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Oral history interview with Jason Berger,
1979 January 12-1980 February 1

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jason Berger on January 12, 1979 and February 1, 1980. It took place in Brookline, MA and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT F. BROWN: I'm concerned.

JASON BERGER: I'm not full of brandy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, so this—

JASON BERGER: How far? [Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Say something.

JASON BERGER: Uh, that might reverberate. [Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is an interview with Jason Berger in Brookline, MA, on January 12, 1979. I'd like to begin by, uh, asking you about some of your early years. You were born in Malden, MA, in 1924.

JASON BERGER: That's correct.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Could you describe something of, uh, of that childhood? And particularly, things that, as you look back, might have, uh, led you to, uh, choose art as a career?

JASON BERGER: Well, I was born in Malden, but, uh, I moved to Everett in—at the age of one or something of that sort.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So the nearby town?

JASON BERGER: The next town over. And my grandfather built two houses on the side of a baseball park, uh, for my mother and her sister, my aunt. And consequently, they had the International League there, the Twilight League. We called them the Twilight League, very good teams, the House of David, they had beards, and this was during the Depression, you understand?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: The House of David, the Colored Giants, teams of that sort, and they were very acrobatic and very funny. And consequently, from our porch, almost every evening, we watched baseball. Consequently, I've never been to a big league baseball game, in my live since because I saw so much baseball then, and it was a great deal of fun, yeah. Yeah—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were, were you a pretty lively child with lots of outside interests?

JASON BERGER: Uh, well—oh, this is another thing I remember. Also, it was very small townish. Uh, across the park was the primary school. I used to go to school, and I have—I used to have to fight my way to school through this phalanx of toughies, and on my way back also. Also, it seems I spoke Yiddish the first two years of my life—and I was living in a completely gentile neighborhood. I mean my friends were half American Indians, Irish, Irish Americans, Swedish Americans, and things of that sort. Very polygot. And I came out when I was three years old and asked somebody to play with me in Yiddish, and they all ran off when they heard this crazy language, so. Because my grandparents were living with us, so my mother says, "Now, he's gotta learn English." [Laughs.] But that was—the reason I bring that up is because very frequently, I go to parties or I see people, and they say, "You don't have a Boston accent, you sound European," and it occurred to me since that perhaps that's why, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: It's very funny. You know, I never thought of it that was way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you learned English just to calm your mother about her fear?

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes, yes. Well, at school also, yeah. I was very naughty in school and very naughty and, uh, once I ate garlic before going to school, and they sent me home. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why?

JASON BERGER: Well, pranksters, I mean that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you deliberately so, or—

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —is that way you'd get a little prestige with your schoolmates?

JASON BERGER: Well, I don't know. No, it was just that, well, my grandfather, the whole family were big jokesters. Actually like them, I made practical jokes and things of that nature, and I guess it just, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: My brother is a professor in California. He's very much concerned with humor and so forth, also. So it sort of runs in the family.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it a pretty happy family with your—

JASON BERGER: Well, I would say so, yes, yes. And, you know, it was a very *Saturday Evening Post*, you know, the whole thing. You know, roller-skating and ice skating and making bonfires and warming yourself and things like that, so very, uh—I would say life, very much life as it was shown in the '30s and '40s on the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Norman Rockwell, you know very much that sort of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were your parents quite—and your grandparents pretty encouraging in your schoolwork?

JASON BERGER: Well, that's very interesting. Yes, they were, but later on, I never had any trouble about going into painting. Most people who want to become painters have to really go through hell with their parents because most parents don't want their children to become painters, or actors, or anything else of that sort. They want them to pick, uh, very solid professions. Until recently when rich people delighted if their progeny go into some of that sort because they have all the money they want so that's sort of—that's points, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. But your parents were very tolerant of this or encouraging?

JASON BERGER: They were, they were and my uncle, of course, was—he's still alive—an illustrator for—

ROBERT F. BROWN: For the [inaudible].

JASON BERGER: —the Boston Post. His name is J. G. Savel [ph]. And, uh, of course, I was—he was always around, I always saw his work from the beginning, and he encouraged me. And I remember when I was living in Medford, I went out to Spot Pond—which I think is in Melrose—once, and he was there doing illustration from the First World War, and he had some people with gas masks on and early—like the helmets of the British had used[ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: He involved—

JASON BERGER: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —he involved himself.

JASON BERGER: Yeah, and they were on the ground crawling and so forth, and he was making drawings, you know? So, so, I mean this was the most natural thing in the world for me, you know? And I was painting at the age of 13 that I can remember. By this time, I had moved to Roxbury in the Grove Hall District. And, uh, when I went to high school, I knew I was going to art school, so consequently I didn't take any math the last two years. I
—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you, did you work with your uncle a bit? Did you got out on some of the—

JASON BERGER: No, no, no. But, but I was painting all the time, and I used to go to T-Wharf, uh, and I had a friend whose father had a big car, and he used to—he was very nice. He used to bring us to T-Wharf, and we'd go painting on Saturdays, you know? And then pick us up. You know, it was very—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were you painting then?

JASON BERGER: Landscapes and seascapes, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: Uh, right from nature, the same thing I do now actually.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have other, uh, models? Did you—you were in—by, by that age when you were a teenager, were you going to look at collections at museums?

JASON BERGER: Well, no. No, in the last years—in years of high school, the Boston school system ran a wonderful series of programs in the Museum. So after school, we would go two or three—I think three days a week after school to spend the whole afternoon, and we started with Ms. Alma LeBrecht, that was the name. Have you come across that name before?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And Ralph Rosenthal. And they were very good. And I mean, we had wonderful times. And, of course, we were in the Museum, and we could look around, and we all did watercolor copies of Coptic tapestries, and we were in the Classical Sculpture Court, which no longer exists.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But these were lessons? These were things that Ms. LeBrecht had you, had you do?

JASON BERGER: Yes, absolutely, and it was for the Boston school system, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: So, it was a very easy transition from that into art school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, did you enjoy those, uh, the schooling at the Museum? Because 'til then you had just been out painting—

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —from nature.

JASON BERGER: Yes, but I didn't—I mean, and then I'd go out and paint nature—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, but you—

JASON BERGER: —on Saturdays.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you enjoyed the curriculum? You didn't [cross talk]—

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —having to copy those casts.

JASON BERGER: No, no. We loved, loved all that. We did compositions. And we had Sunday classes, too, which were private I think with, um, Harold Rotenberg. Have you come across that name?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: Yes. So, I studied a lot of, you know, people, and I was in that and, uh, if—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you think you learned from those Museum classes particularly—

JASON BERGER: Well, actually—well, the thing is what I learned from them is that a lot of kinds of experiences that other people were not to go through until they got to art school, I had been through already.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Like what—for example?

JASON BERGER: Well, um, just having—just feeling very free to do something on a paper. You know a lot of people were very inhibited, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And I had sort of had my baptism of fire, as it were, in this way, you know? And so, it's very exciting and so when I went to art school, it was the most natural thing in the world for me to do, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you, you knew you were going to go to art school to do the—

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did that come about?

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you recommended from the—

JASON BERGER: Well, we sort of looked around. I looked into various arts schools. Yale was very big at the time, but then, uh, the Museum School is where I decided I wanted to go.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was your family willing to send you anywhere? Could they have—

JASON BERGER: Uh, well I went through on scholarship. I think my family paid a half-year's tuition during the whole time I was there, and that was very small at that. It was in 1941 or was it '42? 1942, I think. It was minuscule. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, your uncle was, of course, in art. Were, was your father or your mother?

JASON BERGER: No, my father, my father was a sheet metal worker. Actually, he was an artisan. He could, he could lay out—have you seen these rather complicated cupolas, uh, made out of copper?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

JASON BERGER: They get green, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yes.

JASON BERGER: Well, he could lay that out. I mean he could see it, and then just lay out, and then cut it, and then bend it, and put it together.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And assemble it.

JASON BERGER: And assemble it. You see? So, he had this kind of, um—well, he could conceive of these things to do it. So, it's interesting this kind of artisan thing, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you see a tie-in at all with your, uh—

JASON BERGER: Yeah, I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —knack for proposing?

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes. And also, he liked to make cartoons, you know? My father and I never got along. I mean he was a very cold man. But he liked to make cartoons, and his specialty were these faces that you could look at either way. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really? [They laugh.]

JASON BERGER: It's crazy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: It's that crazy. You could look at them either way, you know upside down and so forth, so anyway. So the Museum School, at that time, was absolutely fantastic. Uh, there were only about 125 people in the whole school, and the classes really consisted of mostly people, uh, who were first-generation Americans actually. And then, and then these mostly girls who were from rather well-off or well-seen Yankee families.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why do you suppose that was? That most of the men were, uh—

JASON BERGER: Well, this is during the war. This was the beginning of the war? Was it? No, it was just—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well '42, is it?

JASON BERGER: Yeah, '42, yeah, into the war already. It was very interesting. It—well, for the girls, it was a kind of finishing school among other things. And arts schools still are finishing schools for certain girls actually and maybe certain boys for all I know. I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: Uh, because a lot of the styles, the clothing styles, for example, what you see—well, at that time anyway, the art school, the way kids in art school dressed was the way other people would—would be dressing 5 or 10 years hence, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: So, so that was—I mean just to mention—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It had that—

JASON BERGER: —sort of, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —for the girls?

JASON BERGER: Yes, that's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Again, why wouldn't the old-American, stock boys be there? Because they were—you were just as subject to the draft, so—

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: Well, yes, that's true. Well, it's just at that particular junction in history for the two years or something, that's how I remember it. This may be very subjective, but that's how I remember it. And the funniest thing is these girls would all go and they'd draw and do lithographs and drawings of poor people in subways, which they knew nothing about. But they thought that this was real life you know? It's interesting, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

JASON BERGER: Yeah. Yeah. And anyway, it was very alive at this time. Uh, we'd go into class, we'd go into class and the whole time we were painting practically, we'd be seeing a capella. I mean it was, it was a fantastic sort of *esprit de corps*, you know, it was incredible, going on at that time. And in the first years, of course, we'd paint all day. Draw in the morning and then paint in the afternoon, and then do graphic arts at night. So, it was very alive and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And were the teachers the—this was okay with them?

JASON BERGER: Oh, absolutely. That's what they did. I mean it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, but I mean the—your collegiality in singing.

JASON BERGER: Oh, oh yes. Well, you have to realize—yes, yes. You have to realize the teachers were not there the whole time. They came in twice a week for criticism, so therefore, they were not party to the whole thing. They—it's not that they had to listen to us. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you went there, uh, intending to do what, what line?

JASON BERGER: Well, that's very interesting. Because of my uncle who's an engineer, whom I mentioned earlier, the one that told me about the architecture. He said, you know, you should do something of a practical nature. So, I signed up to become an industrial designer, which is very strange. But of course, after half a year, I mean there was no longer any thought of becoming an industrial designer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why was that, do you think?

JASON BERGER: Well, I realized that I was interested in painting and not in industrial design. However, later—well, I'm getting ahead of myself, but I—in 1955, I went to see a man at the Waldorf Astoria for an interview, and he was ready to hire me as an industrial designer, and I would live in Columbus, Ohio. [Laughs.] But it didn't work out. I mean I could've done it, but I decided that it wasn't the way I wanted to go, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see. But, but you didn't, uh, mind doing the kind of study that led up to industrial design, drafting in a way?

JASON BERGER: Well, I didn't—no, I didn't know anything about drafting in the least.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

JASON BERGER: I still don't. No, but I could have learned that, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But in that first—

JASON BERGER: —I would have made drawings. I mean other people could have done the drafting, you understand? Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, now that—I know in its earlier days the Museum School had a very, uh, careful, regular, and rather lengthy curriculum.

JASON BERGER: It did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, did you begin with—or did you—because you had prior training where actually you could jump a bit ahead. But did you have to begin with these studies of, uh, shapes, and of shadows and then—

JASON BERGER: Yes, we did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —working in plaster cast?

JASON BERGER: We did actually. Uh, well, no. We didn't work with plaster cast, but—it was a very interesting curriculum. And, of course, I went—I left in the middle of my second—no, in the middle of my third year. I was drafted into the Army, you see? I was drafted in the Army—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you?

JASON BERGER: But during the time that we—that I was there, I did an enormous amount of work. I mean, it was just—I don't know. I think that the spirit of the times, there was a war. I mean it felt very serious about things, not to the extent that one didn't have a good time also. But, but there's something about war that instills a kind of, uh—I don't know. It just does something to you. I don't know. You know, there's—you feel doubly blessed to be able to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To be doing what you were doing.

JASON BERGER: Doing whatever you're doing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible.]

JASON BERGER: Yes. Yeah, precisely

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there—were there any presiding figures there at that time?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, very definitely. Karl Zerbe was there at the time. And he's just having a show now with Hyman Bloom and Jack Levine. And I knew Jack—I knew Hyman Bloom—wait, well, we'll get into that later. That's very interesting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. But at this point, Zerbe was, uh—

JASON BERGER: Zerbe—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —what was his position?

JASON BERGER: Zerbe was the head of the painting department. And Bengtz, Ture Bengtz was the head of the drawing. Ture Bengtz taught me a great deal about drawing. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was Zerbe like?

JASON BERGER: Zerbe was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was your impression of him when you—as a new student?

JASON BERGER: Well, he was very autocratic. He was German after all, but he'd studied in Paris and so forth. And he was part of a school, which is called the Neue Sachlichkeit, which means the new objectivity, and he was crazy about me. He used to—they said he practically genuflected when he came into the room to look at my work, which was good in a way, but he didn't give me too much criticism. But he gave me a lot of encouragement.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now what was it in your work that he admired, in your painting?

JASON BERGER: Just the painting. I guess he liked the spirit and the way it was done, and so on. Because I had enough experience. I had more experience than most people had by the time I got to art school, you understand?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he at all—did your painting at all resemble his?

JASON BERGER: Well, I think that's a good question. [Laughs.] I think there were certain affinities. There are perhaps still to a certain extent, I mean certain affinities but, uh—because I got into a heck of a lot of trouble afterwards. Because a lot of people—they knew how he felt about me and since, they've gotten positions in the art world and they were very jealous of me and they still remember that because of the way he treated me, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was his own work like at that time?

JASON BERGER: His own work? Uh, well, he was doing a lot of still lifes in encaustic. He worked in encaustic because he developed an aversion, a physical aversion to turpentine, and this happens to some people. I don't know if it's psychosomatic or what. And he was doing a lot of landscapes also and figure things, too, but they were all, uh—we all were very much grounded. Uh, all the people who went there, to a great extent, were very much grounded in painting from nature, and painting realistically, not naturalistically but realistically, I would say.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did realism mean at that point, do you think?

JASON BERGER: Well, well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it?

JASON BERGER: I suppose realism—we were also very expressionistically oriented too. It was tremendous in Boston, well as, you know, there's a great expression.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But were they—well, did this affect the colors too?

JASON BERGER: Um, to a certain extent. To a certain extent. Uh, I also went to school with Ellsworth Kelly who, who did a complete about-face to that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, but at the time—

JASON BERGER: He's an exception—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —he was in—

JASON BERGER: No, he was painting realistically, yeah, so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, realism with him meant, it's really a kind of Expressionism?

JASON BERGER: Yes, yeah, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But working—

JASON BERGER: But Expressionism, uh, not Abstract Expressionism.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

JASON BERGER: But Expressionism—well, when I say realism, I mean that the various objects contained within the painting are somewhat recognizable or pretty recognizable. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was your intention with this expression? What were you trying to express?

JASON BERGER: Well, I was—actually, in the early days—I mean I've gone through a lot of various periods in my own way, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: I never became, I think, an Expressionist in the sense that Zerme was an Expressionist, or that Bloom, or Levine are. And I've been thinking about my own development. I mean you can't be your own historian, but it seems to me that there's sort of a novel way in many things. For example, when I was young, I used to go to all shows naturally. You do it when you're young. And, of course, there was a whole school of Boston watercolor painters coming out of Homer and Sargent, and things of that sort, in which they would go

and do a watercolor painting, you know, in one sitting. And that's essentially, what I do with my paintings in oil, now to this day. So, I think somehow, that that idea came out of this sort of Boston watercolor paintings I saw as much as out of Zerbe, or out of Expressionism, or anything else. You see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: This idea of doing something spontaneous and, you know. [Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, would you say that, uh, spontaneity characterized your work even, even when you were in a student situation in a curriculum?

JASON BERGER: Not so much then. I'm talking about now. I think less then in a way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why?

JASON BERGER: Less then. I mean it's very interesting, when I was in art school, of course, I was tremendously influenced by other paintings, you know. I mean you are. It's sort of—and I think it happens to all kids in an art school because as I've said, you see something and you try to emulate it. I think it's very natural, you know? Then see how I can do it all? And as a matter of fact van Gogh, in his letters is very explicit about this. He saw certain qualities or effects, if you will, in painting, and he studied them to see how he could achieve the same thing. And he talks about it very objectively in his letters. So that was really a period of a great deal of work and then I went into the Army for three years, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: And I remember that I wrote back to the school. Very few people were in the Army. I had gone into the Army hoping to get into camouflage because one of the people in school was in camouflage. But camouflage, by the time I got into the Army, was discontinued because of the nature of the war. So, I was sent to the—to Texas in the Air Corps and I remember going on a big bivouac and writing back to my class on these rolls of—on this toilet paper and they never got over it. They're still talking about it. It is very funny. Well, it makes the ideal stationery, if you will. [They laugh.] But I did it, sort of, as a lark, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: But anyway, so I was in the South. I was—then I went to Europe. I was very fortunate, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were in the—while you're still in the Army?

JASON BERGER: Yes. And I also studied engineering at the University of Alabama, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What's that? What did you have in mind there?

JASON BERGER: It's something called ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program, which you see, the Army denuded the universities and the colleges of men to the point where they had more men than they knew what to do with. They didn't know what to do with so many men, so they figured, by sending them back into the universities, they could repopulate the universities and also add to the education of the students, which they could use after the war, you see? And this happened, a lot of people got their pre-med training in the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But what did you have in mind by taking in there?

JASON BERGER: Well, I didn't have anything in mind. Let me tell you, I took a hypothetical language test, and I got the second highest out of 3,000. So I said, "Please, let me study language." They said, "You speak one language fluently already." I said, "No, I only had high school French and high school German," because this—the presupposition was that you had to come from probably a first-generation family and speak one language fluently already, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you still have the Yiddish at that point?

JASON BERGER: No. I had studied German since, which practically got rid of all my Yiddish. Uh, so consequently, I pleaded with the major. He said, "No, this is the rule. We can't do anything." So, consequently, I had to study engineering, a subject for which I have absolutely no feeling whatsoever. However, and I always felt bad but a couple of years ago, you know, it occurred to me that had I studied languages, I probably would have been dropped behind the lines. I'd probably be a dead duck today. Yeah. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, after you had—

JASON BERGER: Not cooked in cacciatore, yeah. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now after you'd, uh, then had this engineering, how long did that last the engineering—

JASON BERGER: Well, I was in the University of Alabama for 10 months of actual school, which is—which was an accelerated course in engineering. And of course, I did very well in all the—in English and things of that nature. But I still can't balance valence in chemistry. I mean I have no feeling whatsoever. Oh, there's one thing I meant—I forgot to mention. In Texas, I was in the hospital with an Army cold, which is called nasopharyngitis. That's Army cold. And I was in the bed next to Randall Jarrell, the poet. He was the Poet Laureate—oh, well, what do we call it? Congressional Poet, for a while, and we had a marvelous time. I never heard such exquisite bitching in my life, you know? He was a very amusing, very interesting man. Well, that's just an aside, but anyway, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: After you left the engineering program—

JASON BERGER: After I left the engineering program, they broke that up, and I went into an infantry outfit near Indianapolis. I remember walking around Indianapolis, which is a radial city and I kept coming back. No matter I went—where I went, I kept coming back to the center, right?

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

JASON BERGER: I can remember that very strongly. Anyway, I was in an outfit, which consequently, was about 70 percent—it was the 106th Infantry, which was consequently about 70 percent annihilated in the Battle of Bulge because they're completely green troops that didn't even know what K rations were. And I got this from a friend of mine Reed Kay, who went to art school with me, who was in the battalion fighting alongside of them, and he said, "They were just completely green troops." So then, I was transferred instead of this—shortly before they went across—to an engineering outfit, a machine shop. They had machine-shop trucks mounted—machine shops mounted in the back of trucks. And I was a disc jockey. We went to—we left for Europe from Fort Dix. We left from New York actually, but we were at Fort Dix.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this is when? In 1945?

JASON BERGER: This is in 1945 precisely, and we bought all these wonderful classical and jazz records. And we had this amplifying system, and I'd play them, you know, for the troops.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You went where?

JASON BERGER: Uh, we went to France and then—we'll get into Germany. Anyway half of my outfit were graduate engineers. They were all engineers already. The other half were hillbillies. The hillbillies made a still to take over to Europe to make liquor. But when we got to France and then consequently to Germany, and we saw how much liquor there was around, they just threw the still away. [They laugh.] They realized they wouldn't need it because in Germany, for example, we had all the Moselle wines, sparkling Moselle wine we wanted. Trucks would come in full of—and also, a ration of a bottle of Polish vodka a week. I gave mine away, it was too strong for me. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So all sorts of things were coming up?

JASON BERGER: But we were in the first convoy to leave from New York and not touch England, and there were about 60 ships. It was huge, and we arrived at Le Havre, which was—and docks had been floated over from Britain. And we arrived there, and it was very dramatic getting off the boat in the middle of the night and going by these blockhouses that the Germans had, that had big red crosses. Of course, they weren't the Red Cross bunkers at all, but they had them marked as such. And then half of my outfit went along the coast to this camp. There were camp—there were a series of camps called cigarette camps at this time—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why were they called that?

JASON BERGER: Well, there was Camp Philip Morris, there was Camp—I went to Camp Lucky Strike.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

JASON BERGER: And you know? But then the camps were named because it was convenient names for the camps and readily available to everybody, that kind of a name, you know? And I got in a train, and of course, all railroads in France emanate from Paris, so there was no coastwise train except on the Riviera, there is one. But, so consequently, we had to go in towards France to a place called Montville, which figures in one or two of the stories of de Maupassant. And then we came back and I was in a terrible train wreck in Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, which was on the coast. We came back because there were no brakes in the car, and they came down this gradual incline and kept gaining momentum to the point where the caboose, the engine fell into the basement of the train station. And all the other trains, sort of, accorded up over each other, and men were asphyxiated all around me; they were purple. I don't know, and I was miraculously saved. And about 150 men were killed in this

train wreck. It was, it was fantastic, anyway, and then we went—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So at this point, your morale had been pretty good, hadn't it?

JASON BERGER: Very good. And everybody swore, the ones that had been saved, that, you know, it was a fantastic experience. I had never been in Europe before. And France was, I—you know, I was dying to go to France under any circumstance, and I came and it was—there was snow on the ground, and it looked like a Bruegel. All the trees were planted in rows, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And then suddenly, I saw people shrieking and running away. You know, it was incredible. And then the next thing I knew, this terrible crane trash, [Laughs.] train crash. And, of course, they were working in the night with acetylene torches cutting people—wheels off, and getting—extricating people, and giving them brandy to try to keep their morale up and so forth. It was incredible. And of course, all the people who were left said, I will never ride in the train again. Of course, in a month they were.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: [Laughs.] We were—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How, how did you come out of it?

JASON BERGER: I was not even touched. I had my saxophone and that wasn't even touched, so consequently. So, we sat around, and then eventually, we went to Germany, and, uh, but I didn't do any fighting. The only thing that my company did that I can remember, we were next to a company. In other words, if somebody else were knocked out, we would take their place. We made these big cotter pins about, oh, maybe 40 inches high, which were about eight inches—no, six inches around. And I remember drilling holes in the handles, so you could put—holes near the top, so you could put handles in them to, to extricate them from the bridge. This is to go across the Rhine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, I see.

JASON BERGER: We were sent into a foundry, into a German foundry to do this. And then I remember I was in Bonn, Germany on VE Day and that was a fantastic, uh, the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it like?

JASON BERGER: Well, it was incredible. Uh, the thing that I remember most is that the university, that there was whole libraries that were burnt to a crisp, but the books still had their forms. In other words, they were all ashes, but they haven't lost their form. So, if you blew, they would just disintegrate. It was an incredible experience. Also, we were in—on the way up, we'd play—near the border, we were stopped. We were in a cigar factory in a place called Kaiserslautern, which is right over the border just above Lunéville in France. And, uh, something I've never seen pictures of—there were all these dead horses on their backs with their feet up. Have you ever seen the pictures of that?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-mm [negative].

JASON BERGER: That's incredible. I've tried to find out why that happened, but it was absolutely surreal, surreal.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did that affect you?

JASON BERGER: Oh, it was incredible. It was—I've never gotten that image, absolutely never forgotten that image. It was incredible, incredible. And then after, we came back to a place called Camp Boston, which was in Chalons, which was in—near Chalons-sur-Marne, which is where the First World War was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were just very briefly in Germany?

JASON BERGER: Three or four months, yeah. And then we were sent to Marseille, which—where I was for about six months waiting to go to Japan. You see, we were sent there, went—go to Japan, and then the—they—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you time yourself, you know, in all these places?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yeah, so I—we weren't doing anything. We were just biding our time, so you know we were just on call. We were on hand.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Um, did you play—what did you do? Did you still—were you still a disc jockey?

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes, yes. We had our records and I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you play—

JASON BERGER: —you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your saxophone?

JASON BERGER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were in a band or something?

JASON BERGER: Well, I just played around a little. Uh, and then in Marseille, I worked as a translator for a while in French because many of the officers wanted to send objects home. So, I would go with them to this little wood mill where they sawed wood along the Riviera and translate for them. And then they'd get the wood and bring it back to Marseille and send their things home. And I also—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they were sending carvings home or where this is was—

JASON BERGER: No, no, no, they were sending—this is to make crates.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, the crates.

JASON BERGER: To make crates, yes, of course, for crating purposes. And then, I also worked in a tent with three—two other men, to purify water to send up to the troops. There's a plateau called Calas, C-A-L-A-S, above Marseille, and that's where most of the troops were, and that's where I was for a while. And we'd put fluoride or whatever, chlorine—I don't know what we put in, and we had this little gauge and we'd control the flow of the chemical into the city water for the troops.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were things pretty well broken down in Marseille?

JASON BERGER: Oh, well, the Germans, you see, it's right into the old port of Marseille, there were Roman buildings. And, of course, there was still streets where you can practically touch the walls in Marseille. The Germans bombed, they bombed all of these buildings because the FFI and the partisans, and the resistance were hiding in these, like, mazes. You could never find people. So, they just bombed the whole thing, and they blew it up so that nobody could hide there. As they did in Saint-Valéry when I was in Normandy, there was all this beautiful Norman architecture, you know? They just, they just blew it all up, so the troops could not infiltrate from the coast, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So, in fact, these towns were pretty well broken down?

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes, yes. And then I came back in '46 of March, and I went back to art school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You came back; you were mustered out fairly—

JASON BERGER: I—yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How do you suppose the war, in general, affected you? What were you like when you got back?

JASON BERGER: Well, I think—my aunt who was a schoolteacher seems to think that, in a funny way, it was good for me. Because she was afraid that if I didn't go in the Army, I would've become a sissy, and, uh, but she didn't mean a homosexual by that. Yeah. Or at least I didn't think she meant that. Anyway, I think she meant that, I had led such a protected life that I had no idea what the other half was like, you know, in that sense. I think that's what—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you been—had you led a protected life?

JASON BERGER: Yes, I had. I still have, I think. I still have been very fortunate, and, I think I have led a very protected life, yes, in a funny way, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, your aunt, at least, saw that they were changing you? That you—

JASON BERGER: As an educator. My mother on the other hand said, "Jason, you were so sweet before you went

in the Army." Yeah. [Laughs.] So, two different opinions.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: It's rather amusing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you weren't, as far as you can tell, psychologically affected or depressed, or, uh—

JASON BERGER: Well, no. I was very fortunate. I mean, I had never been shot at. You know, I was very fortunate, in that sense, and just by logistics. I mean, you know. I'd been in a bad accident, and I'd been in an outfit that was demolished, you know? So, it's just logistically I was lucky. I would say that, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, getting back into school, was that difficult or—

JASON BERGER: That was very difficult. That was difficult. You know, I, uh, after being out of school, the school—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You'd be going into your third year about then, right?

JASON BERGER: Yes. Uh, yes, in my third year, and the school was being held at the Museum itself in the upper reaches of the Museum. Because the building of the Boston of Museum School had been used for a Navy hospital during the war and was still being used mostly for pregnant—uh, the wives of pregnant sailors for deliveries and things of that sort. So, it was a bit of time before we got back into the school. I forget exactly when. But—but, uh

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it a difficult personal adjustment, too, going back to school?

JASON BERGER: Well, I think it was, I think it was. I think that was—

[Cross talk.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible] painting and drawing?

JASON BERGER: —painting and drawing was really the, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Zerbe still—

JASON BERGER: He was still there. Zerbe was still there. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was he like to work with then when you came back?

JASON BERGER: He—Zerbe was not—Zerbe had sort of this elite that he would go to lunch with at the local Howard Johnson's on Friday afternoon—on Friday noon, like today. [Laughs.] And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You, too, had been part of that?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, I was part of it. So actually, I mean, I didn't feel that I was being slighted in that way but this whole sort of elitist system, it bothered me a bit. It bothered me a bit. Uh, because either you were sort of everything or you were nothing. It was an interesting thing. And it's very interesting also that, uh, I was later to be thrown out of the Museum School for being an elitist—[Laughs.] but we'll come to that later—when I was teaching.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Okay. Well, who were some of the others? The students that were close to Zerbe and any that are—

JASON BERGER: Well, Reed Kay, and Jack Kramer, and David Aronson, and George Sheridan who has lived in Europe for years, and Dick Boyce who's now dead. These were all friends that—you know friends, people who were going to school at the same time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you talk about?

JASON BERGER: And Marilyn Powers who is my wife, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you talk about? Was there—

JASON BERGER: Well, we talked about, mostly about painting, you know? It was very cozy. I would say it was very cozy at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did Zerbe dominate the discussions or was there a good deal of give and take?

JASON BERGER: Yeah. Well, I think there was a great deal of give and take. I mean once you were in that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Group or something.

JASON BERGER: —group, you were free to talk, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were—so, what would be some of the things that you—looking back, if you could think back—that you probably discussed the most?

JASON BERGER: Well, I think we talked mostly about painting and things relating to painting. Uh, it doesn't seem to me that—it was sort of painting chitchat. I don't think we got into philosophical or political kinds of discussions, as I remember it. As I can remember, the tenor of the discussions, it wasn't anything of that nature. It was mostly—don't forget, at this point, we had very exciting shows. One of the first de Kooning shows was at the Museum School. Uh, there was a—Beckmann came to give a lecture. His wife Quappi read it in English, and as a matter of fact, I have a picture of Marilyn and myself with Beckmann somewhere in my photographs. Uh, Max Weber came. Ben Shahn came, uh, and so forth, and so on. Kokoschka came. Yeah, I got to know Kokoschka quite well. I saw him subsequently in London. And so it was a very fertile kind of thing. So, there's always this sort of thing to talk about and a lot of it was, I would say, shoptalk, too, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there other teachers there that, uh, you worked closely with in those last year?

JASON BERGER: No, no, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about Ture Bengtz, was he [inaudible] teacher?

JASON BERGER: Well, Ture Bengtz—it's very interesting. Ture Bengtz resented Zerbe's influence because Zerbe was like god. I mean he really was. So, he gained power by making a graphic arts department, you see? So, consequently, the school became really divided into two cliques, the graphic arts people and the people who were in painting. Yeah. I mean there were people studying sculpture also, but they were not in the running, in this kind of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that—

JASON BERGER: So there's this kind of vibe. So consequently—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was Ture Bengtz like? What was his—as a person?

JASON BERGER: Is this for—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. No, that was—

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: Well, Ture Bengtz taught—is this going to be—actually, was very good for beginning drawing because he taught drawing like plumbing, to make the drawings fit in and so forth, you know? But aesthetically, I resisted his influences very strongly because aesthetically, I didn't think it wasn't good, I don't think, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: But he was kind of an amusing man. He was very, you know, he ran his thing like, like Hitler. I mean where you know—I mean Zerbe—he and Zerbe were vying very strong. There was this strong vying in between them, and consequently—to the point, for example, later on when I taught, to give you an example, I think this will tell everything. Zerbe left, I think, in the early '50s or something to go to Florida because he wasn't treated very well. And I knew later on that the painting students would receive lower marks for drawing because they were painting students. So consequently, I would compensate by giving them a higher mark in painting than I would have otherwise so that their average would come out—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

JASON BERGER: Right. Now, does that tell you something?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, it's a very—there was a good deal of pettiness there that was—

JASON BERGER: Well, yes, yes. And then—and now that that students, oh, would just—I mean there's this vying

in between them, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Descended to the level of—

JASON BERGER: Yes, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible].

JASON BERGER: Yes, in a sense, yes which is a terrible thing, you know? I mean, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Zerbe on the other hand, a little more broadminded toward Bengtz's students?

JASON BERGER: Oh, I don't know about that—oh well, no. I don't think he was faced with that problem because the people in painting were in painting, but the people who were in painting also were in drawing, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yeah.

JASON BERGER: And so, he wasn't faced with that problem, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I want to ask one other thing. You say that school had a, well, like a de Kooning show and the like?

JASON BERGER: Yes. Very early on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, were you—so to speak before he first—

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But was there—so, you were here, you were in the school through—into 1949.

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: By that time, the abstract art is coming more into its own, especially in New York.

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there any, uh, reverberations among new students?

JASON BERGER: Not particularly at that time, not particularly at that time. I wouldn't say so. Uh, we were very caught up with, I think, German Expressionism, the Impressionists, things of that nature actually. And at this time also, through Marilyn, my wife, I got to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were married at that time?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, I got married in, in 1947. Yeah, I forgot to mention. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, and she was—

JASON BERGER: I got—she was a student when I got back there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

JASON BERGER: And as a matter of fact, she was waiting for me. Somebody told her about me, and she was just waiting for me to come back—sight unseen. That is fantastic, yeah. And so anyway, we were married in '47, and she was a friend of Bloom's. So, I knew Bloom very well at this time for the next two years and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he quite active in exhibiting at all out there?

JASON BERGER: Well, actually, uh, yes, he was very active, and he used to come to eat with us about once—we were living in the north end—no in the, in the west end, I'm sorry. And we—oh, it was very nice. We were living on—it's the same street that South Station is on, I forget. It's that street that goes up, I forget that. We were living on this street, and we lived opposite, uh, diametrically opposite was this old—was this Jewish restaurant that was fabulous, and they used to feed—for nothing, they used to feed these blind fiddlers that came in.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

JASON BERGER: It was incredible, it was very romantic, you know, at the time.

ROBERT HYMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And Bloom used to come to eat with us once a week, and so did Hyman Swetsoff who was ultimately to become our dealer, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was Bloom like at that time?

JASON BERGER: Well, not much different than he is today actually.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very reclusive?

JASON BERGER: Oh, very reclusive.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Private, very private?

JASON BERGER: Uh, very private and he couldn't stand me. He couldn't stand me, but we had a lot of nice talks. But he couldn't stand me and he thought I was too much of a joker and things of that sort. It's very funny because, ultimately, he went to a psychiatrist to, to try to learn to be this way. [Laughs.] Oh, yes, has—have you—has anybody mentioned—there were a lot of painters who went to this one psychiatrist who was actually—uh, his name was Clemens Benda. Do you know this name?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

JASON BERGER: Clemens Benda, his spécialité is mongoloids, and he worked at the, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: McLean's [ph]?

JASON BERGER: No, the one for mongo—uh, I forget the name of the hospital; it's very well known. It slips my tongue anyway. Uh, anyway, he analyzed a lot of painters that were around town, you see. And as a matter of fact, Kahlil Gibran—I met him when I came back on the steps of other insurance company, the one on Boyle Street, what's that one? Well, I can't remember the names of it. It's the Hancock or the Prudential—but that one, anyway, and he said, "He's great." He says, "He breaks you down, and he builds you up any way you want." [Laughs.] And I, that sort of—that gave me—I, sort of, thought about that. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you, you, uh, didn't have any interest in that?

JASON BERGER: No, no, no, none whatsoever—oh, I'm interested in that but not—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you see at all that these people were too dependent?

JASON BERGER: Well, they were. It's very interesting—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Looking for an outside solution?

JASON BERGER: Well, I don't know. Uh, you know, there are two school of thoughts about artists going to, uh, a psychiatrist, anyway, because it's a very delicate mechanism. And Benda used to—people that were waiting in his office could hear what he was saying to people with whom he was talking. It was a very strange kind of quality, and I came to the conclusion—to me Benda was like—I saw him as a kind of vessel, sort of. I saw it in the terms of a vessel that had a platform with holes in it, and there was a certain amount of knowledge in there. And people could grab it from different holes in the vessel. Uh, there was something very groupie about it. I mean there was something very groupie about it definitely. Uh, it was a kind of "in" thing to do, you'll pardon the expression, but it was—there's something terribly groupie about the whole thing, anyway. And as a matter of fact, later on, I saw Benda at one of Kahlil's openings and I said, "Mr. Benda, you look considerably more jolly than any of your patients." [Laughs.] I had to do it. I couldn't help it, [Laughs.] and he sort of smiles benignly. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But they all—so many of your contemporaries then were—took themselves very—more seriously or at least to—

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: Well no, no, no, no. A lot of—uh, well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was sort of a heady quality.

JASON BERGER: Well, they had problems. They had problems, I mean obviously. I mean, I don't think—well, maybe now people go because it's stylish, but I think they really had problems.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They did.

JASON BERGER: I mean they had problems that were really bothering them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. Although, it was an "in" thing, nevertheless, they had—

JASON BERGER: Nonetheless, none, yeah, yeah. Because I'm not saying across the board, everybody went, but there were a few that went, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And then—I also knew, through Marilyn also, Alan Hovhaness at this time, you know. And at this point, this is in the late '40s, you know, uh, middle and late '40s. There were Hayes Bickfords around Copley Square where you could sit and have a cup of coffee at three o'clock in the morning, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

JASON BERGER: And you don't have—the whole milieu has changed now. And you don't have this kind of place where you can just sit around ad infinitum and in this kind of restaurant. Yeah. I mean—and that's kind of deterrent to intellectual life. I mean—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, it is.

JASON BERGER: I mean from that to Fridays is a lot of change, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you knew those, too, and then you mentioned also, uh, you knew Hyman Swetzkoff.

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I think—

JASON BERGER: He was a very good—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he doing at that point?

JASON BERGER: He was a poet at this time. And he had been translating French poetry for *The Tiger's Eye* and various journals of that sort. And you know, we had long, philosophical talks with Hyman, with both Hymans, you know? And it was a very exciting time, you know? We lived in this. And then we had a fire and I had a lot of very good books, you know, from the Obelisk Press, and James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, and things of that sort, and they got all burned. And we escaped into the subbasement of the Jewish restaurant to escape from the reporters. And, um, they made deals with us that they'd let us out if we gave them a story, which we subsequently—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To get out of the fire?

JASON BERGER: —did.

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: —they'd keep us imprisoned underneath it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is it an important fire or is that rather—

JASON BERGER: Well, I don't know how important. I guess all fire is important [laughs] in that sense you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: "Artist has fire," Although—anyway—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did—did you—when you were first, uh, when you met Marilyn Powers, were you very attracted to her from the beginning?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was her background similar to your own, or is it—

JASON BERGER: Well, we were both—uh, you know we sort of, looked each other over for about a year, so, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did she, did she come from a middle-class family?

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: An artistic family, or are you—

JASON BERGER: Well, uh, a middle-class family, yeah, but she was very into—you know she had been at Mass. Art and then she changed over to the Museum School, so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mass. Art, was that a—quite a different sort of school at that time?

JASON BERGER: It always has been. It's just got another—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What it—what was it like at that time?

JASON BERGER: Well, number one, it had bells between periods—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, is it?

JASON BERGER: —which is anathema for an art school, it seems to me. You know and a state-run school, and it was, um—but there was one very interesting man there by the name of Larry Kupferman who really turned Marilyn on to painting a great deal. And we became friends with him ultimately, yeah. He's still alive, but I think he's very ill. Yes. Have you seen him or—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Well, this—at this time then, uh, was it in '49 you finished your career there?

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you got a traveling fellowship.

JASON BERGER: I got a traveling fellowship and I graduated, and Mr. Russell Smith who was the head at the school of the time told me I was the best student to ever graduate from the school. This was 75 years. So, I said, "How do you know, you've only been here 25 years?" I was a little bit fresh, shall we say. So, anyway, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did he say?

JASON BERGER: I don't know what he did. He laughed or something.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible.]

JASON BERGER: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Anyway, so we left for Europe in September.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your wife—

JASON BERGER: Yes.

[Cross talk].

JASON BERGER: And I had this traveling fellowship of \$3,000. Also, I had time left from the G.I. Bill of Rights because one was given—for every month one had been in service, one was given a month of school, you see? So, consequently, we went to Europe on the Admiral De Grasse, which was the French line, and it was a very small seagoing ship, but—I don't know how many tons, but a very small one. It was soon out of service after that. And we—again, we landed in Normandy [laughs] in Le Havre, the same thing. And we were the only ones on the boat that—everybody went on the Paris train on to Paris, and we decided to go up the coast because we wanted to live in Normandy. The reason being that we were very much taken by the Monets in the museum, both of us.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Museum of Art?

JASON BERGER: In the Museum here in Boston, of course. And especially, there's one of cliffs and people on a kind of quay in the foreground. And we were—it's still a fantastic painting. We were much taken by that and we want to go to Normandy, and of course, I had been there during the war, you see. So, we took a coastwise bus up and we got off at Étretat where, of course, he painted.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible.]

JASON BERGER: Oh, well, we had cliffs all along but it was—and we looked the city over, and we decided we didn't want it. It was too English. It was too English tea for me, for us at that point. That's how we felt at that time. I have been back since. So then, we went to a place called Fécamp, which is a big fishing town. And they said, "You don't want to stay here. You won't be able to stand the smell of fish." Well, that's sort of ridiculous because I've stayed there since. Anyway, then we went up to Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, where I had been in the war, and that's where we stayed eventually. How are we doing for time? You okay?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. What sort of things were you, uh, painting at this point?

JASON BERGER: Well, let me tell you, this is very amusing. We got into the town, and this was in '49. Oh, incidentally, something that I had neglected to tell you is that we were told that there was nothing—there was not much coffee or much food in Europe. Consequently, we brought all this food with us in Le Havre, 50 pounds of coffee bean, unroasted, and God knows what else, I forget. So, consequently, when we got off the boat, there was this man from the French line who was Algerian. He said "Now, do as I tell you. There is one customs inspector who is very partial to artists. We'll have to jockey it so that you bring your stuff to him, and he won't charge you any duty," which he did. We bought him a meal afterwards in Le Havre, and he let us through without paying any duty. So, then we took—we stored all that stuff in a warehouse in Le Havre and then we took the bus trip up as I told you. When we got to Saint-Valéry, I told my Marilyn. I said "You stay here in the café, and I'll go out and look for a place." It was very idealistic. I hired a bicycle, and I rode out into the country—it was incredible—towards where I had been in the Army. And I went to this very nice cottage, and I knocked on the door, and obviously, I had interrupted this middle-aged couple who were obviously making love. But they were very charming, and they came out, [Laughs.] And I said, "Could I rent a room? Do you have an extra room?" They said, "Well, we don't know but we might," and they were very charming about the whole thing. And when I—I looked around some more, and I rode back to the café. But Marilyn, you know, in the meantime, rented another bicycle, and went off in a different direction, and found a place where we were ultimately to live for a while.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this is what? Like a little farm cottage?

JASON BERGER: Well, it was a little café. We lived over a café, and the man—that young fellow that answered the door was a real hayseed. He actually had straw in his hair. You can't believe it. He wasn't really because he ended up being, a maitre d'hotel in a very fashionable restaurant, and he had also, served—

[END OF TRACK.]

JASON BERGER: This is reel 1 of 1, Side B. And uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this man—

JASON BERGER: And his name is Fernan [ph] and he had also served as an aide to General Dulanto Doutasini [ph] who had his shirts made by Lanvin. [Laughs.] Anyway, so this was kind of a put-on. He was being in the country now, so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

JASON BERGER: Although, his family were all farmers. Anyway, it was he who taught us both to make a marvelous salad dressing. It's very simple. [Laughs.] Anyway, uh, so we lived in the country, and we had a room and another room to paint in. And I think it was fantastic. The two of us were given room and board and we had big meals with the family on Sunday. Uh, and it was \$75 a month. [Laughs.] It's incredible. It's unbelievable. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, did you work very hard there? Did you—

JASON BERGER: Yes, we worked—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You both—

JASON BERGER: We worked very hard.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you paint in nature? You went outside?

JASON BERGER: Yes, we went out, but I had great difficulties the first year because I was—I had, sort of, ideas about going beyond painting and that gave me a great deal of difficulty.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—what did you think? What did you—

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: Well, I don't know. I don't—I don't know what I meant by that now. But I remember I had this idea, and that's when I started to do woodcuts also. So, consequently, I would work on a painting—I worked on one painting for about a year over and over and over. Well, I had to get out of my system something, anyway, but I did a lot of woodcuts then. That's when I started. And so, we stayed there for about a year, and we bought a car called a Rosengart that nobody has ever heard of since, before or since because Marilyn's parents were coming to Orly. They were flying into Orly, and I had—in three days, I had to get my driver's license. I had never had a driver's license. I got my first driver's license in Worms. And to make sure that I got the driver's license, I, sort of, greased the palm of the guy that was doing the—I gave him a few francs, and I think I would have gotten extra. Anyway, but I knew my parking wasn't too good. But anyway, so we went into Orly to get Marilyn's parents, and the car broke down, so we got there late. And nobody knew anything about where they had gone. Can you imagine? I mean there's so many hotels in Paris. Who the devil would know where they went? Anyway, one of the—we said, Powers, Powers, and one of the people picked it up. She knew because they say, "Povers" [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

JASON BERGER: You see, "Povers." Just like General Eisenhower was "Isenhover" in France you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: So, we got it. So luckily, we found them, anyway. So, it was incredible. Well, anyway, we stayed there for about a year and during which time, my mother came over. We met her in Cherbourg. We did the grand tour, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: But also, France. And with Marilyn's parents, of course, we went up to Holland and Belgium, and with my mother, we went to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because they had interest in looking at certain towns?

JASON BERGER: Yeah, yeah. In France and Spain and Italy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, you did a bit of traveling during that second year?

JASON BERGER: And—all—a great deal.

ROBERT F. BROWN: During the second year really?

JASON BERGER: Yeah. And my car died in La Londe just below Bordeaux, so we continued on, uh, by train with my mother. And then we settled in Paris and, of course, by this time—and I had the impression—I had really sort of museum fatigue to an extent that you can't imagine. I mean we'd seen so many churches, so many museums, so many paintings, and it seemed to me that they were all so dark, you know? They were so dark, I couldn't imagine. Anyway, then we settled in Paris, and I looked over the situation because I had to study with somebody, and I didn't really want to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean you were required to study?

JASON BERGER: Yes, to get the benefits of the G.I. Bill. So, we were required, I was required to study with somebody. So, we went to—I finally decided that I didn't want to study with any of the painters who were available, that Léger was available, André Lhote at that point. So, I decided to study with Zadkine, who was a sculptor. Besides, I had a kind of a—I wanted to do some sculpture. I had a feeling. Anyway, Zadkine was absolutely marvelous, and not only did I learn about sculpture from Zadkine, but I learned about teaching. He was absolutely an incredible teacher. People—he was a cocky, little man. He looked very much like Bertrand Russell, very much. He had sort of a goiter. Yeah. And, uh, people either liked him or they didn't like him, and I liked him very much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did he teach? What was the—

JASON BERGER: Well, he was incredible. I mean he would summon up all kind—his father had taught the classics in Russia, and his first language he learned was English before he learned French. So consequently, he would summon up all kinds of classical allusions, literary allusions, social allusions, political allusions. And somebody would say, "Why doesn't he teach us sculpture," you know? I mean, but he did. I mean he taught a great deal of sculpture, but he taught a lot of other things too, and he was an incredible, pedagogically, fantastically interesting person to be with. I think we—[Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. This is the second interview with Jason Berger in Brookline, MA. This February 1, 1980. You were last talking about your time with Ossip Zadkine studying sculpture in Paris where you were from 1950 to '52.

JASON BERGER: That's correct.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I think—was there anything more you want to talk about? Your experience there in France at that time?

JASON BERGER: Well, uh, what was very interesting is besides going to the museums, of course, going around seeing the shows of the painters who were painting in France at that time, the French painters and others, you know? And the kind of styles, which were *en vogue* at the time. And also, uh, we met several Americans who were very interesting and who—and we talked a bit, you know, about Cubism--something which was quite foreign to me, before I became—before I got to France because I had been almost totally immersed in a kind of—in Expressionistic Boston at that time, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see. You were there at the Museum School at the time Karl Zerbe, right?

JASON BERGER: Yes and Beckmann, and Kokoschka came to visit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

JASON BERGER: You know? So there—there were strong influences of that sort.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what's your reaction to Cubism?

JASON BERGER: Well, I found it very interesting, and I think I still have—there's still lingering—in my work there's, uh, lingering traces of that, I think very strongly. To me, somehow that idea that a painting was more than making painted sculpture was very interesting, you know? Because we had been always taught about form and space. And the idea of being concerned with the flat surface of the painting as well as the sort of photograph or the spatial was, sort of, an interesting idea. And, uh, it opened me up to many new things at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get acquainted with some, uh, European artists while you were there or—

JASON BERGER: Uh, a few but not of a Cubist persuasion.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were your main—were your acquaintances mainly with the other Americans over there on the G.I. Bill?

JASON BERGER: Uh, well some Europeans and some Americans.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes. There was a lot of activity at that time. And a lot of people whose work one saw who—people that we met in cafés that have since become rather important in the American arts scene, you know? A lot people studied with Zadkine for example. He had an enormous influence—one could start naming names, you know? An incredible amount of people at that time, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what did you, uh—did you think ever of staying on in Europe, or was your intention to come back—

JASON BERGER: No, no, no, no. I spent all in all about 10 years in France, piece by piece. But I never considered being an ex-patriot. No, that never interested me particularly. Maybe because I didn't know how I could do it for example. Um, that might be the main reason, but I don't think so, no. If I had wanted to, I probably could have found a means of doing it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But did you—I mean, did you come back here in, uh, in 1952?

JASON BERGER: I came back in 1952, and I installed myself in a building on Boylston Street, which was an art building at that time. It had a lot of artists in it. Now, I think it's become something of a commercial entity, which was part of the Robert White Fund. Have you heard of that?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. It was the—

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —philanthropic fund for various causes in Boston.

JASON BERGER: Right, precisely. And the Robert White Fund had this building, and I remember moving into this building. And I lived there, my wife and I. We—I had classes in 1952, and I remember Carl Zahn made a sign for me. He's the, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The designer now.

JASON BERGER: The designer for these—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he then?

JASON BERGER: I think he was a designer for the Museum at that time, but he had just begun, and he made a little sign. I have a little—I still have a [inaudible] in yellow, white, and black, I remember. And I had quite a few students and that lasted for a while, and we also used to have jam sessions there because I played the saxophone, and we used to play jazz there. And a very fine pianist by the name of—of Dick Twardzik, who died on a European tour at a very early age. He used to play with us. So, it was very nice sort of environment. But shortly after, some people, uh, some friends of ours who had an apartment in Boston—that we had given them when we left for Europe—were leaving for Europe, so we went back into that apartment, and that was in Bay Village. And then I had a school on—I took a loft over a bakery on Albion Street in Boston. And I used to teach, I think, on Saturdays and maybe one other day. It was very interesting. I had a lot of interesting students. I had a lot of students who were going to the Museum School at that time who would study with me privately for nothing incidentally. I didn't charge them because I was interested and I used to teach them. And then in 1955, I won the grand prize of the Boston Arts Festival, which was juried, among others, by Jacques Lipchitz. And he insisted that I get the grand prize, and he told me afterwards that he had an enormous fight. And people thought that maybe he was related to me. In other words, they thought, "How could he give this man a prize," you know? And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this because your work was so unlike, uh—

JASON BERGER: Well, no—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the rest?

JASON BERGER: I don't know. I don't know. Because he was so vociferous, so strong in his support of me. It wasn't anything like his work at all incidentally. It was just—it was a sort a land—it was the landscape of the public garden. Of course, the public gardens, I've had trouble with it always. Anyway, he said, "You can give any of the other prizes to anybody you wish, but Jason Berger has to have the grand prize." So, uh, it's very funny. Uh, this is a hilarious story but, I knew something was funny when Fred Waukee [ph] came to my home and told me that a friend of his, and a friend of mine—his name is Jack Wolfe—had won the grand prize. And when the show was arranged on the walls, there were these sort of portable, outdoor walls that were put in the public garden at that time for the art festival. Uh, he put Jack's work, which I thought was very funny, in a place of honor, as if it had won the prize.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who did? Fred Waukee?

JASON BERGER: Oh, Fred Waukee

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Waukee one of the jurors or organizers—

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes, yes. Waukee was very important in this thing, so I got a—well, I wasn't that amused but there was sort of an amusing aspect to it all, so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But in fact, you had the grand prize?

JASON BERGER: Yes, of course. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Okay. Well, the arts festival, was this something that you would enter each year?

JASON BERGER: Yes. The arts festival was on for—in that—I don't know when it ended. Actually, what happened is the arts festival, it was going very well and then it got opened up more and more to the performing arts, which ate up a great deal of money. And eventually, it was, sort of, um—they couldn't continue because the performing arts ate so much money that they didn't have the budget for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's too expensive.

JASON BERGER: It, it became just too expensive. But while it just stayed with the plastic arts, with the few performing arts, it became—perhaps it died of over-ambition, I don't know. Anyway, it was very interesting and a lot of people used to come through, would see the show, and then it created a very nice feeling. Of course, there was—the artists always complained about one thing or another. I mean we always do, as you know, so.

And I remember I didn't show one year because they picked 50 artists and that's how they would show. I was one of the 50, but I protested because I didn't think this was fair because it wouldn't be a showcase for new talent, you know, I thought so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And in your opinion, in the '50s, did the arts festival generally, except for that one year, would cover, uh, a good deal of talent?

JASON BERGER: Well, I think it did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it quite broad?

JASON BERGER: Yes, I think it was quite broad. I think it was very broad.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I wasn't selective in any way?

JASON BERGER: Well, they tried to be selective on—on this occasion but that didn't—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But otherwise—

JASON BERGER: —go very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —it was anyone could send in—

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —a slide or?

JASON BERGER: Yes. But no, no, no. Usually, what—people sent in actual works. Slides are rather difficult. Actual work and then there was a prejudging, and so forth, and so on. And those—of course even the people who didn't show, I mean it was—it's sort of paced a year because it was a yearly event, you see, and this happened every year. And then—and another event of the time was the independent show, which had all sorts of—which showed all sorts of things, but it was kind of interesting you know? Now, the art scene, of course, is changed, so we don't have anything of that nature anymore—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, was that any association in, in—

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in Boston only?

JASON BERGER: Yes. And it had been, but I think they—I think the independence took—I think from all over New England. I may be wrong but it was a very interesting show. And it was held in various places, wherever they could get free space. And, uh, we don't have anything of that nature anymore, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: How independent were they? Were they—did it represent a broad spectrum of styles?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, yes, it did. You had, oh, things which would be considered maybe old hat, a very, very conservative view onto very modern sorts of things. So it covered a broad spectrum. Although, originally it was founded by very conservative people, I think, in early days. Well, that's all there was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. Were you, um, also were having commercial galleries?

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So that was—you seemed to have been with the, uh, with Hyman Swetstoff Gallery from 1949 to '58?

JASON BERGER: Yes, I was with Hyman Swetstoff for many, many years. Hyman was a poet when I first met him, when I first got married and then he became a gallery dealer. And I remember his first gallery was instituted on Huntington Avenue, uh, during the time that I was in France, in 1950, something of that sort. And we had a long, long relationship.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like to, uh, to work with? Did you get to know him quite well?

JASON BERGER: Oh, I knew him very well before he had the gallery. He was a very difficult sort of person. Uh, but I think he was a force at the time, definitely in the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what—what was he like as a person as you recall?

JASON BERGER: Well, he was a very interesting talker and inclined to be somewhat precious, I would say, you know? He was rather precious. And of course, he came to visit us in Paris, and we went around the galleries with him. And then I could see that his taste and mine—well, why should they be the same? I mean that the reasons he liked things, I found rather alien to my way of thinking, put it that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What, what did he like before, do you recall?

JASON BERGER: It's very difficult at this time, but I just—remember that low [ph], you know? I don't remember. But, but, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, would he show your work? Say, give you one or two shows a year, or how was this?

JASON BERGER: It was more or less on that basis. It varied actually. But of course, I didn't sell very much work at this time, because he used to tell people that they should start off with more easy-to-understand things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what sort of things were you doing at that time?

JASON BERGER: Well, at that time, I would—it was rather experimental. I was doing sort of, um, it was kind of a mixed bag. I was, sort of, you know? But I think it's—I think what today would be called semi-abstract, [laughs] you know, at that time. Yeah, so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you make a living during this—

JASON BERGER: Well, I—

[Cross talk.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —decided you went on the Museum School—

JASON BERGER: In '55, I was in terrible, terrible trouble financially, and I could remember very definitely going to see a gentleman from Columbus, Ohio, at the Waldorf Astoria in New York in response to some kind of an ad. I don't know where I got the information. I was all ready to work for him as an industrial designer in Columbus, OH, the home of James Thurber. [Laughs.] And I would have, in fact, done that but some friends introduced me to the editor at WC—at W—was it E? WCE? What is it? It's the publishers.

ROBERT F. BROWN: DCE.

JASON BERGER: DCE. I was saying W.C. Fields. DCE, and I went and got a job illustrating a French grammar—Fraser, Squair, and Parker. It's a very famous French grammar that everybody's used, and they revise it every 10 years. It's been revised since I did it, and so I got this job to do this, and I remember the person, the young person who was putting the whole book together. I brought in my drawing, and she said, "These are very nice, rough drawings," roughs. And I said, "My dear, these are the drawings." [Laughs.] But anyway, it worked out very well and I have a copy I'll show you later. And I got somewhere in the vicinity of \$2,500 for that for a month's work, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And generally speaking—

JASON BERGER: —I was probably—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you were in the early '50s, uh, it was hard, but you had shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston—

JASON BERGER: Yes. I had this—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in '52 and in '56—

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: No, I had a show there when I was 17.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But I mean you returned to it in the '50s.

JASON BERGER: Yes, yeah. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the Institute of—fairly important to artists in the '50s, in 1950s?

JASON BERGER: Oh my Lord, yes. It was very important and there was a lot of difficulty over the Institute.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was—

JASON BERGER: Probably in your travels, you've heard of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, I know the name change. As a matter of fact in the '40s.

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But what about in the '50s? Uh, it was dealing a lot with industrial design? It was also showing a lot of things—

JASON BERGER: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —uh, most of the things they showed weren't local—

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —as I recall.

JASON BERGER: But what started—that started in—you see, it started—I think they got somebody from [inaudible]. And, uh, they decided to change the name and we all raised hell. There was a big rally and people spoke.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you around at that time?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, yes, and they—because somehow "modern" seemed to have a bad ring, and so they changed it to contemporary for some political, or some reason, I don't know. And everybody took this very—they took it to heart, and there was a great protest. And you see, people got very, very excited about this whole thing. I remember—the two great rallies I remember, that was one of them and the other one was the rally for the Hollywood 10 at that time. It was around the time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The blacklisting of the—

JASON BERGER: Yes, the blacklisting. And I remember those two rallies very strongly, and this was just as strong in its wake and, uh—but anyway, the Institute did change. And by 1955, of course, I started teaching at the Museum School, you see? And I was to continue there for 16 years. I think it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well now, but until that point after you returned in France, you had no steady work?

JASON BERGER: No, no, I had no job, but I was teaching privately, and I derived a certain amount of income from there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did people hear about you, or was it—did you do it by referral from—

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes. Uh, I was fairly known, fairly well known because I had shown around, you know? I was fairly known and also there weren't many—there weren't too many people teaching at that time. I mean we have a proliferation of schools in arts and so forth now, in 1980, that did not exist to the same extent in 1950.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

JASON BERGER: Don't forget that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you, uh, find that you had a gift for teaching?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, yes, I enjoyed teaching very, very, very much. Yes. And, you know, especially at that time, I had come from Zadkine. And I was not only taken with art, but I was very taken with the idea of teaching also because he was such a fantastic teacher, you know? So, I suppose I wanted to try to emulate it, in so far as I could in many respects.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you particular, uh, want to to accomplish with the students?

JASON BERGER: Well, the point is what I want to accomplish for the students—don't forget, the students that studied with me were not as involved as I was, and god knows I wasn't that involved at that point. But anyway, it seems to me what I—well, what I've always tried to get is to have people see relationships very clearly. You know, connections, à la E. M. Forster, you know, and in their own way. And of—but of course, I could—you know what I mean? I mean this was always the crux of teaching. You could only teach what you know. I mean people who tried—I'm very chary of people who tried to teach something they don't really feel themselves, you know, especially in the arts, you know? Uh, sort of and while one can teach a survey course in the history of art, you

know, when you're actually teaching the practice of art, the practice of painting or drawing and so forth, I think it's very difficult to ask somebody to espouse something that one doesn't really have a gut feel in the art, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, did you talk much as a teacher, talk or did you make—

JASON BERGER: Well, it's very interesting, I talked a great deal, but I think this is true of a lot of teachers. I talked a great when I started. I talk much less now because I think, sort of, as one gets older, to compress and to be able to say more with less, at least I would hope so. Uh, I don't know if all teachers feel this way, but I think when you start, you, sort of, pour your heart out and then after a while, you're a little bit more selective, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, when you started in the Museum School, it was just after Zerbe had left.

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who were—or why were you hired in there, and what were you hired in to do?

JASON BERGER: Well, I was hired, initially, to teach in the first year, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did—

JASON BERGER: And this was—if you remember, 1955 was the silent generation. That was known as the silent generation, and when kids didn't talk. And I can remember very definitely coming in, and one time, you know, I—here I poured my heart out and nobody would say "Boo." So the next time, I remember, I did this as just as a kind of sweet revenge. I came up, and I looked at everybody's work, and I'd go by it and say, "Yeah," or, "Hmm," and so on. And it's interesting that they got the point. I mean they realized that I was giving them back a mirror image of the way they were acting. So, so that, sort of, broke the ice a bit, I think, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: And—but in fact, did you find it worked better when they were—talked more or when they expressed—

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, of course, of course. Absolutely, because, you know, you just couldn't get any kind of response out of them so—so, it worked a heck of a lot better. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you were hired in there, what was the expectation of you? Was it a fairly broad mandate or did you have the—was it a—?

JASON BERGER: Well, actually, what happened is that I taught the first-year painting for a very short while and then I was transferred to the third-year painting, which was more my cup of tea actually. As a matter of fact, I taught some students twice because some of them—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what would the difference be between first and third? What were they to have done by third year?

JASON BERGER: Well, the first year of painting was sort of an introduction, and we did—I think there were four main problems, uh, a texture problem with paint and then—oh, yeah then we painted objects in the round, then imaginary objects in the round. You know that was from imagination, the square, the cube, the cone, and the sphere and cone, and the cylinder. And then I think the fourth program—the fourth one was a *trompe-l'oeil*, a, a very fool-the-eye, kind of very realistic kind of painting, like the Dutch still lives on that style. Whereas in the fourth—in the third year, we were—it was almost totally devoted to figure painting with some landscape. What we'd do is we'd paint a landscape in the good weather. In other words in September, we had a few weeks of possible weather and at the end of school, we had some good weather, so we painted landscapes along with—anyway. But otherwise, we'd paint a figure and then that's essentially, what I have been teaching most of my life, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, when you get to third year, uh, did it take much less supervision? Would you stand back more and just come in occasionally to critique them?

JASON BERGER: No, no, no, no. I wouldn't say that at all. Uh, I—it took a lot of supervision because there were a lot of—there were a lot of problems that had to be solved. And it wasn't that they were running on their own steam that well at that time. You know, that's very important. They were not. I would definitely say they were not. And of course, at that time, I was considered very aloof. I don't know. It's my character. I'm told or I read that Aquarius is seen to be detached and so forth. My, my present wife thought I was detached until she really got to know me better. But I seem to project that somehow and "Why can't we talk to him," and so forth? And perhaps, I was a little aloof by default, yeah. It's very more than likely, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you didn't, in fact. What about other colleagues? Who were some of the colleagues you were close with during those years of the Museum School? Did you develop some close friendships?

JASON BERGER: Not particularly at that time. No, it was—I mean I'd see people in school and so forth but there weren't too many people that I felt I had much in common with artistically besides my wife at this point, you see? We were both sort of interested in the same kinds of artistic problems. But otherwise—yeah, we knew people and so forth, but we weren't particularly close. I wasn't particularly close, because we weren't pursuing the same kinds of goals artistically, you understand?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. And what were there—who were some of the colleagues that, uh—

JASON BERGER: Well, let's see—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —came in about your time?

JASON BERGER: Well, various people. [Inaudible] was there. Jan Cox was there for a while. Uh, Gardner Cox was there for a couple of years, as I remember. Ernest Morinon [ph] was there—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In sculpture?

JASON BERGER: Yeah. Harold Tovish was there for a while, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But these were—they'd, sort of, come in and do their teaching with their class and there wasn't much inner team—

JASON BERGER: I think we all did it and that was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —among you?

JASON BERGER: —I think that was the reason. I think we all, sort of, came in our hours and left. And that's tended to be true in a lot of art schools, I think, in most art schools. Uh, because the idea is that if you want professional artists who were working on their own, I—you—they sort of adjusted their time and they'd come into school, too, and then leave. And, of course, Mr. Smith told me that I can come in anytime and leave anytime I wanted because he knew that—uh, of course, I didn't come in late but I—you know but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was the dean of the school?

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ru—Russell.

JASON BERGER: Russell Smith who I believe is still alive off in east [inaudible]. I saw him two years ago. Have you spoken to him?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: Yeah. So, anyway, it was a very interesting kind of thing and, of course later, oh, the whole—do you want me to go into the whole Museum School thing?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I mean I'd like to—

JASON BERGER: Very interesting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, characterizations of it then—

JASON BERGER: Oh, it's very interesting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —because you were there—

JASON BERGER: Well, I was there—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —until 1969.

JASON BERGER: Yes. And, of course, the Museum School, during the war, you know had been in the Museum itself. Because the school was used as a bay for the hospital, mostly for wives to have children as I remember, sort of a maternity hospital for the most part. So, we moved back. I came back after the war, and the school moved back, and it was well moved back by the time I got to teach there. And things went along, but there was

always rumblings that the school wasn't paying its way or that the Museum treated the Museum School as a stepchild, you know, and that sort of thing. I suppose it was benevolent neglect or—I don't know. Anyway, at a certain point, uh, a chair designer, an interior designer by the name of Nelson—what's his first name? I forget. George Nelson. As a matter of fact, I have a bureau by him. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He's very well known—

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —as a designer.

JASON BERGER: He is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He came to teach in—

JASON BERGER: No, no, no. He came to do a critique of the Museum School because they wanted to change the Museum School, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why weren't they—they weren't happy with it for some reason or another?

JASON BERGER: Well, they felt they had to jazz it up, yeah, so. Uh, he came to do a critique, and of course, everybody was told they should speak freely—

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: They should speak very freely about criticism, let a hundred flowers bloom, but, of course, those of us who spoke too freely were thrown out. But we would have been thrown out anyway whether we spoke because—well, everybody knew more or less where the other people stood, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you knew that you were in peril?

JASON BERGER: Oh, absolutely.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why, why was that, do you think?

JASON BERGER: Because of the ideas espoused by Mr. Nelson.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which were? What were—

JASON BERGER: Well, he—oh, I can't tell you. He was incredibly [inaudible]. He wanted to have them teach—this is a time of the happening, and, and the light show, and so forth. He wanted to have them teach anatomy by having three screens going—about two screens going at the same time, you know, and that sort of thing. I would say his approach is completely the opposite of mine, which is sort of contemplative, I would say, and his was very jazzy and razz—razzma—razzmatazz, and jazzy, and so forth, you know? So, he came in and he—they installed big Bill Bagnall [ph] who incidentally has now taken Walkies' [ph] place.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, at the DeCordova Museum.

JASON BERGER: Bill Bagnall became the head of the Museum School. And, of course, I had known him for years because he taught a course in interior design there. We always used to shoot the breeze, as is natural, one does as [inaudible]. But unbeknownst to me, he probably hated my guts for some reason because I suppose I was—I had, what's the modern expression? More visibility in the school, yeah, or a higher profile or, so. So, consequently, I, that summer, was in Acapulco. That's not what where you're supposed to be, in Acapulco, so. However, having only summers, I was painting in Acapulco, and I got this letter from Bill Bagnall in August, telling me that I would not be coming back. I mean, this is not when you let people know. Anyway, and I remember in the letter that he said, "I didn't know you were in Acapulco." And I remember to this day he said, "Better me than you." I mean I remember it to this day. So, I wrote to Jan Cox and I said, "You know, you can't do this to a person, let them know in August."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Jan your—

JASON BERGER: Jan, Jan was the head—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your—

JASON BERGER: —was head of the painting—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Head of the painting department.

JASON BERGER: Yeah. He has since gone back to Belgium. So I said, "You know if this goes on, I'm going to sue the school. I'll get a lawyer but don't tell anyone," which meant tell everyone, of course. So consequently, I was hired back for that year in the evening school, which was considered to be a putdown, because I was teaching in the evening school, not in day school, but I was getting the same salary. So, but I was delighted because I had more time to paint, you know? But anyway, I knew that the writing was—the handwriting was on the wall. Boy, we're using clichés like crazy here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They had felt—they had felt that, uh, your approach, and were there others that they also relieved?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, a quite few people. Quite a few people were released like this. I was not alone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They felt your approach was too conservative idea maybe or?

JASON BERGER: Well, it wasn't jazzy. It was very—it was rather classical, I would say, compared to what they were doing. So, they got rid of me and a few—quite a few other people, and meanwhile I had gotten a job to go to Buffalo, to the State University at Buffalo for a year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why had you thought of that as a place to go?

JASON BERGER: Well, it's very simple. I had a friend who was a provost, so I got it through a friend just like everybody else gets jobs. [Laughs.] And I had a wonderful year there. It was during the war protest, and I had never been—the only other university I had ever been to was the University of Alabama, and that as a student in the Army. It wasn't the same thing. I was a student of engineering.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. So you were in engineering.

JASON BERGER: So, I've never had sort, uh, really an experience in the university, and I had it all in one year, and it was fantastic. I got arrested. My picture was in *Newsweek*, and it was very exciting. I met very exciting people. I met Leslie Fiedler there who's still a friend.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. The literary critic?

JASON BERGER: Yes, he's a very good friend, and it was fantastic. Here, you had this college, this university with all these sort of lefty intellectuals from Berkeley up against these—this sort of blue-collar Democratic town of Buffalo, that was terribly anti-lefty. So you had this terrible confrontation, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: And it was a very exciting year. Uh, all kinds of things were compressed into this one year. Actually, the least important thing was my teaching art. I mean that was almost a throwaway

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you only had that for one year.

JASON BERGER: One year, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you—now, you did then come back here?

JASON BERGER: I did come back to this very house.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you, uh—with no teaching prospects?

JASON BERGER: No. No, no. But I had sold quite a bit of work, and I had thousands of dollars outstanding so I knew that that would come in, in dribbles and droplets. I could have lived that way, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: So, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you mainly sold through dealers or directly?

[Cross talk.]

JASON BERGER: Well, I was with Joan Peterson Gallery after Swetzoff, but at a certain point—I forget kind of at what point—she stopped having the gallery, per se. Uh, but she was very helpful to me; there's no question. Uh, and I started tea—so I would, sort of, privately through people who knew me—or whom I knew [inaudible], so that's how it worked and that's how it's been working actually, so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's been—in the early '70s then you, uh, were mainly spending your time painting. Were you doing any teaching privately at that time?

JASON BERGER: Uh, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mainly painting?

JASON BERGER: But my wife had a class here, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And it was at Buffalo that the Direct Vision was born or the idea of the Direct Vision was born.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you better explain that.

JASON BERGER: Now, the Direct Vision is a group of—a group of us formed the Direct Vision.

ROBERT F. BROWN: People out there and—

JASON BERGER: No, no, no. No, people here but we figured that the kind of things we were doing did not look good hung next to other—in concert with other people's work of a different nature. So, therefore, we had to group together so that we'd have a community of interests, and so that people who had like ideas would exhibit together. Consequently, we had a very large show in City Hall. I forget the year, '72 something of that sort, maybe it was '73, and we had 16 people. So there were—and so, there was quite a gamut at this point. There was the center, the right, the left, you know, if you want to put it that way. But the next show we had, about half of them dropped out because they didn't really feel they should be with us artistically. Also, they objected to our highhanded ways. I mean, that's what they said.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, why do you think—why do you think they said that?

JASON BERGER: Well, that we weren't democratic. We, we had no pretense at being democratic. I mean—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were you—what was the link to then, uh, linking you in Direct Vision? What did you mean by Direct Vision?

JASON BERGER: Well, Direct Vision, Jack Kramer up with that idea at the Kitchen. Uh, it's the sort of the idea of painting from nature. It's essentially *plein air* painting or what comes out of *plein air* painting, because not all my paintings were *plein air*. But it always comes out of *plein air* painting, so Direct Vision just as it says.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you sought other artists who—

JASON BERGER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with whom you could show?

JASON BERGER: Yes. So, the first year, we had 16, and then the second year, it pared down to seven, I think, or maybe it was eight—seven I think. And we got a grant from the Mass Council on Arts and Sciences in order to make a catalogue for them. And you've probably seen it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, oh sure.

JASON BERGER: It's pink. It's shocking pink. And that worked out very nicely, and we were very successful with that show. I think we had something in the order of 2,000 people at the opening. It was incredible.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was this also at the—near City Hall?

JASON BERGER: Yes, it was. In those, those new galleries, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: And it was quite incredible. And then subsequent to that, we had other shows. Also with one, we had music and Leslie Fiedler came and introduced one show, and then Adam sang with—no, said his poetry.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your son, of course.

JASON BERGER: And my son Adam was part of the group as a painter incidentally. Uh, he recited his poetry with gospel singers in back. It was fantastic. Uh, black gospel singers, women gospel singers. It was on the steps of the City Hall. It was really quite fantastic. There was a good deal of theater in that sense, as well as painting and

sculpture. And that went on and then in seven—it was very exciting times and we were down to, as I say, seven or eight people. And then in '75, we got another grant to have—I think we were the first big show in the State House, and we used that room in front. I forget what the name of the room is but—and we arranged a show there and finding out that a certain door was only used twice a year when—either when the president of the United States came or some other state occasion. I knew that I could have a huge wall, and I painted something, which I had wanted to paint for a long time and that was a sort of an homage to Revere Beach which was 16 feet long. And I can remember making a rig on top of my Volkswagen to carry it to the State House.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really?

JASON BERGER: And I remember unloading it, and I remember Cathy Cane [ph] coming by as I was unloading it to bring it up the stairs, the steps of the—

[Cross talk.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: The mayor's assistant.

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes of the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

JASON BERGER: [Inaudible.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what were the—what kind of public did you reach out to in City Hall or the State House? Surely, it wasn't the normal art public, was it? Or did it—

JASON BERGER: Well, it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —also include—

JASON BERGER: Well, of course, we had quite a following, you have to realize that. We had many, many people. I mean anybody that can attract 2,000 people in an opening, obviously. And, of course, we did our homework. This was like a GHQ, you have to understand, and we had four or five people addressing envelopes, I mean, and sending it to this, that, and the other. We got a lot of coverage from the airwaves, and the media, and so forth. And we were very media-oriented and so forth, in that way because it was necessary in order to reach the kind of public that we wanted. And it was just a—it was buzzing, you know—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: So compared to that it—I mean now, I'm relatively reclusive also because the Direct Vision only exists—I mean it doesn't exist anymore since. That's the—people have been dispersed by death and by jobs, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: So consequently—but, uh, those were very exciting times—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

JASON BERGER: —in, in that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Well your—uh, your wife died in, uh—

JASON BERGER: She died in '76.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

JASON BERGER: Just about three years—

ROBERT F. BROWN: She—you two had worked together for many years very closely?

JASON BERGER: Yes. We had worked together, and of course, she was a dynamo when it came to the Direct Vision also. I mean, you know, she was, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you say you'd also in your art developed fairly parallel as well?

JASON BERGER: Well, I'd put it this way. We were quite different. If you can imagine two circles sort of overlapping a bit in the edges, not being tangential but overlapping a bit. I'd say there was a certain area where

we both, uh, had a lot in common and that—you see what I mean?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you share—um, did you discuss what you were doing there?

JASON BERGER: Oh, all the time. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What sort of things particularly do you remember that—or what were most—some of the most recurrent things that you talked about?

JASON BERGER: Oh, we talked about design, about total—always came up—total painting as against color painting, painting in terms of color, and things of that nature. Of course, we just—when we were living in Normandy, in the country, we had these postcards of all of the masterpieces, and we would pour over them and make, and study the design, and the format and areas of plastic qualities contributing to the design and so forth. So we had done so much groundwork, as the Germans say, in the early days that we didn't have to discuss anymore. I mean we just converted to it, you know? Uh, that was already done.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was implicit?

JASON BERGER: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you were teaching also. By '73, you picked up teaching again at the Art Institute of Boston.

JASON BERGER: That is right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, what is the Art Institute of Boston?

JASON BERGER: The Art Institute of Boston actually is—was the School of Practical Arts. It had started initially as the commercial school, and that still is its largest function, you know? And it was one of the people, I think, that started that was—Maclvor Reddie, or he was very instrumental in some ways.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he was—

JASON BERGER: And he had been the teacher of my uncle who was an illustrator. My uncle's name was Jack Savel. And so, it's funny how he's—it's a very Boston kind of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is very different from teaching in the Museum School, isn't it? That the students mainly were thinking of careers in commercial art?

JASON BERGER: Well, but you see by this time, there was a fine art department. So these—the kids that I taught had nothing to do with commercial art. So, strictly a—a fine arts department had been instituted some years before. And so essentially, I taught the same thing that I taught at the Museum School, third-year figure painting and, at either end, landscape, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: So and when—and, you know, I had some very good students. Naturally, these things run—one year, you get excellent students and then you can have a run of, sort of, somewhat mediocre classes for two years, you know, so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that's what you do occasionally even now, you teach the artists?

JASON BERGER: Yes, yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Travel has always been an important thing for you.

JASON BERGER: Yes, I've been traveling—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were in Acapulco.

JASON BERGER: In, in the summer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you got one [inaudible]. Why do you travel do you think, and where do you travel exactly?

JASON BERGER: Well, actually, the reason I travel is because, you know, in the old days, everybody who could went away for the summer and I still believe in it, you know? I mean the change I think is very, very good. I enjoyed having change and it's a little bit the sun, the sort of, the challenge of the open road, and that sort of

thing. Very old-fashioned. I mean I like to go away and go to new places, not all the time. I mean, I've gone to mainly the same—the same places over and over again.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you still—

JASON BERGER: But I like getting away though.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you like to find unexpected things?

JASON BERGER: Yes. Yes, but there's just something about, sort of, leaving this terrain and going to another one that I don't think this is an extraordinary, original idea. [Laughs.] I think most people who could have—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well—

JASON BERGER: I couldn't say—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why do you—why have you stayed here in the Boston area most of your career?

JASON BERGER: Well, I suppose—well, I like Boston as a town. I like it very much. I'm a Bostonian. I'm used to it. I've never lived for any length of time in any other place, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: Just in short spurts. So, I feel at home here I suppose, yeah, or maybe it's just I'm not adventurous or something, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you, have you—you haven't had steadily one dealer so, since John Peterson.

JASON BERGER: I haven't had any really to speak of, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So that's not ever been a very important factor in your—

JASON BERGER: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —career?

JASON BERGER: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Probably the collectors, the people who know of you, have figured more importantly in the—

JASON BERGER: Yes I would say that. I would say, I haven't gotten many people off the street and I think—I don't know, I think of my painting as—what's going on today, I think it's, sort of, increasing—can you hear me?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, sure.

JASON BERGER: Increasingly more difficult market for my painting. I think it's more difficult to find people because you have either sort of—there's a lot of—if one looks around, there's a lot of very slick painting around, which I don't do. And there's a lot of—I shouldn't say this. It's almost—it's not a really abstract. There are different kinds of moods in the air, I think, which people are picking up on and buying, you know? So, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To me, your work is reminiscent of, uh, things that were done in France such as Dufy or [inaudible].

JASON BERGER: Possibly, very possibly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —which have a charm, which have a—don't they usually have a steady public form? At least in Europe, they do. Perhaps, more there than here.

JASON BERGER: Well, I don't know. I think, but styles change, you know? And the fans come in and so forth. I mean—I don't know. I can't complain too much really, but I think that there are different ideas abroad at different times. That's all I can say. [Laughs.] Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you intend to continue?

JASON BERGER: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You're hopeful, you're resilient, you're—

JASON BERGER: Yeah. Well, the point is, I never really did paint self, you know [inaudible]. I mean, I started painting at a very early age, and I would always—well, I shouldn't say only painted to please myself. That would be an outright lie. But my feeling always has been that if I could please myself, maybe I could please somebody else also, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JASON BERGER: Uh, so I sort of do as I goddam please.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Have you—did you mind having someone buy your paintings, take more—

JASON BERGER: Oh, no, I love it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Don't you ever had a—

JASON BERGER: I love it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you have a hoarding instinct?

JASON BERGER: No, not at all. No, no. I'll tell you why, why I don't have a hoarding instinct because—I have probably conned myself into feeling this, I don't know. But I really feel that painting is, sort of, very experiential, and, and, and I'm more experientially oriented, I think, than product-oriented. So, therefore, once I have done it or [laughs] to translate it, once I have done it, I've had that experience. I just hope somebody else profit by it. Do you see what I'm getting at?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, I do. More of the act of doing rather than, uh—

JASON BERGER: Yes, precisely, precisely, yeah. Right. So, I'm not much of a collector in that sense. Yeah. Yeah. And collecting is—that's it.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]