on it. I could never have done that huge thing otherwise. They even helped mix paint; she's mixed a lot of paint and she prepares a lot of the canvases and does a lot of work for me. But lately since her own things are going so much better, she's taking over the studio! (chuckles)

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Ah hah!

ALDEN MASON: She's painting and the smell is kind of strong, so I go away when she's painting and then I have to come back the next day so I can paint. So it's becoming a more honest sharing, I suppose. But, yeah, she's been certainly a great help and we go to Mexico and birdwatching and fishing and she enjoys exactly the same things. But she is young and has a high energy level and mine is probably depreciating, I suppose, although it's...

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It's hard to see that it's depreciating. (chuckles)

ALDEN MASON: I can't complain, but I'm sure it is. So, it's very supportive, yeah, that's true. I guess it's very lucky to have that kind of support.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Yes, it is.

ALDEN MASON: Donna gave me that kind of support before, so I've been very lucky in that regard, I guess. Some people don't get support at all; they get negative feedback or something?-- through a marriage or whatever situation you're in like that.

LAMAR HARRINGTON: It does seem to me as if things are coming together. Your future looks really wonderful.

ALDEN MASON: Yeah, it does! I feel good about what's happening and these new paintings progress so much faster. That's been three years. When I look at what happened, three, four years ago with the beginning of these paintings, how terrible in a way they were and how they've progressed, whereas the oil paintings went on for eight years and this is three years, and they're already now up to or beyond what the oil paintings were doing in that seven, eight years. So, yeah, I feel real good that, and hopefully some really great things will happen. We'll see!

LAMAR HARRINGTON: Well, thank you very much, Alden.

END OF INTERVIEW

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