



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Arman, 1968 April
22 and May 18

Contact Information

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Arman on April 22 and May 18, 1968. The interview was conducted by Sevim Fesci for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

This interview was re-transcribed and translated in 2010 by Archives of American Art volunteer, Gaston Lacombe. A side conversation in French occurred prior to the interview. The English translation of this conversation appears immediately after the French in the transcript below. The interview was conducted in English.

The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

[April 22, 1968]

ARMAN: - sous le pretexte de vendre de l'armements, il s'en liquidait de tout ce qui ne servait plus [inaudible]

SEVIM FESCI: Oui, oui. Combien de temps vous êtes resté en Turquie alors?

ARMAN: En tout, en tout deux mois, avec [inaudible].

SEVIM FESCI: Vous avez tout visité? Vous avez fait-

ARMAN: Oui. J'ai traversé de l'Est à, de l'Est à l'Ouest, et de l'Ouest à l'Est, et de-

SEVIM FESCI: En voiture, vous avez fait ça?

ARMAN: En dos de chevaux.

SEVIM FESCI: En dos de chevaux! Alors. Vous avez fait ça seul?

ARMAN: [inaudible] J'étais avec ma femme et un ami qui était, qui est toujours d'ailleurs, qui est maintenant le chef d'expédition, il était épigraphiste de l'expédition française en Iran, d'archéologie, qui était à [lieu] et en [lieu].

SEVIM FESCI: Comment il s'appelle?

ARMAN: Le Père Sèvre, un père dominicain.

SEVIM FESCI: Me semble que j'ai entendu, je savais qu'il y avait un père, qui, oui-

ARMAN: Sûrement, il est très important, sûrement. Il a fait une plaquette assez importante sur [inaudible], et on a été à Boğazköy, on a été à Taissiri [phonétique], on a été voir les, les, bref partout quoi.

SEVIM FESCI: Vous êtes allé à Pergame aussi? Parce que j'ai fouillé là pendant deux mois.

ARMAN: Vous avez fouillé à Pergame!

SEVIM FESCI: Oui, parce que j'ai étudié l'archéologie pendant-

ARMAN: À Izmir, Izmir

SEVIM FESCI: À Izmir il y a pas tellement de choses encore.

ARMAN: [inaudible]

SEVIM FESCI: Il fait beau mais-

ARMAN: Pas peut-être tout, mais on a pas mal fait le tour. J'ai dormi à Boğazköy sous la tente.

SEVIM FESCI: Et comment vous avez trouvé -

[audio break]

English translation

ARMAN: - under the pretext of selling arms, he was liquidating all that was not in use anymore [inaudible].

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, yes. So how much time did you spend in Turkey?

ARMAN: In all two months, with [inaudible].

SEVIM FESCI: You visited everything? You did -

ARMAN: Yes. I crossed from the East, from the East to the West, and from the West to the East, and from -

SEVIM FESCI: By car, you did this?

ARMAN: On horseback.

SEVIM FESCI: On horseback! Well. You did that alone?

ARMAN: [inaudible] I was with my wife and a friend, who was, who is still actually, who is now the expedition chief, he was the epigraphist of the French archeology expedition in Iran, that was in [place name] and in [place name].

SEVIM FESCI: What is his name?

ARMAN: Father Sèvre, a Dominican monk.

SEVIM FESCI: I feel that I've heard about him, I knew there was a monk, who -

ARMAN: For sure, he is very important, for sure. He made a quite important placket on [inaudible], and we went to Boğazköy, we went to Taissiri [phonetic], we went to see the, the, well, we went everywhere.

SEVIM FESCI: You went to Pergamon too? Because, I dug there for two months.

ARMAN: You dug at Pergamon!

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, because I studied archeology for -

ARMAN: In Izmir, Izmir -

SEVIM FESCI: In Izmir there isn't much yet.

ARMAN: [inaudible]

SEVIM FESCI: It's nice, but -

ARMAN: Maybe not everything, but we pretty much went all around. I slept in Boğazköy under a tent.

SEVIM FESCI: And how did you find -

[audio break]

[Interview conducted in English.]

SEVIM FESCI: Arman, Why don't you start at the beginning, and by the beginning I mean your familial background, and your education, and training. I understand that your whole name is Arman Fernandez Arman.

ARMAN: Not really, it's Arman Pierre Fernandez.

SEVIM FESCI: Is it of Spanish origins?

ARMAN: Yes - well, Spanish from Algeria, Algerian Spanish. And some, some of my family is from Malte [Malta], some from Tunisia, from Algeria. Some - I have grandfather Jewish, Sephardic Jewish, Spanish Jewish. And, grandmother Spanish, Algerian-Spanish. My mother is French.

SEVIM FESCI: Your mother is French. And your father is?

ARMAN: My father is Algerian Spanish.

SEVIM FESCI: Algerian Spanish. And where were you born? Were you born -

ARMAN: In Nice.

SEVIM FESCI: In Nice. And your parents were artists themselves? Or they were, are you the only artist?

ARMAN: Yes, what we can call, Sunday painter. My father was a Sunday painter. And my aunts, my sister father [sic][redac: father's sisters] too, they were all artists. They painted. My father taught me to paint oil painting when I was ten.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, he taught you?

ARMAN: Yes. I was already quite gifted for painting.

SEVIM FESCI: When you were very, very small?

ARMAN: When I was a child at four I wasn't really drawing like a child, I wasn't sketching as a child. I would sketch and draw a little bit like a man, and I was using perspective, the good relationship with the subject.

SEVIM FESCI: And that was very spontaneous?

ARMAN: Yes, spontaneous. And I remember everybody was amazed that it wasn't really a childish way to paint and to draw.

SEVIM FESCI: And what were your relationships to your family?

ARMAN: What family? My direct family?

SEVIM FESCI: Your direct family, the direct family, your parents, mother?

ARMAN: I am single [sic][redac: only child]. And I - My father was from a quite rich family. He was the broker with the crach man [phonetic]. My grandfather was on the banking stock. He was a millionaire, and they were living in Monte Carlo, Hotel de Paris. They were all quite rich. And my mother was very poor. She was a maid, a peasant from the country. And during a long time my mother was the mistress of my father. And I didn't recognize long time after, when I was five. They married when I was five. And, quite a good relationship but I always felt my mother was very unhappy because she wasn't accepted by the family of my father. It was quite a very strange relationship. On the Sunday afternoon at the precise time of two o'clock, the family of my father received, well, me, then my mother, me and my mother once a week or once a month, I don't remember. It was quite ceremonious.

SEVIM FESCI: And all the family was- Do you have brothers or sisters?

ARMAN: No.

SEVIM FESCI: You are the only son?

ARMAN: Yes. But my father had sisters and all that family was living with draconian tradition. My father's sisters never went out.

SEVIM FESCI: They never went out.

ARMAN: No, no. They were under very special experiment, where they were living in a very large apartment. Even in Nice after, first in Monte Carlo, with pillow and cushion [sic] everywhere, waiting to be married. Nobody, they -

SEVIM FESCI: They were not married?

ARMAN: No. Because they didn't know, it was stupid, you know. They keep, they keep a little it the news of the family in Algeria. They were the kind of family they were very not - The girls didn't go outside.

SEVIM FESCI: She was waiting for her husband at home?

ARMAN: Yes.

SEVIM FESCI: But your grandparents were, they were still alive, at that time?

ARMAN: Yes, at that time, yes. They died quite old, eighty years old. They were alive when I married, myself.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, they were still alive? Oh I see. And -

ARMAN: Well. My father is a very sweet man. A little bit hyper-subjective. Only one things count for him: his wife, his parents, his dog, if he has a dog, his son. The other people doesn't exist. He's completely cut off -

SEVIM FESCI: Out of the world, yes?

ARMAN: Out of the world. His own small world. He is very sweet, too sweet. He is not at all authoritative, honest man, never had to make, never had a - afraid to have a fight with me even when I was a baby. A very too sweet father. But a strong mother.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, she was strong?

ARMAN: A very, very strong lady. A very strong character. And, very sweet and very artistic, my father was playing cello, painting, listening to music, or reading poetry. But a little bit cold style, you know? Everything that was really the taste of the end of the 19th century, the average bourgeois' taste at the beginning of the 20th century.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, I see, yes. And did your father want you to be an artist? Did he push you in a way?

ARMAN: All the family, all my father's family pushed me to be an artist. They were, thought I was very good at art and could do a lot of things like that. But they got quite deception when they followed my evolution.

SEVIM FESCI: In which way do you mean?

ARMAN: It was quite a shock, you know. It was very funny. I remember I had been in a school after I completed my secondary studies, my baccalaureate.

SEVIM FESCI: All that in Nice it was?

ARMAN: Yes. I went, I did baccalaureate philosophy. And after I take the - got into the school of National Arts Décoratifs. And I was a very good student. I won many first prize for nude drawing and sketching, anatomy and everything. And I was one of the two -

SEVIM FESCI: It was very classical drawing?

ARMAN: Yes. I was one of the two three best students of the school, the whole school. And I didn't finish because I found it quite boring and I left for Paris. And I wanted to go to the school of Beaux-arts. But the exam was so long and so difficult and I started to prepare for it but I never finished it. And I went to the School of Louvre for History of Art. And there I completed the studies at the School of Louvre. I was interested in the study of history of art.

SEVIM FESCI: But I'm sorry, at the School of the Louvre you didn't draw, you didn't paint, it was just historical?

ARMAN: No, no. Historical, but it was important for me. It gave me an idea, a kind of general idea about the history of art. It was quite important because - showed me the necessity of some evolution, artists, history, art of the world. And there I started to paint by myself. What I was doing was quite surrealism. When I showed -

SEVIM FESCI: In Paris?

ARMAN: In Paris. When I showed-

SEVIM FESCI: You?

ARMAN: When I showed my father some of those surrealistic things, he started to scream that it was disgusting: "why this personage have a head finished with, like a diamond. Why? it's not natural." And after I changed after for some years I become abstract, and, a bit influenced by De Staël and Poliakoff. My father: "Before at least there was some figures, now nothing. What does it mean; it's terrible." After, I was involved by stamping objects on color. He said, "Well, before it was some color painted with oil painting, but now what is it? What are those tracks, those things?" After I was involved in the object himself, the object together and garbage, garbage can, "My goodness before it was, at least it was-" And every time the evolution was worse, worse, worse.

SEVIM FESCI: Something else. And he didn't understand what-?

ARMAN: My father: "When will you become serious, you will take a real job, you have three children and you're not serious. All those stupid things that lead to nothing." And all the family was like that. He was roaring I was so old and didn't like to make money, to do somethings and I was really the shame of the family.

[audio break]

SEVIM FESCI: So, as you told me, you went to a school where it was only girls?

ARMAN: Yes. I guess, to start with, you asked me, I guess, about what was my major interest?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: I guess because I used to be alone, to have not friends to play with because I was living only with my mother in a house where there were no other children, apartment house with only old people. And I used to invent my games myself. And I was really attracted by every kind of combination I could make of games with someone else or quite always involved a number of small objects like money, or matches, and kind of topological games, you know, not very complicated with very simple type of game. I invented stories, some with soldiers, some with people and they changed places. And I did this quite late, even I invented games like that even when I was thirteen years old, after. But I start to play alone by myself very young. And that changed, that changed when we moved and my parents got married. And we moved to a place where there were some other children. But something special, instead of going to school, the public school, the junior public school where all the children were going and mixed between girls and boys, I went, because some friends of my parents who had their daughter there who was the same age as me, I went to this school. It was to this school, a very exclusive private school for girls. And from six, from five and six months to eleven and six months, six years, I've been to this school with only girls. And I guess it was quite an interesting experimentation.

SEVIM FESCI: And your relation with the girls was very good?

ARMAN: Oh, yes. I was very happy because from the Directrice to the younger pupil I was the only man and everybody was very nice with me. It was a very good feeling. Maybe because of that I've never felt very insecure with a woman.

SEVIM FESCI: You were used to it when you were very young.

ARMAN: Yes.

SEVIM FESCI: And then you left school when you were eleven years old.

ARMAN: Yes. Then I changed. They take me out that school because the Directrice was worrying that I started to flirt a little bit too much with the girls and they take me out of that school, before it could be dangerous. And I went at the Lycée. In France, *école-lycée*. And I don't know and that was about the time, just the time when the war finished, the first phase of the war in France was finished.

SEVIM FESCI: Yeah, I didn't ask you when you were born.

ARMAN: In 1928. And when I was eleven the start, the war start, start.

SEVIM FESCI: It was just starting.

ARMAN: Just start. And when I was twelve, it was very bad climate. And because of the climate, because of the change of schools, and, I will, I made during three years very bad studies. It was just, I was just the last one of the class. And I remember they brought me [to] a different school and it was a very tough school. One time it was for- It was especially a technical school for worker who wants to become specialist. I was so bad in school when I was there. And I remember that kind of club called the "Club of the Yanne." The "Yanne" it was a kind of slang word for li-co-ricce; licorice? licorice? You know, that's kind of candy, black candy, licorice.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: It was the slang word for licorice. The purpose of the club; it was a racket, a very simple racket. The last one, of the-

SEVIM FESCI: Of the group-

ARMAN: The worst pupil was the president, the second worst was the vice-president, and the third worst was secretary of the club. And we divided the class in two parts, good pupils, bad ones. The good pupils have to pay a fine for the good notation to the bad ones-

SEVIM FESCI: So the bads were the goods.

ARMAN: -that could buy, like licorice and ice cream. There was very few ice cream; the country was so poor. But we had a kind of licorice and a thing called Glace Ateka [phonetic], which was just a kind of syrup on crushed ice, this time. And I had been president twice of three quarters. And this thing has been discovered because the better pupils were complaining to their parents, they couldn't be that much good there. If they were good they

had to pay a fine to the others, and if they didn't pay the fine, we were the stronger too. We were not only the worst we were the stronger. We'd beat them up all the time if they didn't pay the fine. And after this scandal has been, I dropped out of the school. That was very strange, because I was always, when I was playing as a child, as a child, in a group as a child, I was violent and competitive, I always wanted always to be the best, the strongest, the fastest. Or I was playing alone very quietly and very seriously. Or reading a lot. I read quantity of, very well. I was reading quite well at eight. But, I was reading at five. My mother taught me to-

SEVIM FESCI: What were you reading?

ARMAN: -before I went to that school, I was already reading. But my-

SEVIM FESCI: And who was telling you what to read, your mamma? You pick up everything?

ARMAN: No, I was reading, pick up everything, you know. I read most everything I could. But very quick I've been involved with things like Jules Verne, Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo, adventurous things and classical things which I could find. And I was reading, reading, over-reading, even in the night if I could. Later, when I was 13, 14; even when I was in boarding school, I would try in my bed I had a blanket to read, and I read the largest quantity of things possible.

SEVIM FESCI: And did you have some heroes at that time?

ARMAN: Hum?

SEVIM FESCI: Did you have some heroes? A few persons that you admired?

ARMAN: Heroes? Mythical heroes?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. Through books or?

ARMAN: Oh Tarzan. When I was really small, Tarzan, because I saw some movies before the war. Tarzan. And I was always playing Tarzan with the other ones.

SEVIM FESCI: And you were the Tarzan?

ARMAN: Yes. And if I wasn't Tarzan I tried to beat everybody, and make it. And if they were stronger than me, I preferred to give up than to play anything else but Tarzan. And Tarzan, and after, I was very, I was very involved in Captain Nemo, of Jules Vernes. I would like to be a kind of Captain Nemo who knew a lot of things. He was quite a superman in science and everything.

SEVIM FESCI: And were you impressed by the news, you know, from the war? You know, because you said that when you were in boarding school it was during the war. And were you impressed by, you know, the news that you might have read in the paper or what your parents said about the war?

ARMAN: I didn't pay that much attention of the fact itself. I was really involved in the visual fact, photography of the war. And I was very attracted by everything. I can say now, I guess, I was attracted by the planes. I would see some pictures of planes throwing shuttles and other planes exploding and things like that. Or newsreels on the news. And, I was really attracted by every kind of violence.

SEVIM FESCI: Violent things, yeah.

ARMAN: Or, image of explosions or things like that, photography. I was really really attracted by that. But without the judgment of what it was, after, I had judgment, showed me the German side. My father had to escape because the Gestapo was looking. I was lucky with my very French and *paysanne* [peasant], to avoid anything. But my father and family had some trouble.

But it was quite a, quite a strange feeling. And it showed very quick, because Nice was not a very rich part of France about food. And I don't know if you know that but we had the most severe *rationnement* [rationing] in Europe, more than Poland, in fact. Nobody knows that more than Poland and more than Bulgaria, as Russia- And it was quite okay for people living near a rich country, because France is quite rich in agriculture. But in Nice it was just awful. And, furthermore, the bridge, the main bridge that was communicating between France and that part of France which was Italian before, and claimed by Italian during the *guerre* [war], we were living under the Italian flag. And if you weren't Italian citizen, you were like a slave and the food problem become so, become so-

SEVIM FESCI: Difficult, difficult.

ARMAN: Difficult that it became the main thing of every day. I killed cats to eat them. I killed birds with my sling. I was really a marksman with my slingshot.

SEVIM FESCI: You bring them home, or?

ARMAN: Yes. We were eating them in soup. We had cats. Very quick, no- Nice was a town of retired people, full of old ladies and their cats and their birds. And really I can swear in six months not one cat-

SEVIM FESCI: Were running anymore?

ARMAN: -surviving among the streets of Nice. We ate all the cats there and we ate all the birds, include the sea gulls, everything we could get, because very quickly we couldn't reach the sea. It was, the Ger- When the Italians gave up in '42, the Germans built a kind of wall. Nobody could get fish anymore. It was finished. The way to the sea was cut off. And food, because rationing was something crazy. I remember we were dreaming in the night about food. My grandfather, but not the- my mother's father was a peasant, sent many, many packages, you know, many parcels, but then one in every five arrived and a times they arrived open and somebody take.

SEVIM FESCI: Stolen

ARMAN: In '43, end of '43, we received one with a ham. But it travelled for so long time it was covered of worms. And we eat it like that. We just take off the worms, and we eat it, a small piece of, we had a, we just take off with knife very quick the worms, put that under water, the worms, and ate it. It's really- Food was really a problem. Maybe all those insecurities and other things lead me to that very securizing [sic] image of accumulation.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I was thinking of that to understand.

ARMAN: Because, just after the war, when the war was over, I found a little job in a building office working with the American Army. I didn't speak English but just, I was just with a sign, to show the hotel where the Americans were, the boarding house. The station to the- But I could, I start to make some business with the American Army, with the P8. And I became quite good at trading because we were starving until 1948 in France. But less than 42, 44 and 45. But, you have been in France at this time?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, but it was-

ARMAN: In Paris?

SEVIM FESCI: No, I was in Monaco.

ARMAN: In what year? You were a baby?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I was a baby. I was three years old, three or four years old. I don't remember anything.

ARMAN: Even Monaco was quite terrible for that. I don't know what was the status of Monaco in this was.

SEVIM FESCI: No, it was not so, so bad, as far as my parents told me.

ARMAN: It was quite independent, maybe?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: They could receive some food from Switzerland or America?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: I have good, one good memory. You know, sometimes, sometimes, you know, we always have a memory of the- People do not like Switzerland because they always have the feeling, you know, that they get profit out of the war and they didn't get any risk or everything, as well. It causes resentment. But I can't feel any resentment for Switzerland, because one of the best-

SEVIM FESCI: For what again?

ARMAN: For Switzerland.

SEVIM FESCI: For Switzerland, yes

ARMAN: Because one of the best memories I had it was during, just during the war. Once a day at school a quart of milk was offered by Swiss to the children and that quart of milk was something so wonderful! And sometimes chocolate.

SEVIM FESCI: So that you began to dream of Switzerland?

ARMAN: Yes. Switzerland was a dream, a dream country.

SEVIM FESCI: And you told me you were reading a lot as a child. Did you have time to paint, too?

ARMAN: Not as much. I was very good. I was always the first one, but anyway in any kind of school, in the classes of -

SEVIM FESCI: drawing

ARMAN: I was the first one. I was painting a little bit, drawing a little bit. But my main activity was really reading and building games, a lot of solitary games. I played chess very young. I taught myself chess when I was eight. And I was playing chess a lot then. I was proven, I beat my father at chess when I was eleven. He become so mad he just throw the chess set out through the window.

SEVIM FESCI: And did you have good friends at that time?

ARMAN: Few, very few. Because I used, it was always - I had a gang. After, after, after twelve, when I was thirteen, I had a gang. In this gang was the singer, Gilbert Bécaud. We were the same age.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, he was with you in the gang?

ARMAN: Yes. It's very sad because, that gang we were five in this gang, five six or six, small gang. Quite tough boys. And some become very famous of this gang. One became famous as a killer. And another as a singer, Gilbert Bécaud. One killer has been involved in a lot of politic things, and become bodyguard, and a killer for the RPF. And myself, I become a bodyguard but not for politics but because I was so friend with him, to protect him, too.

SEVIM FESCI: So you were, you were his bodyguard?

ARMAN: Yes. He become a bodyguard and become kind of responsible of a lot of things with De Gaulle, when De Gaulle was fighting with Communism. And I become the, I become a bodyguard of the Minister Dassault and I have been involved in a lot of bombing, a lot of terrorism. And, it's very strange, because at the same time, I had that very violent life. It happens, once in a time, once in a month, somethings, a duty to do, to bomb those who are for Communists, to machine them. And I was quite good at that, I was gifted for things like that. And, but this I got-

SEVIM FESCI: Why? Why? Can you explain why you were so attracted by violence?

ARMAN: I guess because, I guess maybe, if I make an analysis. I can't be very accurate one, of course, but I have been in psychotherapy. I worked a lot, as every kind of psychotherapy, I also work a lot in the surgery. I guess it's a kind of homosexual repression as every kind of violence. When you see on all those Nazi Party and all those organizations and when the young men are very attracted by violent sport, to prove themselves they are really male. And I guess, that was, I was paying the reverse of the six years with girls.

SEVIM FESCI: in the girls' school

ARMAN: Something like that. But, besides that, I was very, it was a kind of a very strange push for me, because in this time I met Yves Klein.

SEVIM FESCI: When was it?

ARMAN: When I was 18. I met Yves Klein at a judo school. Yves Klein and -

SEVIM FESCI: That was the way you met him?

ARMAN: Yes. At the judo school, we met at the judo school. And I become very quickly involved in a lot of metaphysical philosophy, like philosophy Hindu, Rosicrucians, Zen Buddhic. And I was, my time was very, work on philosophy and things, and break with some violent things, like politic things and all that. It was very -

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. Two tendencies within yourself.

ARMAN: Two tendencies, very strong. And I become, I become very good at judo. I become a judo teacher. When I was 22 we had the school in Spain with Yves Klein.

SEVIM FESCI: In Spain?

ARMAN: In Spain, made it with Yves Klein, I was teaching in the school of Yves Klein there.

SEVIM FESCI: When did you become independent financially from your family?

ARMAN: When I married.

SEVIM FESCI: Did you marry very young?

ARMAN: Yes, very young. Because I married at something like 24. And I was soldier at the time. And I had been drafted -

SEVIM FESCI: Were you drafted?

ARMAN: I had been drafted at 23-24 because I was a student.

SEVIM FESCI: What were you studying at that time?

ARMAN: History of Art in Paris. I became partially independent because after a while I was still working with my father. After a while I became independent. I worked with my father. I became again independent. I worked again with my father.

SEVIM FESCI: You worked, you mean?

ARMAN: Yes, I worked with my father. He had -

SEVIM FESCI: You mean painting, or?

ARMAN: No, no. At first he had a store of antiques, used furniture and things like that. And after -

SEVIM FESCI: A shop? He had a shop.

ARMAN: Yes, a shop. And after he had one with modern furniture. And we worked, we worked, I worked as a salesman with him at that time. Because it was more easy for me to work for him, I worked for other people, too, because it gave me time when I wanted eight days to have an exhibition somewhere, or some other time, I could take eight days when I was working with my father and I could take two days to go somewhere.

SEVIM FESCI: You were at the same time more independent.

ARMAN: Yes.

SEVIM FESCI: And when did you decide to become an artist? Can you recall an exact moment?

ARMAN: I always wanted to be an artist. Just, I didn't know how exactly to start because I always had the very strong self-criticism and I knew that I was not doing something very interesting. But I was always involved to do, and I never stop making something. Even when I was - I stopped, the long primary - even when I stopped I was making drawings, sketches, portraits of my friends. But, when I went over to the School of Arts Décoratifs, by reaction, I stopped for a while, but I was coming back. But as, really I got the will, the strong will to make exclusively that and nothing else after '54.

SEVIM FESCI: After '54.

ARMAN: I remember especially a summer, I got my vacation time in South Spain in a US car, and I got my vacation time one month, and during one month I didn't go out, I painted day and night. I paint, I paint, I paint. And really, I felt strongly that it was my career.

SEVIM FESCI: Which kind of paintings were you doing?

ARMAN: Abstract paintings at this time.

SEVIM FESCI: Under which influence?

ARMAN: Influence mainly, De Stael.

SEVIM FESCI: De Stael.

ARMAN: De Stael, and not very, Kandinsky. They're both very, very interesting. I was painting like 10,000 other painters. Not very individualist, but very- I didn't bring much to these paintings but it was a very good exercise. But I guess it's very important to afford to do a lot of bad things, of wrong things, of weak things. If you can afford it, maybe one day you can do some good things, too.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. Maybe you can find yourself better that way.

ARMAN: And, the first personal things I did, it was rubber stamps.

SEVIM FESCI: Yeah, in 1954.

ARMAN: No, '55, and '56. Really '56 systematically, '55 accidentally. I was in the office working and using the rubber stamps and making compositions with rubber stamps. And the under the influence of Kurt Schwitters and Pollock, and all those influences became very important for me.

SEVIM FESCI: Pollock, yes. How did you come to know about them?

ARMAN: As any, when I started to really in '54 to be involved in painting, doing exclusively that. I was involved in getting information too.

SEVIM FESCI: In information?

ARMAN: In information about art. Every kind of magazine, every kind of invitation, every kind of book about painting. I always have the character to become specialist when I do something. Everything I am doing.

SEVIM FESCI: By specialist you mean?

ARMAN: I specialize very much, everything, it's my character. I have never been a, how do you say that? A dilettante. If I study chess I study chess. I get books on it, I want to become good.

SEVIM FESCI: You have to go deeply in what you are doing.

ARMAN: I must pro, a professional. I learn judo and I become a pro. Everything I do I kind of perfect this character.

SEVIM FESCI: To get deep

ARMAN: I dig a lot about. And when I was about to do only painting and nothing else when I gave up the judo and everything in '54, after an operation on the knee, and I understood that I'd never become the champion of judo any more, and it was not the way to. And I was always involved in painting. Like Yves Klein was, too. And what I did, I really digged (sic) the material too, I could huh, information I could receive from every kind of part. Books, history of surrealism, and everything I could find. Relation about exploration critique. I was really collecting every kind of information. I never do just one things instinctively. I always work.

SEVIM FESCI: So, like you said, until '54 you gathered a lot of information but you really express yourself in your own way in '54? So you start.

ARMAN: No, no. I really start, or I start to really express myself independently as an artist with some original material not before '55.

SEVIM FESCI: This is right. That's what I mean.

ARMAN: Yes. Not before '55. But always still, I still, when I receive an interesting catalogue, an interesting -, I keep it. I always, that rat pack instinct to keep information (inaudible). It's very important. I always collect slides, pictures, writing, texts, it interests me that, always, in every subject I'm interested in.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. And then you belonged to the School of Nice for a little while?

ARMAN: I belonged? I created the School of Nice with Yves Klein, but it didn't exist. It's a joke, the School of Nice.

SEVIM FESCI: It was a joke. It's right. I didn't know how to ask you.

ARMAN: Yes, it's a little bit of a joke. It was Martial Raysse who for the first time employed that word "the School of Nice" as a joke. But it has been written about an article, by an art critic after, and they related somethings happening in Nice, the new School of Nice. But really -

SEVIM FESCI: For you it's a joke.

ARMAN: It doesn't exist. I don't think it exists really.

SEVIM FESCI: Was there, for you, a kind of group feeling with all those artists?

ARMAN: Well, yes. And especially a group feeling with Yves Klein and Martial, and Ben a little bit. Ben Vautier,

who is a very interesting personage; more interested in Happenings and expression like Fluxus group. He's Turk, he's Turk.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I know. He's of Turkish origin.

ARMAN: Yes. A very interesting guy. That's where the group feeling, but not for everybody.

SEVIM FESCI: And when was it really that there was this kind of, you know that you met a lot together? Was it?

ARMAN: Well, it was sometimes fantastic. When Yves Klein was traveling a lot, Yves Klein was the most *développé* [developed] already. He knew what he wanted. At this time, in '53, he was belonging to the, when he came back from Japan, he belonged to the group, Lettrist group in Paris. It was really a kind of festival every time he was coming back in Nice. We had a lot of sessions, we were making theater happenings and a lot of things; and we started "Symphonie Monotone." We were screaming from many houses on the same note, for the same while.

SEVIM FESCI: From a lot of houses you mean? From different houses?

ARMAN: From my house, from Yves Klein's house, from everywhere. And it was very fantastic. Every time Yves Klein, many years he was coming back several times to Nice, and we always had a kind of festival. A lot of things happened. We did a lot of things. It was very interesting. He was really the soul of the group, he was more active. I awake later than Yves as an individual. I was more dependent on what happened around me.

SEVIM FESCI: Which were the ideals that you shared together? What really was the meaning of this?

ARMAN: There have been things like that. But it was just between Yves Klein, Claude Pascal, who was a poet, and me. And what happened one day: when we were very involved in philosophy we decided to become kings, but not kings to have the crown, but kings as responsible, conscious, responsible to some things. And we divided the world.

SEVIM FESCI: The world?

ARMAN: The World, the universe. Yves Klein was to take everything that was organic life. And huh, it was organic, live.

SEVIM FESCI: Nature you mean, in a way?

ARMAN: But alive. Claude Pascal, everything that was natural but not alive, like stones. And me, everything that was made.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh I see.

ARMAN: And we split the world. And every morning, we were traveling - It was a very interesting time. We were very close of each other. We were traveling together by cycling.

SEVIM FESCI: This was about when?

ARMAN: Oh, that was a long time ago, before we become painters. It was between '48, like that, to '52.

SEVIM FESCI: And that was in Nice?

ARMAN: When we were in Spain, we were in England together.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, you traveled?

ARMAN: We traveled by cycling to Italy or somewhere.

SEVIM FESCI: Was it just to know more?

ARMAN: To know more. To have experimentation. To teach judo and to be taught in other things, to learn languages. I started a little bit to learn English in England but I was so poorly gifted, as you can see, that it was a complete failure. And, but, it was quite huh. Sometimes there were two of us, or three, or four, when another guy called Vadim, a Russian, came with us.

SEVIM FESCI: You mean the singers?

ARMAN: No. I don't remember the name; I just remember the first name. And in the morning, we have come, you know, to meditate, together. In the morning we awake and we put our hands on our head like that and we are

meditating during five minutes about our worlds, about the subject, about the responsibility we had. We played a lot of games like that. And silently.

SEVIM FESCI: It was a kind of game?

ARMAN: But very silently.

SEVIM FESCI: You were taking yourselves very seriously.

ARMAN: Yes. During seven years I have been a vegetarian. That was another kind of game which we took seriously, too.

SEVIM FESCI: And did you believe in these games?

ARMAN: Yes! Yes, yes. We were very involved in what we were doing. And during this time we would meditate by meditating or by drug, and starvation, fasting.

SEVIM FESCI: Starvation?

ARMAN: Yes, we were fasting. We were fasting one day a week and one week a month.

SEVIM FESCI: For what? Why? Just?

ARMAN: Just to become more conscious. We were working on philosophy, Zen philosophy, Buddhism. We took the za-zen position of the night, all the night, starved completely for two or three days, and looking at the moon. In other words, really, we escaped the body. It turned out so well; it was something quite fantastic. I had a very good time with Yves Klein, a good pastime. And it was -

SEVIM FESCI: But you didn't express yourself in any way at the time?

ARMAN: Judo.

SEVIM FESCI: And that' it.

ARMAN: Judo. Exercise, mental exercise, astrology and a lot of things like that. And, it was the same time I was involved by another friend in those violent political things. But these were going few by few. The other world, Yves Klein and Claude Pascal, take over more and more. And we pushed just the pure stupid violence aside.

SEVIM FESCI: You became more aware of yourself, yes.

ARMAN: We were really good friends.

SEVIM FESCI: And that was always in Nice?

ARMAN: In Nice, and traveling, on trips. We were traveling together. I went a little bit everywhere in Europe. From Germany to Belgium, to Sweden, to England, to Italy, and Spain. We teach there. It was very interesting. And we felt that nothing can happen to us. We felt like stones.

SEVIM FESCI: You felt that strong?

ARMAN: Yes. We were really like rolling stones. Nothing could happen to us. Nothing. And it was of course a very good feeling to have.

[audio break]

SEVIM FESCI: In, I think it was in Milan, Milano in 1960.

ARMAN: Yes, but the group itself had been met before.

SEVIM FESCI: You mean the group of The New Realists?

ARMAN: The New Realism group, yes. It was an idea of Yves Klein and Restany; Yves Klein because Yves Klein wanted power and with the group he thought that he would lead the group and have the power over the other people in the group; and Restany because it was an idea of Restany, the new urbanism, the new poetry of the object, of the common object, of the manufactured envir-

SEVIM FESCI: Environment

ARMAN: Environment of the town, the city. And the group has been made originally, it was kind of restrained group with only six people. They were Yves Klein, Villegle, who was the man on the posters.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: Hains and Dufrene, Tinguely, and me. That was the first original group. And Cesar came after. And, but it was just a manifesto. But the group itself, a few months after, two months after had been officially meet with eleven members at the Yves Klein house. There had been a constitution of the group with a manifest, a New Realism more complete, and with, every member of the group signed. The group lasted twenty minutes exactly.

SEVIM FESCI: Twenty minutes?

ARMAN: Twenty minutes.

SEVIM FESCI: How was that?

ARMAN: For the very good reason that start some fighting and dissension in the group. Restany left after everything has been signed. He was so happy, he has a group! Like Breton with his group of Surrealism, Restany had the group of the New Realism with eleven members. He'd gone somewhere to get drunk. To, *comment on dit*: "Fêter ça." [transl: How do we say: "To celebrate."]

SEVIM FESCI: To celebrate

ARMAN: To celebrate. He got huh. And he left some members together. Those members were Yves Klein, Haines, Villegle, Dufrene, Martial Raysse, and me, at the house of Yves Klein's. But, the members of the group, they accepted Martial Raysse and the Lettrist group, the group that was scratching posters. But suddenly Hains told to Yves Klein, "Well, you know, I don't agree very much with Martial Raysse. It looks a little bit surrealist, not new realist. It's like you, when you make woman print. I like the blue but I don't like the woman."

SEVIM FESCI: Hains said?

ARMAN: Yes, Hains said. And Yves said, "Come on! You tell me that in my house!" And he slapped him. "I made everything myself. I made that group. I called everybody. You and your little palisade, you know, little things. You can go to Hell. And I don't want the group any more. I will make a group and we will call it the Group of Nice," as Martial told me. "And we don't -"

SEVIM FESCI: So that was the idea for the Group of Nice?

ARMAN: No. It was before; Martial called it before. "And we don't want you and there's no more group." And Hains go and the others go and the group was broken, and it was never built back again. Yves scratched one of the posters of the realists, took apart one of the things. He got angry. And two hours after I met Restany and I said, "You know your group of the New Realists is finished, it doesn't exist anymore!" Well, after that, Pierre (Restany) organized a lot of exhibitions of the Group of the New Realists. But for one reason or another, it was never complete. They excluded Martial Raysse for some years, because, well, after some people didn't want to exhibit with the group, some people like Cesar didn't want to sign with the group any more. So all this group, really last, as a group, the whole thing lasted only twenty minutes after it originated.

SEVIM FESCI: But what was the idea behind this twenty-minutes group?

ARMAN: The idea actually was, I guess as always what happened with a group, groups, they are very good at the beginning of, to take a position to fight against something established. It was to make a coordination of the move against the expressionism, tachiste-expressionism, in Paris; to take, to try to get some place in a salon, to get some exhibitions, to get some recognition, and it was to make some coordinated moves together. And that was the proposal for making the group. And with some secret ideas. People like Tinguely and Yves Klein with the idea "I will use the group for myself." And some weak people like, in the Salon, we don't give the name of the weak one, said, "Well, with big names like that, that will pull me."

SEVIM FESCI: Pull me down, yes.

ARMAN: Yes. Some will be the locomotive and some will be the wagon, you know. And that was the purpose, I guess, of the group itself, really. Because those artists were quite different anyway.

SEVIM FESCI: They were different?

ARMAN: Yes.

SEVIM FESCI: But was there a basic idea? Was there a basic idea, *une idée générale*?

ARMAN: Basic idea. In general the basic idea has been defined by - it was a long fight to find a sentence who could be applied for everybody. And the sentence, I will tell you in French, was, the sentence everybody accepted to sign was: "*Nouveau Realisme égale nouvelles approches perceptives du réel.*" That's, "New Realism equal, new approach persp- new sensitive, perceptive approaches of the real."

SEVIM FESCI: But I saw also another definition that said, that it was forty degrees above Dadaism.

ARMAN: Well, that was after.

S

ARMAN: That was more, much after.

ARMAN: And that made a big fight because Yves Klein was against that style. He take, he didn't want to-. He was in the show, but against his will. And Martial was too. And me, I was between. It was quite a joke because the, the mov-, Restany make the New Realism start in 1943-1944 with Yves Klein and Hains, as take a position. And for him it was forty years after Dada. And if it was forty years after Dada, after Picabia, it was forty degrees after Dada. It was a kind of joke that doesn't mean nothing, really.

SEVIM FESCI: I see, yes, But you have very often been referred to as the Nouveau Réaliste par excellence.

ARMAN: Myself?

SEVIM FESCI: *Oui* [yes] yourself. Do you agree with this term?

ARMAN: Well, yes and no. Because I've never been really a New Realist. A New Realist would be to take reality as it is. The real New Realist could be Marcel Duchamp if he didn't put any base or stand on the object.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: And the New Realism I guess for Pierre Restany, I was a very good New Realist when I used the garbage, as an expression. And when I use it like that I just pour the garbage in the container. As I did once.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh in the container. But what was the meaning behind it? Did you- ?

ARMAN: The expression by the quantity.

SEVIM FESCI: Expression by the quantity?

ARMAN: Yes.

SEVIM FESCI: But why garbage?

ARMAN: To show that sixty cubic meter of garbage is not like the garbage of one person, it has another quantity. And to show the beauty of the element itself, not as you see it because you know it's garbage; because it is like Kurt Schwitters when he was using old paper from waste baskets. Exactly the same meaning. A three-dimensional Kurt Schwitters.

SEVIM FESCI: I see, yes.

ARMAN: And by accident, because Kurt Schwitters's was a composition. But I start with that very simple theory: I believe that the objects, they have an auto-composition themselves.

SEVIM FESCI: That the objects have?

ARMAN: They have auto-composition themselves. If you put in the container two thousand forks, they will assemble following plus or less the form of the fork and they will have space between them and they will have auto-composition that will be made by accident, but that will be still predictable when you use an object.

SEVIM FESCI: That's your idea of accumulation, you mean.

ARMAN: Accumulation. Auto-composition of the object.

SEVIM FESCI: But do you mean that the objects have aesthetic values by themselves? Why do you choose that, these objects and not another one?

ARMAN: It depends. I'm quite aware of what I'm doing. And I was, at least quite aware of what I was doing. When I was taking an object with a very strong meaning, as an object like a gas mask, which is a little built on the

human face, and has a meaning of war or destruction, the meaning of the object was stronger than the aesthetical [sic] one, the poetic, or the message; the literary message was stronger than the aesthetic one. Whereas gears, a ball bearing the aesthetic is stronger than the meaning. But I was aware of that. And it depends on the composition. Sure, if I have five thousand square feet of gas masks from a certain space, we can forget the gas mask. It will be drawn on the mass of gas masks. But because it's a large object it will take on its importance when it will be put in a five by six composition.

SEVIM FESCI: I see, yeah.

ARMAN: And I knew it when I was doing it. But if I take ball bearings, even in a small composition, two by two feet, the ball bearing could be forgotten as a ball bearing and take a position in an all over grain composition surface. And I always play between those two tendencies; some a little bit more literary when the object has a meaning and some more aesthetically when the object has just plastic value.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. Do you think you are very far from the objects of Marcel Duchamp, for instance?

ARMAN: Yes. In the sense that-

SB: The ready-mades. . . ?

ARMAN: First I must make the statement that he refused the aesthetic. I have never refused the aesthetic. I integrate the aesthetic, and I accept and I am interested by aestheticism. Even if it's a little bit old-fashioned, I don't care. Because I always pretend that non-aestheticism leads to aestheticism.

SEVIM FESCI: *L'esthétique de la laideur*- [inaudible] [transl: The aestheticism of ugliness-]

ARMAN: Yes. Or aestheticism of the non-aestheticism primary structure is aesthetic. Even Bernar Venet when he doesn't want to touch any aestheticism has some aestheticism. His is non-composition only by the choice or by the non-choice to make an elevation from a common objects or form a proposition, and to see, to make this proposition look at it as a piece of art is an aestheticism in itself. And I'm always very aware of it. And even when Marcel Duchamp takes an object and shows it as something else than the object itself by the *baptême*, baptism of the object, he makes an aesthetical [sic] move because he made this move in the field of aestheticism. If he used the object in poetry he made the move, the object will be used in poetry as meaning. If he make, if he used the object in science, if an object by any kind of chance has to be used, ball bearing, or whatever it is, in science, it becomes part of a total in science, too. But it depends on where you use something and where you take something out of its natural context of use and that becomes a part of what it is. And art is aestheticism anyway.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I understand it very well now.

ARMAN: For that I'm very precise in the statement. It's most impossible to refuse aestheticism. In this case, I prefer to assume it.

SEVIM FESCI: But why did you choose the object to express your art?

ARMAN: I guess I have a very strong feeling about the object. In first, by my environment, has been-. My father was selling odds, antiques and things and I was concerned by objects. In second, my feeling of quantity. When I was a child, the quantity of objects was always interesting and I was always transforming those quantities. And, I guess I was very sensible as a collector, as an instinct, as a rat pack collector. I collect information. Everything I collect from my childhood up to now, I was collecting. I wanted to have marbles, I didn't want to have marbles just to play.

SEVIM FESCI: Just for possessions?

ARMAN: For possessions. I guess for securization [sic].

SEVIM FESCI: Security you mean?

ARMAN: Securing assets.

SB: *Oui, c'est ça* [yes, that is it], Security.

ARMAN: Yes, security. And what happened, too, I have been quite fascinated by the transformation of the object through civilization and of the history of art. A hundred years ago the object had a very strong personality despite the fact that it has been made by human hand. Every chair was a little bit different even if they were alike. Every clock was different. Every cart was different. Every table was different. And these objects got an individuality. You can see that when we collect antiques. You never find exactly the same chair. They were made by hand and they were individual. Even if they were made by hand they were less close of human than the

objects made in the industrial 19th and 20th century, objects which have been injected, made by mass production. Those objects made by hand were passed on to the son, and the son passed it on to his son. They were repaired with love.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, from generation to generation.

ARMAN: Yes. And because they were really created by hand, they got part of the individuality of the people who created them. But what happened with the mass production the object lost its individuality. When you made thousands of coca-cola bottle, the prototype is a coca-cola bottle, the other ones are just part of the production. A bowl, an object, a plastic bowl, every kind of mass production, a car. And by this fact, they lost their individuality as an object, but they got somethings more human; they got the kind of -

SEVIM FESCI: More human?

ARMAN: Yes. Like an extension, like nails, like hair, like our skin. It's like, you know, we use objects like a snake uses its skin.

SB: Like a snake?

ARMAN: When we are through with the object, we throw it away. And it's a part of the human extension. A car is a part of a human extension more than everything else because we just use it like that, radio, telephone, a bowl, a bottle. They are just an extension of our possibility and, I really mean this, really more an extension of everyone than before the object was more individual. And the kind of surrounding of the mass-produced object fascinated me, scared me, too. And the cycle, the most living cycle of the modern object; production, consummation, destruction in the end.

SEVIM FESCI: In the end, a kind of cycle.

ARMAN: I've always been very sensitive to the cycle like that, the cycle of production like. And this kind of anguish and this kind of reaction I always transmit or translate in my work. The adventure of the modern object and the classical object. A violin is a classical object. Gears is a modern object.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. When you do accumulation, do you want just to hold the moment, you know, just to stop a moment? How did the idea of accumulation come?

ARMAN: The "stop a moment" is another thing. "Stop a moment" is absolutely another completely different thing that I use in my other- I always have two parts of growth: it's accumulation or destruction; these are the two parts of my activities. If you want to split them, very well.

SEVIM FESCI: That's right. The accumulation on one side and there's your "*Colère*" or "action sculpture," for instance.

ARMAN: Yes. "*Colère*," cutting, burning, the blowing in with dynamite, the destroying, the sinking, every kind of destructive action I use.

SEVIM FESCI: Is it your way to express your modern times?

ARMAN: Yes. Well, no, destruction is more to stop the time.

SEVIM FESCI: To stop the time?

ARMAN: Yes. You carry a bottle of milk when you're a child, you drop it, so then the milk has a form on the floor and the piece of glass, but it doesn't ever keep it. It's just an accident. It's very intriguing accident always that's happened and you would like to keep it. And the furry, the "*Colère*," for me has always been something, stop the fire, stops when he has just start.

SEVIM FESCI: So you keep it because

ARMAN: Keep it, keep that moment, the moment of destruction because it's between destruction and not destruction when you stop the process.

SEVIM FESCI: You stop the destruction though, you said?

ARMAN: Yes, you stop the destruction.

SEVIM FESCI: Or you look at the destruction? You look at it.

ARMAN: Yes, when you, and especially when you embed it or fix it in the panel, you stop the moment, you stop the accident, you break a violin like that, everything is blown up. If I could stop them, up [in the] air, and do it, too, I would like that very much. But-

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I see. But there must be a problem of time for you, too.

ARMAN: Huh?

SB: There must be a problem of time? You know, time, *l'heure* [the hour]

ARMAN: Yes. What time, what do you mean?

SEVIM FESCI: Are you obsessed by time?

ARMAN: Not as much.

SEVIM FESCI: No?

ARMAN: No. The time, no. I'm more upset by memory than by time. I don't believe in time. Time is a very relative thing.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, abstract also.

ARMAN: No, relative. The memory creates the time. Doesn't exist the time. Even if we refer to the revolutions of the solar system, it is not a constant one. There is a transformation through space, degradation. The Earth turns very, a little bit slower every 2000 years, if 2000 years exist. It doesn't exist in any way. It's more subjective than real. Time doesn't exist. I believe in memory. The memory is the real inspiration. The memory creates the time. And you can see through civilization when a civilization adjust the oral tradition, the civilization takes thousands and thousands of years to give an inscription the reality. When a civilization has the writing and tradition it becomes shorter. When a civilization has a printing tradition it becomes shorter and powerfuller [sic]. When you have computer, it's wonderful. And it's power, pure power. Memory is pure power. Pure power and pure strength, and pure utilization of space and time, if time is something we can really relate. But I don't believe in time itself.

SEVIM FESCI: And did you use also human figures sometimes?

ARMAN: No. I use it when I used to slice sculpture. But not for-

SEVIM FESCI: To slice sculpture you mean?

ARMAN: Yes. Bronze sculpture like I bought some corny bronze or metal sculpture and I sliced it.

SEVIM FESCI: Because I saw some of your erotic sculpture, what I might say.

ARMAN: Ah yes, that was, I made four, then no more.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, that's right, that's all.

ARMAN: It was an experimentation I got. But it was more for what I put inside than really the form.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, now what did you put inside?

ARMAN: In one I put gloves, human hands, other I could color, other a violin inside.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, I see, yes.

ARMAN: Yes. There was a little bit a relation, but I don't feel that easy on the relation of the human body as I feel with an abstract space, geometrical space.

SEVIM FESCI: And could you tell me a little bit about the, what they call the creative process involved in your work? I mean by that, if you could tell me a little bit about the bridge between inspiration on one side and intellectual approach on the other side?

ARMAN: Oh, yes. I thought a lot about that because it's quite and interesting phenomenon not only for me, for the other artists, too. And, we can divide artists in two. It's always, I like to divide things, it's part of my game. It's not true because, even we can't divide humanity between man and woman because there is always some gradation, evaluation. But there are some artists I call Pavlovian.

SEVIM FESCI: Pavlovian?

ARMAN: They react to their environment and they walk like the dog of Pavlov was eating, was making saliva when he react at the bell.

SEVIM FESCI: Instinctively, you mean?

ARMAN: Yes. Instinctive artist. And the others, conceptual artists. Perfect, for me, the perfect show, that instinctive can be a little bit conceptual, on the line, when Picasso, that I consider an instinctive artist, was working one some tortured woman, it's a line of work. But as a piece itself I know how he starts. He starts as a gift, poetical inspiration, poetical gift and extends that plus or less with destruction, addition, retractation [sic], coming back, erasing, coming back until he felt fulfillment with the piece.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: That for me that is complete instinctive behavior. Other artists like Mondrian, that I call conceptual, have a precise idea what they do before they start to do it.

SEVIM FESCI: You mean they know it?

ARMAN: They know it. They have- A large percentage, I will say. A large percentage of the vision of the piece when the piece will be finished, maybe 70%. I'm pretty much sure that when Jasper Johns, who is a little bit of both, when Jasper Johns worked on the Ballantine Ale bronze he knew a little bit how he would make a plaster, from the plaster he made a mold in bronze, and the bronze would be painted as the Ballantine Ale can has been painted. That whole operation you have to have a precise idea of what you will do and to have a representation of the piece, how it will be when it's finished. For the flags, too. And in this case, I call them conceptual. They have a concept of that they are doing, not only on the line but on the piece itself.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I understand.

ARMAN: And some are more instinctive, like Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg is an instinctive artist, even when he's working on some very precise or mechanical or electronical [sic] things like those discs. I'm pretty much- if the concept of the disks, he can figure out with the help of a scientist or technician. What he painted on the disks has been plus or less instinctive.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I see.

ARMAN: And me, I belong more to the conceptual than to the instinctive.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, I see. You mean you have an idea.

ARMAN: What will look the piece.

SB: Or let's say a vision in your mind before you start the work?

ARMAN: A vision, it's more a reasoned vision, when I have an idea, it's more a vision that I thought about. Before it became a vision I have an idea. For instance, some months ago I had the idea.

SEVIM FESCI: Before you started to work?

ARMAN: Yes. I had the idea when I was pushing a tube, how it could be the fact if I don't press the tube myself, it's mechanically made, because my pressing of the tube when I press a tube of painting-

SEVIM FESCI: There's the mark of yourself.

ARMAN: My gesture, my rhythm. I thought if it was just made mechanically, how that's look. And I started to speak about it to friends with some ideas, and for finish after a long time of speaking, turning the idea over in my mind, making small sketches sometimes of the operation, I made a tortured color tube. It's pressed between two Plexiglas with screws and wing nuts. But, before I made the first one, I had to have a clear idea of how it would look.

SEVIM FESCI: Before you start.

ARMAN: Before I start.

SEVIM FESCI: And then, while in the process of doing it, you might change maybe a little? Or?

ARMAN: The less possible. I hate any kind of change. That's happened, accidents happen always, especially in

the field of plastics or in the field of color. But I'm not that happy of accidents. If I can avoid accident, I avoid accident. I prefer the biggest percentage closest of the primary idea I had of the piece.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, I see. So how much importance, for instance, do you give to the sensibility of the artist? Is it to be apparent in a work of art? Or?

ARMAN: For me it's not very important.

SB: It's not very important?

ARMAN: Everybody is sensitive. Everybody is an artist. Everybody is a musician. It's just a questions of specialization. Our civilization is a civilization of specialization. You kill every kind of natural need very young in the child. Primitive tribes, or primitive human groups, everybody, when it's a festival, if there's a celebration, religious or not, can express themselves with participation of the festival of the tribe, of the religious festivities or celebrations of the tribe, by painting, by dancing, by playing music, by building things, by carving things; everybody participates. Our civilization puts so much pressure to the child, very young, with the property, you have to be clean, and with the relationship of the group very tribal, and with the obligation to learn a lot of things very young, that you kill off those spontaneous expressions that pretty much everybody has. I'm pretty much sure that if you bring me every kind of kid of twelve, thirteen, fourteen before it's too late, and I make an artist, not maybe a genius, but a passable artist with him. And he will not be somebody who will do something like me.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. But something personal.

ARMAN: I'm pretty much sure of that. And that's personal things.

SEVIM FESCI: You think there is this need in everybody? Everybody has a need of?

ARMAN: It's like the smell of everybody: everybody has a different smell. It's called, "*odor sui generis*." The sensitivity of sensibility of odor, is intellectual "*odor sui generis*."

[audio break]

ARMAN: - *entre étrangers c'est très chouette* [translation: - between strangers that is very nice.]

SEVIM FESCI: [laugh] Yes. What do you think of the education of the audience?

ARMAN: Well, I guess it's most automatic. It's a question of civilization. A civilization like the American civilization way of life with a kind of leisure time, which means the human being works less and you have more time. When you have everything you need, when you have enough food, enough transportation, enough roof above the head.

SEVIM FESCI: So you have time.

ARMAN: The next need is culture. The first next need is culture. Sure, for some-

SEVIM FESCI: You think it's really a need?

ARMAN: Oh, that becomes very quickly a need. Because, even for very poor people it's a need. But that spreads out easier when you get everything you want. Because, what, it just kind of, that reminds me of the Bandarlog, the monkeys in the Rudyard Kipling novel, you know, the book of the jungle, *The Jungle Book*, there is always this desire of imitation. We are primates anyway. And we do everything. And when, if by any chance in a movie or visiting somebody, you see some improvement on the environment among everything you know usually.

SB: You see some improvement?

ARMAN: Improvement. Somebody has something hanging on the wall. Well, what is that? And that leads to questions. I guess it's not, the information of the audience becomes almost automatic. Sure, It can be helped.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, it can be helped.

ARMAN: Yes, it can be helped. The Musée [inaudible] exhibition is free. But I'm a little bit against the avant-garde on the street that I saw in New York.

SEVIM FESCI: What do you mean by avant-garde on the street in New York?

ARMAN: Like very modern sculpture in the street.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, I see.

ARMAN: Very huge work. Because I see how people treat them. They spread them. They put posters on them. They scratch them.

SEVIM FESCI: So you think that the audience in a way has to be educated to appreciate a work of art?

ARMAN: Well, yes and no. You are not to force the education. It's an automatic education, the average- And to create, to do something, is always to be in advance on the civilization. You don't do somethings, you don't do somethings for the average people. That's not true. Nobody does somethings, because if he does something for the average person he is not in revolt, who doesn't want to make-

SEVIM FESCI: Well, who does he do it for?

ARMAN: He does it first for himself because he has the very strong impression that there can be some improvement. You take knowledge of history of art. As an artist, you know that some other artist did some things. And suddenly you don't accept it. If you accept what has been done completely and you agree completely, you have not the desire to do something yourself. Because, when you are very young, the only desire you have is to change the world. You believe you will change the world. After you become a little bit older, you see that you just put another layer of varnish on the civilization. But it's all right. But, it's impossible; it's exactly the same problem to educate all the audience would be to change the world. You can't change the world. It has to be done step by step. Now, the general audience is able to accept Impressionism and partially Cubism. But no more. And in twenty years there is an acceleration of the information. Information is a very interesting phenomenon with books, with color books, with tv, color tv, movies. These are mass media information, very strong. And this information always- When you see on the movie, on the adventure, comedy movie, on any kind of James Bond, modern architecture, modern painting, modern design, you impress the imagination of the average people who don't really have contact with that. And that's part of the education. It's auto-education by accumulation of information. And you can help it but you can't force it.

SEVIM FESCI: Yeah, I understand, yeah. And what do you think, so, might be the role of the art critic? Do you think he must just show the work of art as it is? Or do you think he has to interpret it?

ARMAN: The art critic?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: The art critic is a, must be a kind of witch doctor.

SEVIM FESCI: A witch doctor?

ARMAN: Yes. He has to play between different strengths. He has to play to, he has to mix different ingredients. One is the knowledge or acceptance of the audience. The other is the imagination and creativity of the artist. And it's a very difficult role because, on the way, he is like a witch doctor: he has to help the artist sometimes to bear, to give birth to this world or his imagination by some positive or negative position. The artist has to be enough individual to keep his individuality anyway. And to bring those to the audience, too, that is very important, because the audience is not completely aware and can take most everything as a good product. And I guess it's a very diffi- the art critic has a very difficult position like a *découvreur*. *Comment on dit?* [translation: How do we say?]

SEVIM FESCI: A discoverer? Somebody who discovers.

ARMAN: A discoverer. And make a quite clear discovery because, okay, for sure.

SEVIM FESCI: Or "searcher", searcher.

ARMAN: A searcher, yes, a searcher. A talent scout; a searcher. But it's a little bit different than the talent scout because he has to be, not aware of what is the need of the audience, but aware of what he's bringing the artist. Because when we take the phenomenon of Noland, who makes circles part of his life, makes circle, very well-made circles, some art historians say, well, but Sonia Delaunay before him made circles with simultanism. But when Noland take off completely out of any kind of aesthetic context, the circle, there were some L's on the very large canvas and very pure composition less mixed up and less Cubist than Delaunay, there were somethings bring, bring, brought, brought, sorry, had been brought. And it's important that an art critic has been able to see what has been brought. But, if somebody else now made circles like Noland and maybe a little bit more attractive, but with some more fancy colors, but doesn't bring nothing, the art critic has to be able to see what is not bring, brought. And that's quite important. A kind of division- It's a difficult trouble. He can be wrong. He is wrong a lot of times.

SEVIM FESCI: That's what I mean. He has-

ARMAN: But he has to- It's a little bit like a judge will separate the good con from the bad one.

SEVIM FESCI: It's so difficult.

ARMAN: And sometimes you are pushed, even if you have a good con and a bad. But you have to have enough guts to come back and, well, it's a kind of game. They are a witch doctor like in a tribe, when, the young men they have to prove that they are men and they have a lot of *épreuves*. *Comment on dit?* [translation: "tests". How do we say?] A lot of-

SEVIM FESCI: Experience.

ARMAN: Experience to complete, a lot of, to get their badge as a male of the tribe. And the artist in the society has a kind of *le barrage de la virilité* [virility dam], the virility obstacle to pass, dam to pass. And it's quite interesting. And one role of the critic is to make things difficult for the artist, but in a good way, a positive way, and easier for the audience in a good way, too.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. Arman, as a French artist and European artist, and in your case living half a year in New York.

ARMAN: A little bit more than a half a year.

SEVIM FESCI: A little bit more; eight months.

ARMAN: Seven or eight months.

SEVIM FESCI: Do you think that there is in a way a difference between European artists and American artists? Do you think that they approach art in a different way? What do you think?

ARMAN: No that much. Maybe the relationship with the society is a little bit different. But the approach-

SEVIM FESCI: The relationship is not the same?

ARMAN: Yes. I could see many American artists who are living for years in Europe, like Sam Francis, Jenkins, or Cy Twombly, become really like the others. And I could see a lot of European artists after a few years, like Claes Oldenburg, no, not really Claes Oldenburg, well he was born in Sweden, but, or like Marisol who was basically educated in Europe, or like Fahlström, Öyvind Fahlström. I could see them, after a time, living, but really living, not just passing a month or two months, in America. live like- . I guess if they are artists, they react alike; the same kind of animals. But the relationship, the basic relationship with society is the same. The society will like winners here, more than the European society.

SEVIM FESCI: Now, speaking of the civilization, these two different civilizations, the European one and the American one, now, it's a kind of globalism now. But do you think that it can influence the artist?

ARMAN: Oh, yes.

SEVIM FESCI: That's what I mean; that's why I'm asking you this question.

ARMAN: The biggest influence has been the result, the famous result, the Pop art. The introduction of this life of everyday on the output with so strong feeling and so great originality, the originality on the American side. That has been quite strong.

SEVIM FESCI: It's really the American side they're emphasizing?

ARMAN: Yes.

SEVIM FESCI: And would you say that Pop Art in a way has influenced you? Or?

ARMAN: Not that much. I'm not very much a Pop artist. I'm more post-surrealist, post-Dadaist, than really a Pop artist. I maybe have been influenced by the country, by the society, by the production.

SEVIM FESCI: Production in this case.

ARMAN: I'm fascinated by all the phenomenon which is production, construction, Manhattan is a big accumulation and everything. That I've been very influenced by that, more than by Pop art itself.

[audio break]

SEVIM FESCI: You know, Arman, do you think that emotional stability and financial security have an influence on the artist and on the way he creates?

ARMAN: In his work?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: Oh, yes, certainly. And through the history of art we can see through the emotional life, and sometimes the financial security of some of the artists, some transformation. And I really believe that it's generally about the same kind of transformation and the same kind of reaction. We are a little bit less individual than we would like to believe or to guess we are.

SEVIM FESCI: Less individual?

ARMAN: Less individual. We react- You know, there are some primary reactions that when you divide that five or six times you get always some kind of pattern. And I'm pretty sure that emotional stability can bring a lot of possibilities to an artist, like, a little bit like the old expression some analysts use when they say, well, maybe you don't need an analysis, but you are like a V-8 engine which is working on six or five cylinders instead of eight. Sure some stability can- I believe that for every good artist, and by "good " artist I mean somebody who brought or is bringing something with him in the history of art, financial and emotional stability makes for improvement.

SEVIM FESCI: It is necessary?

ARMAN: It is not always necessary. Sometimes you can make a masterpiece if you are really a genius and if you have enough things to say, without. But I believe that it can be an improvement.

SEVIM FESCI: But do you think that- I was thinking of psychoanalysts, for instance. And, do you think that if an artist is more and more conscious of himself, I mean in life, do you think that that can in a way against his being creative?

ARMAN: It depends on what is the background of the artist.

SEVIM FESCI: The background?

ARMAN: Yes. If he's used to intellectual discipline for a long time, the knowledge of himself will be an income. But if brutally, from just some instinctual behavior he has to face some of his own reality that he couldn't really afford, it could be a catastrophe.

SEVIM FESCI: By catastrophe you mean if he wants, if he is more aware of himself?

ARMAN: Not aware of himself but if you start to ask him some questions, if he's not prepared, if he must be asking some questions: is it valuable or not? What is his position in life and society?

SEVIM FESCI: He loses his spontaneity in a way?

ARMAN: He might. But if he's used to dealing with intellectual discipline for a long time, every kind of knowledge of himself or every kind of discovery of what are his primary, his deep reactions and what he is and what is the constitution of his work is an income. I'm pretty much sure of it. It's like if you take an African carver and you bring him, inject him into the civilization and start to make him to think what he's carving and to make a relationship with society and himself and in what he's doing, I'm afraid he might become completely impotent.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. I understand now in that sense, yes.

ARMAN: By chance he will be on the town, in a town like New York, in a civilization like America, everybody is quite well-trained to think through analysis or through the Talmud or through any kind of intellectual game or training.

SEVIM FESCI: Are you concerned by the social and political problems of the day? Do you think that the artist-?

ARMAN: Well, political, yes, at least. Because they involve life itself. Social, less. They can interest me very selfishly if I can get something to eat. But political, they involve me more deeply because just the future of what we are and the future of the life. Sometimes it's very important.

SEVIM FESCI: I was thinking that in general I think that the artists do remain outside the problems even though they remain [laugh]

ARMAN: *La Tour d'Ivoire* [Ivory Tower], as we say in France.

SEVIM FESCI: Not *la Tour d'Ivoire*, no. I think more that they remain in their own world. And they have to remain

there.

ARMAN: Yes. Okay. We try. It's always very good protection but it's difficult especially with the immensity of information, the strong, the strength or the power of the diffusion of information is that it's difficult to- You have to go on an island and cut the wire. It's very difficult. And I found that it's less difficult to cut the wire here in New York, for instance, than in Paris.

SEVIM FESCI: Cut the wire off, yeah.

ARMAN: Because if you want to be a little bit solitary and work very hard, you can do it more easier in New York than in a town like Paris or London. Because you depend so much for the human relation here on the phone. If you don't answer your phone, you are quite a lonely couple.

SEVIM FESCI: You can be alone?

ARMAN: Yes. And in London and in Paris, you're always outside and seeing people and you can't avoid to meet people. And everybody is drop in, visiting you without warning. Especially for Americans, it's quite shocking sometimes when you're living in Italy or the South of France or Spain that suddenly you hear somebody is knocking on the door. It's a friend, somebody is dropping in; like that. You don't feel that your time it's you, really.

SEVIM FESCI: That the time is yours. Right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[May 18, 1968]

[inaudible]

SEVIM FESCI: Maybe you can talk a little bit about your experience as an art teacher in Los Angeles.

ARMAN: Yes, I was hired by UCLA to teach painting during two quarters. They wanted the, the complete academical year but I couldn't because of the show here and so forth. And it has been a very interesting and very stimulating experimentation. And I discovered with amazement and deep interest, academical system, American system of universities. Yet it is very interesting because it's quite free and with so many painters not so rigid.

SEVIM FESCI: Free?

ARMAN: Free, yes. Not so rigid and so stiff as the European - German, and French systems. And I guess it's quite efficient. I've been amazed because really when I was hired to teach painting, and the first time I faced the class of 27, I was really a little bit annoyed because I had the impression that technically, as painters, they were students who had three years of university and I had some graduates too, that I had nothing to teach them, technically. They were maybe technically better than me. And very quickly I decided for the two quarters I was going to spend there, there will be not any kind of technical teaching. Sometimes, yes, if a student asked me a specific question about style or balance of one painting or one sculpture work he did, I answered about it, this I could. But I decided to have a kind of game, ludic you could say, a game, a stimulating game relationship with my students.

SEVIM FESCI: A kind of challenge you mean?

ARMAN: No, a game. Like we decided to make games, I decided. For instance I started with some "Cadavre d'exquis". It was a Surrealistic system to build a composition, you know, with paper. You divided a piece of paper in four sections. On the top, you start by, theoretically, the head of something. You fold it. The second one doesn't know what you did and start with the upper middle section. Fold, fold it, he fold it. And the third one the low, the low middle section. Fold it. And the last one the feet or the base of the composition.

SEVIM FESCI: Ah, I see.

ARMAN: And it was a kind of game. After you defold [sic] - how do you say defold?

SEVIM FESCI: Yeah, defold

ARMAN: Defold the paper, and you get a very strange result. Nobody knows how they start. And it's quite stimulating because it's not a question of guess, but every student is a little bit imaginatively stimulated. And it's like those "Exquisite Corpses" that the Surrealists did in the 20's. And we had a very good time with that. After. I divided the class, after I saw their work, a little bit arbitrary - but arbitrary is a part of the life too, challenge - on the modern and the classic. And we decided to kind of fight between modern and classic. All the modern will work on painting without subject, and the classic with a painting with a subject. After we gambled. We divided a very large canvas in sections and we had dice and we decided if the dice give from one to six that the right to paint to one to six squares on the big canvas.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes I see.

ARMAN: And if it was a number, odd or even, they had the right to paint- they had not the right, they should paint - in black in white or color. And that was a very strange progression, that progressed like an animal, that painting with a gambling system, they become more and more fond of this gambling. After we went to the beach. We played with the sand, the water. We swim. We visited some exhibitions, on textiles, on the- But always with discussions, with stimulating games and sometimes tales, legends, I was telling tales or comparative stories or history of art anew or something like that. And we had a really good time and we became pretty much quite friends and at the end it was a really good time.

SEVIM FESCI: And for them it was something completely new that they had never -

ARMAN: A little bit, yes. They enjoyed it. I received letter, later, and right now I still have some contact with some students. I think everybody enjoyed it: the students, me, and maybe the academical staff, too, because they asked me if I can come back one day.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh yes?

ARMAN: I would like, but it's a matter of scheduling time. Because already to spend six months there has been quite difficult for me. I had to set up a new studio just before a show and it was difficult. But I liked it.

SEVIM FESCI: But you taught in France, too?

ARMAN: No, never.

SEVIM FESCI: Never?

ARMAN: Well, what I taught was Judo.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, that I know, but never art?

ARMAN: No, never art. But it was interesting.

SEVIM FESCI: How come that they asked you to teach there?

ARMAN: I guess it is part of the American system. And I like it because it's so interesting, so living. It's the living experimentation. It's the education throws more this way. They don't care if you have a diploma or not. If you, if you- In European universities it's almost impossible. You have to have, to teach, you have to have the proper diploma. You have to be a specialist to teach. And that's been always. That amazed me so much because I realized how it was efficient. I could imagine in the literary field in French universities, if we hired Mr. Sartre or Mr. Camus to spend one week, two weeks, three weeks with the students to speak with them. To, to -

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I know. [laugh]

ARMAN: And, yes, I like very much this system. It's a confrontation. You know sometimes the education in Europe has been great because we, I guess we come out of it very well. For a while, for a long time, the academic system was very good. But, it become a little bit stiff and a little bit rigid. And I guess that confrontation with reality, with life, is widely used in all the American universities. They just hire somebody who is supposed to be good in his field, whatever it is. They can hire a businessman if he knows how to, or if he has a way to succeed. They can hire, I am pretty much sure, every kind of human activity, when they feel that men are good specialists, and to be confronted with the reality, for the student, it's a great thing, it's very efficient. And, well, in art, in the art field especially, I guess something is interesting in the case that all the American universities, they have an art school and they prepare graduate students. They make a large number of graduate students after a number of years, and the percentage of good, of good artists is quite amazing because it is always the same system. It's a question of normal proportion, it is always a proportion.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, that's right.

ARMAN: And I know the French system. The French system is quite efficient, difficult to fill, to succeed the tests and exams. To go to the School of Beaux-Arts in Paris is very hard, very difficult. You have to be ready to work twelve hour days during one or two years. And you have to affront very difficult examinations at different -

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, at the end of the year.

ARMAN: Yes, and very, all the labor, you know, from anatomy, to life drawing, to perspective, to science of color. It's a specialist. But they form very few specialists. And that makes the proportion less good. If you have a hundred good specialists a year, maybe you will have a very great to good painter like that, a good artist every two years. But if you have thousands and thousands like all the American universities, maybe they are less accurate on very specific fields, like perspective or anatomy, or whatever it is, still life, or "fusain". I don't know the name of "fusain", charcoal, yes, charcoal, or everything. But the proportion of two thousand will be anyway better and more. I guess it's more efficient in this case.

SEVIM FESCI: Do you think that unknown or isolated artists can still exist, you know, now, exist in this time?

ARMAN: Yes, yes, yes, but I want to add, I have something to add about the university. The problem at the end of my quarters, it was the grades I have to give my students. And I didn't have a fight, I didn't fight with the staff of the university, but I guess they were a little bit worried because I gave an A to everybody.

SEVIM FESCI: You gave an eight?

ARMAN: A

SEVIM FESCI: Ah, A to everybody.

ARMAN: 'A' to everybody, the best grade to everybody without distinction. Because I felt that in the particular field of art it's absolutely impossible to discriminate from the good or the less good. Yes there is, sure, some academic standards in art. And I couldn't for the ones with the more classical, or easier with the medium, give a better notation than the ones who were more clumsy or had some difficulty of expression. But by experimentation and by evaluation -

SEVIM FESCI: You can't judge.

ARMAN: You can't judge that. Some seem artful or very clumsy, but sometimes there are more chances to get out some things out of difficulties than some very perfect academical ones. And I didn't want to get - I prefer to give an A to everybody than to be deeply unjust, because if I kept them from graduation, or if I cut away, or if I delayed the study of somebody who is gifted in a sense which is not a traditional one, I could feel really worry for it.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes that I can understand.

ARMAN: Are you asking me about -

SEVIM FESCI: Yes I was asking if you think that unknown or isolated artists still exist today as in the past.

ARMAN: Yes, sure. But less than in the past, because there is more demand for art than before, and the market is larger, and the interest is growing and the information is more efficient. But I guess there are naive painters, primitive painters still exist, some. They can be very interesting and very good. But as creative, from classic to avant-garde artists, very seldom undiscovered artists can exist now. It's so easy, when somebody sees something they thing is speaking to somebody else, taking a photo. That spreads very quickly even from the deepest countries in the world, the farthest countries in the world. You can really find - The information works very well.

SEVIM FESCI: That's very exciting.

ARMAN: Yes, and as we know now, the kind of enormous melting pots, like New York, London, sometimes Paris, produce more artists anyway, because the information is more dense. That's a result of the information, a direct result of the information. And I guess it's very stimulating and interesting. But -

SEVIM FESCI: Mass medium, yes.

ARMAN: Yes, and the discovery of the artist is faster than ever and now we have talent scouts, the talent scout, the specialized talent scout. They already find artists when they are -

SEVIM FESCI: The talent scout you said?

ARMAN: The talent scout, yes, scout [alters pronunciation].

SEVIM FESCI: I didn't know either.

ARMAN: They find artists younger and younger and younger. Sometimes, it was usual to work until forty to be discovered and have some one-man show, year and years ago. But now you have one-man shows of very interesting artists at twenty-four or twenty-five.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes.

ARMAN: And pretty much twenty soon. Because the the information is spread out. And you save time because when you receive information, as a young artist, a lot of information, you can take the short way very quickly and know what you want to express, and you don't loose time to make experimentation that has already been done. This is quite interesting.

SEVIM FESCI: Today there is so much dissension among artists and so on about what art should be or is. Could you give me your own definition of this term? A definition, or even some words. A definition is very difficult to express.

ARMAN: Well that's quite complicated. I guess it's a disease.

SEVIM FESCI: A disease, yes.

ARMAN: I don't think - Well, in first, art is a disease, and a neurotic disease that a neurotic disease fits himself to.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes

ARMAN: Well, it could be a search for a kind of lost paradise or the substitution for creativity. I would say, natural life creativity. But it's very difficult to make a very short definition. I remember Mathieu made a definition some years ago in the famous fight between Mathieu and Yves Klein in Paris. Mathieu was asking to Yves Klein what was art for him, his own definition of art. And he gave him his own definition first. Mathieu said that for him art is like an algebraic formula, a function, in which each term is little bit less as a quantity than the total of a total. You've got the difference between, I guess, if you take the value of each part itself and you add it as an addition, the total is less than the whole thing.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, the total equation.

ARMAN: That's one of the definition, a very clever, a very beautiful definition of Mathieu. Yves Klein said: "For me, art is to be in good health."

SEVIM FESCI: Art is to be in good health?

ARMAN: Yes, that was quite imaginative too and interesting. But, me, I guess, it's always a little bit of a joke to make a short definition. I guess it's a disease, a very interesting disease. And a study could be made on what are the neurotic diseases that artists suffer in the whole history of art. Kinds of diseases like asthma, emphysema, allergy, heart, colitis or stomach burn, ulcers, and all those very psychological diseases. And I'm pretty much sure that somebody in completely, absolutely, definitely good health couldn't really be an artist. I don't see anybody, it's just an extrapolation of the system. But I guess it's a difficulty they have, as we say in France, which leads the normal person, the average person, to the desire to let his mark in life, in the field of art. Whether it's music or writing, the artistic field.

SEVIM FESCI: Creative expression.

ARMAN: Creative expression. The desire of, the desire of letting his mark, his passage on the life will be noted. The biological desire, the normal one, to want to give life, to have children and to see a continuation of the life like that. But, to express, through the imagination, that means image, the creation of image, the creation of something that didn't exist before as being thought, a specific and subjective mark on life. And this is not useful as just material things. Desire is a little bit like neurotic desire of self-expression and I guess it's a disease, not very famous one, an interesting one. I prefer, in this case, sick people. But I wonder if in a few centuries from now when everything could be cured in advance and everybody could be very normal and maybe satisfied, very satisfied -

SEVIM FESCI: Do you think -

ARMAN: That could be artificially made you know.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes

ARMAN: But that could be a result in a way. If under that result creativity will not disappear. Because creativity has a part of aggression, and aggression is always challenged and the reaction of some difficulty you have to overcome, handicap. And a kind of psychological neurosis or psychological disease is enough handicap to give enough aggressiveness to create something, to build a world, to replace the world which existed before by the one we want created. All young artists always believe that they will change over the world completely.

SEVIM FESCI: That's right. Do they change their optic afterwards?

ARMAN: Oh, with the time, yes. You know, if you consider the history of art, of music, of writing, as a wastepaper basket, it would be interesting to see what each individual dropped in that basket.

SEVIM FESCI: Discarded.

ARMAN: And what layer, what new varnish layer we'll have on the painting of the civilization. But enough, we have to keep enough ego to go on, to carry on. Without ego, [in French] on coule. [transl: we sink]

SEVIM FESCI: Art wouldn't exist.

ARMAN: No. I think a definition of art could be, a definition of art could be a marriage between ego and the imagination.

SEVIM FESCI: A kind of bridge between them.

ARMAN: Yes, adulterous child between ego and imagination, and intelligence sometimes.

SEVIM FESCI: Intelligence too, I think.

ARMAN: Yes, but on the future, again, I thought about that in California a lot, and another proposition which was most accepted has been studied by some friends of mine, who have the power to do it, to perform it. I propose for the future a kind of, not medical, but para-medical institution as a form of art. Not as a form of, a limited form of art, but a little bit like a clinic for medical checkups. It would be an aesthetic or cultural checkup. Somebody will be studied scientifically - everybody who wants - to get that piece of art which is in himself, and what has to be added to himself, will go into this private institution like a gallery. A gallery will be used for that, I'm pretty sure. And we will have a complete study of his reactions, visual reactions, image reaction, color reactions, sound reactions, word reactions, a very, with some very sophisticated device like a lie detector, encephalogram, precision counter and everything. What each individual has most response to kind of stimulation. That will be a study on stimulation, aesthetic and cultural stimulation, everybody. And a map will be issued, a booklet on what are the individual responses to all those stimulations. And at the end of everything, some things could be properly more completed. Deep environment will be a central environment, like [inaudible artist's name] made especially for himself to all the stimulation in response there, sound -

SEVIM FESCI: Our response to sound, form, color?

ARMAN: Yes, that could be a kind of trip. And we will always have to look closely on the next generation. It's very amazing that one of the most active artistic activities of a lot of young people has been a trip, a very fast trip with hallucinogenic drugs and everything. And I guess in the future we could propose a scientific trip that bears on the individual's response, scientifically studied.

SEVIM FESCI: Intellectual, with machines and so on?

ARMAN: Yes, the candidate to the trip will fit in or lay on something which will be like a very sophisticated egg, a very sophisticated rocket to send him in. He will not move from the place he is, but to send him on the extreme border of his sensitivity. And that would be one form of -

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. The colors would come, and?

ARMAN: Yes, maybe, if he has the right eye closed, that will be maybe created artificially. But I see that as a form of art, a complete set we can feel, get a complete set of any kind of stimulation or any kind of trip, or dépaysement. I don't know how to say that in English dépaysement. I don't know the work in English.

SEVIM FESCI: Fell lost.

ARMAN: Yes, feel lost, or feel nourished. But which is the closest response of all the stimulations which have been studied in this form. It's a two-part system. First, the study of the stimulation, the better stimulation, and second, the trip itself, but done like a checkup, medically, carefully and clinically.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. They would spend two or three days there?

ARMAN: Or a week more likely. Yes, like a checkup, like in a long checkup. And there will be some three incomes for the collector or the customer, I don't know what you will call it. First a booklet, or a study, or a tape. I don't know what will be at this time. A study or a very accurate map on what he is to feel, what are his responses. The second a trip.

SEVIM FESCI: What do you mean by trip?

ARMAN: A trip. Like you say: "Enjoy the trip!" He will have a kind of show made for himself, just for instance, a very complete show. He will be the center of a show that will be from environment, to concert, to happening, to sound, to stimulation, from every kind of source. A complete thing will be made for himself.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. And you will test, you know, the way he responds to that?

ARMAN: No, he will have been tested before. The show will be built after the test.

SEVIM FESCI: After the test, according to the test?

ARMAN: According to the test.

SEVIM FESCI: Oh, I understand now, yes.

ARMAN: And maybe a third one, some prescription: spend two weeks in the Yucatan, and buy a record from Schoenberg, or Death and Transfiguration from Richard Strauss. Buy yourself some things like that, like a medical prescription.

SEVIM FESCI: I understand, yes.

ARMAN: That could be an interesting way to make a new kind of Museum of Modern Art or gallery

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, that's right. It would be very lively.

ARMAN: Yes, more than lively. Experimental. Deeply experimental with some result.

SEVIM FESCI: It would be a kind of psychological test, too. Because you know, are you, you know -

ARMAN: Yes, more than a psychological test. A physical, biological test. What are the physical responses to color or what are the psychological stimulations? And, sure, always some things will be missed. We can't pretend with the better technology to dig really deeply in the unconscious reaction. But that can be done quite accurately.

SEVIM FESCI: And do you think it's possible?

ARMAN: Oh yes. Already now that could be done. With enough time and money to build it, that could be done now, right now, with what we have and what we know. Maybe not as completely, not structured as it could be done later, but on the limited but quite satisfying scale, that could be done now.

SEVIM FESCI: What is the goal of that? That people should be more aware of -

ARMAN: No, that they will have - For instance, we'll take yourself as a subject, my next guinea pig. And, would you like to have a map, a booklet, a survey or what are your responses exactly in different fields? You have an idea, a subjective idea, a supposition of your subjective idea, and pretty much an objective one of your response to color and sound.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, and which colors and sounds, and so on.

ARMAN: Yes, a kind of, like you have when you have a medical checkup.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I understand now.

ARMAN: And it will be your response to culture, too, to poetry, what kind of poetry excites your imagination more. What kind of associations of words, what kind of music, musicians and all. And that can be done with some basic material and refined. And I, do would like to have a make like that or a booklet on you as the subject?

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I think it would be very interesting.

ARMAN: So then we would take that book, that study and something is built for you especially. You will be in a small room, you will be in a kind of spaceship, reclining seat, and suddenly everything will be done for you. The whole environment will change for you with sound, with light, maybe vibrations, and everything. And the world maybe, an image just for you. How - [in French] comment on appelle 'par rapport à'? [how do we say 'par rapport à?']

SEVIM FESCI: According to.

ARMAN: According to the tests you had before that, the booklet.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, I understand, I think it's great.

ARMAN: And at the end of everything, maybe some prescription, because really a whole life is not enough to know everything about culture or -

SEVIM FESCI: On culture, you will ask questions, or?

ARMAN: No, it's very easy to define what are the responses. The aggressiveness, the imagination, the sadism, the masochism. You can - you know the responses are quite easy to define. And some will be complimentary. You need some complimentary things, you need some opposition, you need some, completely - There is a percentage of yourself that has to be feed in the different-

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, like a diagram.

ARMAN: Yes, like a diagram. There will be a lot of diagrams. And it has to be done, I guess, with computers, too, because the data will be so - There will be so many parameters to study, that has to be, certainly, have to be studied with computers, and the more difficult things, have to make a proper programmation of all the information and to get the proper answer, because there is always some deformation from the time you have an idea, you feed the computer, and what the computer got in the end. It's very difficult to go from the imaginative point, from the objective mechanical point of response, yes or not, for the computer, by this system. But I guess it can be done and it will be quite interesting.

SEVIM FESCI: Now that you are talking about experiments, what do you think of the experiments which have begun in France, you know, with the Maeght Foundation. Or the, you know, the other one, Centre? Nouvelle?

ARMAN: Yes, yes, I think it was the Démaisonné [phonetic] Group

SEVIM FESCI: Yes

ARMAN: Well, there is Group N in Italy too, and in Germany the Zero Group. Yes, I guess it's a modern phenomenon that not that modern. You know, they used to work in groups quite efficiently before. But the Maeght is something completely different than those groups. Those groups, they always work on the same way. You have a group of artists who have a similar direction and by brainstorm they develop. By brainstorm, by meeting, they develop all their imagery or their way to understand the medium on the same, in the new direction. But after -

SEVIM FESCI: In the same direction?

ARMAN: In the same direction, if possible. But there is always some slight difference. But what happened every time when, those individuals were at the departure absolutely anonymous. It was Group N, or Group O, Group T, or group of that, or group of this, without names. Very quick the individual feels more secure in what they want to express and become more individual. And every time the group explodes completely and everyone gets his own identity. And it's always the same thing. And the group is the 'machine de guerre,' the war machine, because they feel stronger. A group is always in a better stature to start. It's a very good system to start something, because if you come to a salon, to a gallery, to a place to exhibit and you say: "We are the Group that" or "We are the Group this," you are more secure.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes that's right

ARMAN: Let's go on the - Jean! Jean! [inaudible]

SEVIM FESCI: It's ok I don't mind.

[Audio break.]

SEVIM FESCI: That's right. You believe, you believe yourself in this group feeling and group thinking?

ARMAN: Well, I myself for a long time belonged to a group.

SEVIM FESCI: To the Twenty-Minute Group

ARMAN: Yes, the Twenty-Minute Group, but we always feel that we have to be, how do you say that, associated with. We feel stronger when we are -

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, and you can share ideas.

ARMAN: Yes, share ideas, have stimulating exchanges and everything like that. It's very important, and especially the younger we are, it's better because we get something through the group system, always.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes. And the last question, if you have time. You're in a hurry? I don't know.

ARMAN: Not that much. Yes, a little bit.

SEVIM FESCI: Do you think that Pop Art will give new birth to new developments?

ARMAN: The?

SEVIM FESCI: Pop Art.

ARMAN: Oh the Pop Art.

SEVIM FESCI: Because it's really close to its end now, and I wonder if you think -

ARMAN: Oh, each movement, you know, not further development, but gave a very strong image of the way how to work out some ideas like popular image. And that is the result of every movement in Art. You will have some half-dozen or dozen strong individuals who will be remembered, and the followers will disappear, then later in another movement.

SEVIM FESCI: Yes, and you can -

ARMAN: Roy Liechtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Jasper John, [inaudible], will always remain because they created such strong images that - and the survival in the future will be ten or fifteen years of that, then a revival in another way always. Because every revival, like the object revival, from Surrealism to Pop Art and to the New Realism.

SEVIM FESCI: In a way it's attached.

ARMAN: Yes, always, it's always attached, but with some other - It's like the Expressionists. There was always a kind of hot and cold, warm and cold reaction. After now, we'll have cold one, after the hot Pop Art, with minimal art and the revival of the Art age. But that will go to the warm again in five years or two years, we don't know exactly. It's a cycle spiral, and directional system, which works pretty much well. But with the acceleration of the information that goes so quick, maybe we have two or three, or four spirals in the same time intrincating [sic] themselves into each other. That's obvious now, the acceleration of history is so quick.

SEVIM FESCI: And in it we can feel sort of lost, that I know.

ARMAN: It's a phenomenon. Pop Art was very stimulating for the newspapers because the photos of the pieces, the reproductions of the pieces in magazines was very interesting. It was a kind of super-impression of the material which is used in ads, in magazines as piece of art. And minimal art is less glamorous for that. And there was a little bit of a gap in New York in information, they couldn't inform as well as Pop Art did it. It's very interesting.

SEVIM FESCI: I would like to ask you about the situation in art here between Paris and New York.

ARMAN: If it is a situation. I don't know that it is anymore.

SEVIM FESCI: No, no.

ARMAN: Well, Paris has been the place years ago during the period of the School of Paris and the Surrealists and so forth. And I guess that now New York is the place. There's a bit of challenge and it's just a very simple matter. I guess artist survive on the place, society is offering more supply of energetic -

[END OF INTERVIEW.]