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Oral history interview with Grace Hartigan, 1979 May 10

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Grace Hartigan on May 10, 1979. The interview took place in Baltimore, Maryland, and was conducted by Julie Haifley for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

JULIE HAIFLEY: I thought I'd start with your childhood, just a little bit. In Cindy Nemser's interview, I think that you said that your parents expected you to be different because of the way you were as a child. Were you a first-born child? I wondered if you thought that had anything to do with it?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Probably, yes. Until I was five years old or seven years old, we lived in a two-family house with my Irish grandmother and my aunt, who was a school teacher. I spent as much time with them as I did with my mother and father. My aunt tried to be a writer, she would make up stories. I was talking when I was two years old. I never stopped. And my grandmother had an enormous number of folk stories to tell me and Irish songs and Welsh songs. So that was extremely encouraging to an imaginative little girl. Then I was precociously bright and I just thought, as my parents did - they didn't know I was going to be an artist - but I'm sure they always thought I was something different. When I was a child, there weren't roles available for women then in the arts, really. The most imaginative thing they could think of would be a school teacher, which is what my aunt was.

JULIE HAIFLEY: An art teacher, perhaps?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes, but art didn't go into it. It was writing and stories, theater - as a matter of fact, theater was the thing I was involved with through high school, not art at all. I was going to be an actress.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You did think about becoming an actress?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, yes. So the influence of my grandmother and my aunt was extremely important to me. Then I had pneumonia for a year and at that time they didn't have penicillin, and I was in bed and then taught myself how to read.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You weren't tutored?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, I just did it all by myself, with my aunt. She died soon afterwards, when I was about seven, but she was an English teacher. And then we moved to what then was almost a country town in New Jersey, Melbourne. It's a big suburban community now, but then there were lots of fields, and my great love - gypsies - would camp near the house. I'd sit in an apple tree and watch them. They came with caravans and horses and built bonfires outside and cooked over the fires in big black pots, just like romantic movies and stories. They really did it. I watched them all the time. The women would come around in marvelous long skirts, brilliant colors, and big earrings, and tell fortunes. The men would sharpen knives.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was it a seasonal kind of thing?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, they would travel around according to weather. I mean they'd be going on south, probably, from there but usually in the spring because I remember the apple trees were in blossom then.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did the same groups come?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, no, you'd never know which was which. There were just regular routes they would travel. Now they go around in Cadillacs! But then, it was really wonderful.

JULIE HAIFLEY: But you didn't get to know anyone in particular?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, no, because we were forbidden to play with the children. And why we were told we were going to be stolen when all those gypsies had so many children of their own is beyond my imagination. It was strictly forbidden.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You have one brother?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I have a brother and two sisters.

JULIE HAIFLEY: When did they come along?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, decently spaced, about two and a half years. The sister that I'm really closest to is my youngest sister, and she says she just spent her childhood trying to trap me from escaping.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Trying to run away?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes, trying to escape the kids, climb up the apple tree and watch the gypsies. I had a very interesting public school life in Melbourne, New Jersey, which I haven't mentioned much. They taught French, for instance, beginning in second grade. So I studied French from second grade until I graduated from high school. And it was a public school! An extraordinary English department and drama department in both elementary school and in the high school. And beginning as a freshman in high school, I was in every school play that there was, the lead in every play. I was going to be an actress.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you study acting?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Just with this marvelous English teacher who was the drama teacher. And I acted at the Papermill Playhouse, which is a professional theater, when I was in high school, had a bit part. And I won the prize in high school for the most talented, not in art, giving Maxwell Anderson's "Elizabeth the Queen."

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were you taking art classes at all at that time? In public school?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No. Oh, I did for a while. I'm terribly clumsy and they were making us copy calendars, and I couldn't get that girl to smile right. I just got so discouraged I didn't do it any more. I kept a journal, a diary, as girls do, and I drew in it; just fanciful things. But I never studied. So the idea of being an artist never entered my head all through school. So you may ask, "Well, then, what happened?"

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, right. Well, you were married right out of high school, weren't you?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes. My home life was quite... My mother and father were quarrelsome and as I got to be an adolescent my liberal views conflicted terribly with their very conservative, middle-class views, and it was just a constant fight. And I married the first boy that read poetry to me. (Laughter)

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you go to California then or...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Then we got married. My mother and father suffered terribly from the American Depression in the '30s. My father worked in a bank and he took salary cut after salary cut. The poor kids...it was just a nightmare. My mother was a very bad manager and at the end of the month we'd just eat corn flakes for a whole week.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Really?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes. I got a scholarship to go to a little college in New Jersey, but they couldn't afford to clothe me. I had one dress. So I went to work at an insurance company in downtown Newark, New Jersey, and I met Bob Jachens, who was the first college dropout that I'd ever heard of. He'd been going to Columbia, he was a brilliant boy, he entered Columbia when he was sixteen, I think. Graduated from high school when he was fifteen. After a couple of years he dropped out. We were working in the insurance company and fell in love. That was the first time I was conscious of art - he took me to the Metropolitan. I was eighteen.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And that was the first time you'd been there?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes. My parents had absolutely no consciousness of it. In fact, my mother was so antagonistic to anything like that that if I would listen to an opera on the radio, she'd come in and turn it off. It was interesting because it made me feel as though I had a private life, something to fight for. It was very different, it was forbidden, maybe kind of magical. And so Bob and I got married. I was eighteen and he was twenty. And we decided we were going to be pioneers, going to go to Alaska and be pioneers. We were really hippies for that time, 1940, very revolutionary. We took a bus all the way from New York to Los Angeles where I found out I was pregnant. We said, "That's all right. Pioneers have children, have them in the fields and tuck them under an arm and go on." However, we ran out of money in Los Angeles and were working there when World War II broke out.

JULIE HAIFLEY: What kind of work did you do in California?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I didn't work then because I was pregnant. He just got a job (pretended he knew about skiing) as a ski instructor in a department store, selling skis and telling people how to ski. I was too pregnant to work, and I didn't work until Jeff, my son, was a year old. The war broke out and we moved back East and Bob was drafted.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Originally, was California sort of a stop on the way...

GRACE HARTIGAN: It was a stop on the way to Alaska, was all. Make money and then move on, go up North and be pioneers in the wilderness. Very romantic. Anyhow, the war came and he was drafted, and I went back with Jeff and moved in with my in-laws, which didn't work out too well. And through a fluke, I got a job as a mechanical drafter, only because - oh, I had been doing some drawing with Bob, who was very encouraging. He said, "I know you're not going to be a housewife. Now, what are you going to do? You're creative." So we just sat down and figured it out. I like to write but I wasn't that good, too late to be a musician or composer. I said, "How about drawing and painting?" So we started to go to night classes.

JULIE HAIFLEY: In California?

GRACE HARTIGAN: In California, yeah.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I wondered if the acting thing came in at all?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, I dropped it. I got so sick - I dropped acting, I knew I didn't want to do it. I got so sick of saying those crummy words. Because you know you don't say Shakespeare all the time. I mean, even Maxwell Anderson, "Where I walk is a hall to torture where the curious gods bring all their racks and I writhe." I mean what intelligent human being can go around saying stuff like that?

JULIE HAIFLEY: I guess you couldn't always choose what you wanted to play.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, of course not. Dumb lines. I just didn't have that kind of narcissism, either, to display myself regardless of what I was saying. So I dropped that. And the drawing thing in California - I did it in adult evening classes, but I suffered. I cried, it was so painful. Something about that object and my ability to do anything about it. Immediately it was like I had a calling. I knew that there was something very deep and mysterious there.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I thought maybe you meant it was so provincial.

GRACE HARTIGAN: It was just so difficult to know what to do about that picture and those flowers. I just couldn't conceive of what you did. I knew there was something you were supposed to do about it, yes, a pretty good inkling. But then when Bob was drafted and I was living with my in-laws (they were in Bataan, New Jersey) I got the job as a draftsman because I had to. Bob was incredible, he went into the war a private and five years later he came out a private which is an accomplishment. (laughter) Something no soldier has ever done in the history of the United States Army. So naturally, if you know anything about a private's pay, I had to work to support Jeff and myself, especially since I didn't want to live with my in-laws very long. I got an apartment and put him in a daycare school. Anyhow, I went on as a draftsman. They gave me the job only because I knew how to hold a compass - the last woman held it like a shovel - and you're hired! (laughter)

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you take a drafting course?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Then they sent me to Newark College of Engineering, on-the-job training sort of thing. I went around doing some things on weekends, trying to do watercolors, which is the most ridiculous thing for a beginner to do. While I was working at drafting, this other draftsman asked me if I liked modern art, and I said, "What's that?" He brought me a book of Matisse, I fell in love with Matisse. So I said, "How can I do that?" So he told me that Ike Muse was a teacher and they were taught from the figure and also taught School of Paris in painting. So I began to study with Ike in the evenings and that went on for a couple of years. And the war went on, and I went on drafting, studying with Ike. And Ike and I fell in love. My husband fell in love with a girl in Holland, and I moved to New York with Ike Muse in 1945.

JULIE HAIFLEY: While your husband was still in...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Still in Europe then. Yeah. He had the cushiest job in the United States Army - he was in charge of the brewery in Holland and living with this brew meister and his daughter who was a pianist. So it was a natural parting after five years for people who were that young. You have to be extraordinary to...

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were you corresponding?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes, but the, I mean eventually it just dropped off and this is where we couldn't adjust. So Ike was quite a bit older than I was, about 20 years older. When we moved to New York, I don't know how it came about, but we met Milt Avery.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Ike didn't already know him?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I can't remember exactly how he met him. It was through someone else that he knew that introduced him to Sally and Milton Avery. Ike had drawing classes a couple of times a week, some students, and then Sally and Milton would come and just draw. Through Milton Avery we met Rothko and Gottlieb, who were

very good friends of Avery's. I was going on drafting by them, I was very good and was making quite a bit of money. I was supporting myself and Ike and Jeff. By then Jeff was in Grace Church School in downtown Manhattan. But I was painting as much as I could. We had a cold-water whole house on 19th Street, and I had a little room to paint in, and Ike's paintings were all over. One time we gave a party and I'd just done a painting and Ike condescendingly allowed me to hang it in our living room. All the people at the party congratulated him as the best painting he had ever done. (laughter) You see the handwriting on the wall there, can't you? From then on it was just a battle. It was will of the mind, him really wanting me to give it up. He just couldn't stand that. So I left, broke it up. And I gave Jeff to his grandparents and I had him just weekends. I had a cold-water flat and I quit my job and got unemployment compensation for a year.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I think you said that your boss fired you.

GRACE HARTIGAN: I asked him to fire me, yes, so I could get unemployment compensation.

JULIE HAIFLEY: If you were such a good draftsman...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh no, that was an agreement. He knew I wanted to be an artist. I was only 27 then, and it was a major decision. From then on there was never any doubt. Well, there was this terrible economic trouble. And Bob Jachens didn't work out with the Dutch girl and he came back to America and moved to California. And when Jeff was twelve, he sent for him and remarried. I've never seen him since. Occasionally I hear from him. He keeps disappearing, and I keep getting letters back, "Address unknown." From Jeff. I'm not in contact with his father at all.

JULIE HAIFLEY: He must be about, um...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, Jeff by now in his '30s - he's 36. And has three children. I have pictures of them, he sent them to me last Christmas. And he writes just two lines, "Dear Mom, How are you? I'm fine. Love, Jeff." Nothing. I don't know what he'd doing, what he's working at, nothing.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You wonder if he's going to turn up on your doorstep?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I'd like to get hold of one of those grandchildren. My oldest granddaughter, she looks like me. It's the grandkids I want, I don't want the son! (laughter) Two daughters and a boy.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, maybe one of them will turn up.

GRACE HARTIGAN: That's what I wouldn't be surprised about.

JULIE HAIFLEY: How old are they?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I guess by now they're adolescents. He married when he was very young. I guess the oldest one must be 16 and the other one 13; the boy's the youngest, he's only about 7.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Must be hard not seeing them.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, the relationship with Jeff has been so long and so painful. I had a year of psychotherapy to adjust myself to that loss, to face it somewhat calmly. I was on the Lower East Side and I was living a life of total poverty but meeting all marvelous, exciting people, in the most exciting time in all of American art - the late '40s and early '50s. Being at the Cedar Bar and the Club...

JULIE HAIFLEY: It just sounds so exciting and such a contrast to the way you grew up, too.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, yes, of course. The middle-class New Jersey girl to hit New York like that, live on the Lower East Side garment factory areas heated by coal stove, and share the life of poverty that all the serious artists were in except for the ones that had some private income. But they were very rare. No one was selling any work then, understand that. All these things that you know about now. I could tell you story after story. We went to each others' studios, and one time Franz Kline was in my studio. He didn't have any money to pay his rent, but he had a collector who was going to meet him by a bank, but Franz didn't have any money for the subway. So I cashed in some soda bottles for the subway, to meet the collector to get the money to pay his rent. It was that rough. Elaine and Bill de Kooning would climb out on the fire escape to avoid the landlord pounding on the door when the rent was due. (laughter) That was still in the early '50s, '52, '53. The late '40s into the early '50s.

JULIE HAIFLEY: At some point you went to Mexico.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes.

JULIE HAIFLEY: How did all of that come about?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I was going with - after I split up with Ike - I was going with Harry Jackson, who then studied at Brooklyn College. He studied with Tamayo but he knew Tony Smith and Bob Iverhart, who then knew Al Leslie and Bob Goodnough, and they were working at Studio 35, which Tony and Bob Iverhart had rented for their students. So at the same time I got to know Pollock who was a friend of Tony Smith's, and I got to know Bill de Kooning through Pollock. I also got to know all the younger people. They were all students of everybody. So I had a double life with people my age and then older artists. And Harry was a very talented painter. When he met Pollock, he started to paint like Pollock. We had a brief marriage. I say I've had two serious marriages and two frivolous ones. He wanted to go to Mexico, he was a former Marine, had the GI Bill, and we were going together and we didn't want to split up. We got married so I could get some money as his wife, and the money he got from borrowing and from me and him, we got a marvelous big house in San Miguel Allende, had a maid every day for $10 a month, and the house was huge. It was only $25 a month.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And you went there to paint?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Went there to paint, yes. And there was a school that just let you sign in, you didn't have to go to the school in San Miguel. So he just went on the GI Bill. He didn't have to go to the school, really. He just had two studios, huge studios in this big house in the middle of this little Mexican town. We worked there until some of the dumb students agitated to have better classes and more classes. And what the government did was just take the GI Bill away from the school, saying the school was inadequate in its scholarship presentation. So there we were, no GI Bill. Back to New York where I had the marriage annulled. That was in '49. Then the painting that I did in Mexico, the corner of which you can see there, it's a yellow-white one sticking out, the largest painting I did in Mexico. And that was shown in the Kootz Gallery "New Talent 1950." I met Clement Greenberg through Jackson Pollock and Clem and Meyer Schapiro were making a show.

JULIE HAIFLEY: It was first on exhibit somewhere else, wasn't it?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes, we had done a show at The Club and some of Franz Kline, [inaudible] they'd seen a painting of mine there - not this one. Then they came to the studio for the paintings for the Kootz show and they also picked Franz Kline and Goodnough. Harry Jackson was still painting abstractly then, he was in that. Oh, this is in the Syracuse Library, the list of people, but it's quite a list of artists.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And that was really your first...

GRACE HARTIGAN: That was the first show. Well, I was only 28 then, that was pretty good, to be in the Kootz Gallery with that company. Then after that, John Myers who was an editor of Vue, a surrealist magazine, was forming a gallery, had a backer - Dwight Ripley - who was an English botanist. And John wanted an advanced artist, a young artist to show, and Clem and Jackson Pollock suggested that he show me, so I had the first show. Then I introduced John to Al Leslie, Bob Goodnough, Harry Jackson; Clem introduced him to Larry Rivers and Helen Frankenthaler. So that was the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. And I showed there from 1951 to 1960 when I moved to Baltimore.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You and Harry at some point went to Jackson Pollock's studio for the first time?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes. Harry had a studio on the Lower East Side, a tenement building which is now torn down. And across Grand Street was a building where John Cage, Marty Feldman, and a young woman name Sonia Schula who showed at Betty Parsons', had studios. And we got to know them and shared talks and dinners together. Sonia asked Harry and me what we thought of Jackson Pollock, and we had just seen the first drip show of Pollock. We were fascinated. I'd seen it, I think, fifteen times. So she said, "Why don't you call him and tell him? He's moved to the country and Peggy Guggenheim's gone back to Europe and he's lonely, broke, and no younger people have said they liked his work." So Harry went to the phone and called him up and he said to come on out. So we hitchhiked out, spent several days with Lee and Jackson. Of course, I must tell you that Harry swore me to secrecy that I was a painter because he wanted to be the painter! We could talk about male egos here a little bit. We weren't married then, this was before we went to Mexico in '48. We were in Mexico in '49. And it was only when Harry and Pollock went out to a bar and I was alone with Lee, and she said, "Confess. You're a painter, aren't you?" (Laughter) So we two women painters sat and talked about my work.

JULIE HAIFLEY: How had she known?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, I think she felt that the way I responded to the work and my knowledgeability and enthusiasm. Women artists sniff out each other, sort of. She was awfully nice about it. And then Jackson was wonderful about it once he found out, got to see my work. He liked my work better than Harry's. He recommended me for the first show.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Harry was not too pleased?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, boy, was he ever not too pleased! Well, it was impossible anyhow. That has been a terrible conflict with creative men that I've had relationships with. The sense of rivalry. And the man that I'm married to now and expect to be and have been since 1960, Winston Price, Dr. Price, is a tremendously creative man, he's a medical scientist, knows a lot about painting. But that kind of creativity works for me very well.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I understand you signed your early paintings George Hartigan.

GRACE HARTIGAN: We might as well go through that.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You were identifying with...

GRACE HARTIGAN: George Sand and George Elliot, but no one ever will believe it. They think that I wanted to be a man, and that never entered my head.

JULIE HAIFLEY: How long did you sign your paintings that way?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I think about one, maybe two years. But I started to get creative schizophrenia because at the de Nagy Gallery all the artists would sit on Saturdays, sit in the gallery for the whole day and John was free to buzz around and look at other shows and go to museums and do whatever he wanted. And when my show was on, I'd start to talk about George, you know, and "George, he" - huh? Who? And that's just silly. And finally Dorothy Miller and Alfred Barr had bought a painting for the Museum of Modern Art in 1952, I guess, '53.

JULIE HAIFLEY: "Persian Jacket?"

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah. And they were going to show it and Dorothy - by then I'd gotten to know her and she said, "Well, come on. Let's just call you Grace and forget that whole thing and not be stuck with it."

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, for a while it was George Grace or Grace George?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Grace George. Yeah, I sort of eased my way out of it. But that is the truth, ma'am, and that's all there is to it. But it's going to go on because a lot of the feminists like to think that I felt that it was impossible for a woman to be taken seriously and that's why I did it. So if they want, they can.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I read a lot of the early reviews that would refer to George Hartigan and say, "He's doing his best painting." So I guess everyone wasn't aware.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, it didn't last that long, but it does come up. Now, young women don't have to have women writers as role models. They have marvelous older women artists. That's one of the things - people like Louise Nevelson, and certainly Lee Krasner is a marvelous painter. For a while, she submerged her personality to Pollock's and that's the truth. And she stopped painting for several years because he told her to stop. And unfortunately with his death she really blossomed as an artist and moved a great deal. Some of her early work - there was a show of early abstract expressionism at the Whitney - her work was better than anyone's, I thought, more mature, more of herself than those people were at that particular time in the '40s.

JULIE HAIFLEY: How did Pollock and de Kooning influence what you were doing then?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I've said this before, but you've no idea what it is to see something that's in the world for the first time. I was just stunned by Pollock's work and even more so in his studio. No one had ever done a painting out of drips, for one thing. The expansiveness - now I'm used to large field paintings and they look a little small almost, but then they were just gigantic. We were engulfed by them.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I'd always pictured them as quite large until I saw the originals.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, you're sophisticated now because you've seen so many huge - I mean, if you see what Al Held does and some of his gigantic, much larger paintings than, say, Lichtenstein which were so huge. Well, they're just in the tradition since Pollock of doing larger and larger and larger paintings. But then, they looked pretty big. And Ike had taught me the School of Paris, really cubist painting and Matisse, to see this total abstraction and the emotion in it. It seemed at first to be ferocious and angry but that was partly because Pollock was so ferocious and angry. Now they look quite lyrical. But then they looked frantic and mad. And de Kooning's looked more controlled but, still, I'd never seen anything like that in my life. He was doing the black and whites and "Excavation." And then I was terribly attracted to Bill's mind. He has one of the greatest minds of any artist. He can spend two hours telling you why you can't paint a sky blue, you don't understand what it really is. You're convinced you can't at the end, but I couldn't tell you why it is that you can't do it. But Bill can. He also will tell you all about gestures, how some people hold their head like this and raise their eyebrows - and he goes on and on about observations that are so acute. Pollock was quite inarticulate. But it changed what I got, as well that a dig deep into your unconscious to come up with your painting, a new way to paint, overall paintings, projected surface, painting is the image rather than the images in the painting, that kind of esthetic

and formalism. And really, the younger artists formulated the thought. The men - and it was mostly men, I'll say men because it was - they'd done it but they didn't have that esthetic figured out, and it was really talks with Goodnough and myself with Pelling [phon. sp.], and we formulated the esthetic of how to describe it, how to do it. They did it and we described it except when we were influenced by it. But of course, things were happening at the same time. The paintings I had in my first show in 1950, '51, are avant-garde paintings and they were the advanced way of working at the time, very few people - oh, soon afterwards it started to sweep universities and art schools and every student was learning how to do it. And it finally became so redundant.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And a lot of those people started drifting into New York.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, yes. And some of the people at Black Mountain. Franz and Bill de Kooning would teach there, Pollock never taught. The people started going out to see Pollock. He'd show out in Guild Hall in the Hamptons. Then of course, they'd see the shows in New York. And it just got to be a bigger and bigger art world. By the end of the '50s it was mobbed, but nothing like the amount of artists there are now, of course. It does seem like a lot from a small world where if you went to the Cedar Bar you'd meet a couple of friends every time you went, you wouldn't see throngs of people looking at people.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And you did do a lot of visiting back and forth between studios?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, we were very hesitant to just drop in, and we would always meet at the Cedar Bar and we'd go to parties together. But we would ask each other, "Can I drop by?" or "Will you drop by?" I remember Mark Rothko hired a gymnasium near my studio; he got a commission from the Seagram Building to do six large paintings and he hired a gymnasium that would be the size of the restaurant.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were those the Four Seasons panels?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah, but you see, he didn't give them to them. I think those paintings were shown at Pace Gallery recently, but I'm not sure if they're in, they might be in the museum in Texas. I guess the big bunch of things are at the Tate. Anyhow, Mark called me up and asked me to come over and look at them, he'd just finished them. He had half a bottle of bourbon and we sat. That was the first time he'd gone into darker colors. I was used to the rolly lemons and orange. These were the first time the plums and browns were beginning to appear. I was knocked out. They were marvelous. He said, "I'm not going to give them to them." I knew he needed the money, it was a lot of money. He said, "I just saw the restaurant and it was so vulgar I can't bear it." So we had a sad (now, in retrospect) conversation. I said, "Well, when you die, you can't tell where your paintings are going to be." "Well, then I won't know. This way, I walk by that building and I feel sick." So he didn't. And since I'm not that pure, they bought a Grace Hartigan. (Laughs) And if I remember, a couple of other people were mad, wanting "Seasons" to go up.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was it a struggle financially even in the mid-'50s when you were selling?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, let's see. When I got back from Mexico, my unemployment had run out and Harry and I got our marriage annulled so I didn't have any support. I got odd jobs. I worked as an artist's model for a while. That's how I met Hans Hofmann, modeling for him. He said, "Oh my god, a Titian. Now I have a Rubens." (Laughter) And that got sticky because I was showing then, that was '50, '51; not selling anything but showing. And then the Art Students League, the instructors would see my work and it was revolutionary for them, and they would fight with me, and here I am naked on the modeling stand and an instructor fighting with me about my painting. I thought, "This has to stop. I can't do this any more. There must be something else to do." So I signed up for a temporary employment service doing idiot jobs like stuffing envelopes. You know, that a machine can't do. Let's see, what else did I do? Oh, I ran for a while a travel bureau at night at the Plaza Hotel. I would paint all day and then work for about four hours in the evening. The best job I had was a market research firm that was open 24 hours a day. I edited market research interviews and you could just drop in any time you wanted after a day of painting. Then after the Museum of Modern Art bought "Persian Jacket" in '53 or so, nothing much happened until they bought "Riverbreakers" and they showed it. Then the museum, the Whitney bought "Grand Street Brides" about 1954. Now, you must understand that I was living on the Lower East Side and the loft I had was $30 a month. The landlord reduced it to $27 because I agreed to clean the roof. So I cleaned the roof. And living was very cheap then on the Lower East Side. So when I say I was supporting myself it was not on any grand scale. Then I got another floor in the building, so I had the world's crummiest duplex in New York. The other floor was, I think, $35. But two whole floors! Think of that! Now it would be at least $250 a floor. So except for one rough time when I was broke and worked for one month as a draftsman, I think then I supported myself entirely on my paintings until I married Winston in 1960.

JULIE HAIFLEY: The paintings that the Museum of Modern Art bought were not purely abstract like the things you had done before. Was there a time when you started painting from the Masters?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I realized that I had what I think of as ripping off Pollock and de Kooning esthetic without going through their experience, so in a bout of conscience I had a year of my work from a fairly free,

open brush. I worked from Velasquez and Goya, Diego, Rubens. I worked my way back into modern art, influenced by Matisse. And then I was up against that stark expressionism again, but I was using the abstract expressionist esthetic with working from images on the Lower East Side, things from my window, push carts, fruit stands, passersby, and the bridal things on Grand Street, some nice window that had a lot of cut crystal in it. Then the Metropolitan one is mannequins in a window. And I continue to be interested in windows. The painting upstairs I'm working on now is from the gypsy window down the street here. So that interest has never left me. I did, at the end of the '50s, go back again into total abstraction and battled my way through abstraction into imagery again when I moved to Baltimore. It took about five years for images to come back in again. It was slow, but it gradually came back and back and back until finally, instead of doing a city life painting, I did a suburban life painting, a shopping mall. That was 1965, the "Reisterstown Mall." And that is the breakthrough painting. From then on, and I haven't stopped. It's been images of various sorts ever since then, by now almost 15 years.

JULIE HAIFLEY: The period during which you were working from the Masters caused some problems with some of your friends, though, didn't it?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, they all thought I was reactionary then. Bill de Kooning was nice about it because Bill had tremendous training in Europe, of course, and he knows that young artists go through times like that. But Pollock and Kline, even Mark - although he didn't say much because Mark was very fond of me and also not very destructive as a person - but they just felt that I had lost my nerve. And Helen, I think Helen wasn't very nice about it, either, neither was Joan. In fact, I can't remember anybody that was nice. I had a lot of fights.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you stop seeing them or argue with them?

GRACE HARTIGAN: We just fought, yeah. No, I didn't stop seeing them, we liked each other a lot, but yeah, we'd just fight. But I had to do it and I went through it. And then I feel much stronger for having done it. Of course, there is a point of view that you're supposed to make one painting your whole life, and I've never been able to go for that. Make it in different colors. Same painting in different colors. When I started to do things like the city life paintings, then everybody got friendly again because they thought they were pretty good and they'd forgive me for throwing a mango in or something that looked like a bicycle.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1
TAPE 1, SIDE 2

JULIE HAIFLEY: In Sandler's book, he makes quite a distinction between the so-called "first generation" and then the "second generation" New York School painters. I wonder if at the time there really seemed to be quite a distinction between the people like Pollock and Kline and so forth, and then the younger artists, or whether it was all this big...

GRACE HARTIGAN: It wasn't that clear as the historians are making it now. We were just younger friends, that was all. I don't think they went around saying, "I'm first generation and you're second." We were just younger artists, that's all. We were very free to talk openly about anyone's work. I think that certainly they had experiences we didn't have because we couldn't have. They had the crucial WPA experience and working figuratively and taking, really, the great from European art, and the experience with the European artists that came over. I only met Matta once, and Gorky had died when I became friendly with Pollock. He'd just died. So I didn't have that surrealist time either, so that was different. Their experiences of being older were just different experiences. But there wasn't that self-conscious a break in it. Motherwell insists on it very much now because he's determined to establish his prior important role in American art before he dies. It's rather unbecoming of him that he'd doing it. (Laughter) But it seems necessary to him. But Bill doesn't think about things like that, and we're very friendly whenever we see each other, although he's gone into seclusion a great deal now. And aside from that, there aren't many people around of that, now that they call them that, "first generation."

JULIE HAIFLEY: When did Rauschenberg appear on the scene?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, Bob was around when, good heavens, let's see, 1950. Have you ever heard of the 9th Street show? Well, he wasn't in that. But then the Stable Gallery took over that show, the advanced artists, and I met Bob then. I was going around with Al Leslie for a while, and we went to see Bob's work at his studio. We adored him. We thought (we didn't take him seriously) we just thought he was a nut. He was married then to a painter named Susan something or other. She didn't get in the Stable show. The artists voted who could get in, everyone who was in the original show would vote for new people. Bob got in. He did his first combine. And in the middle of it he put one of her paintings. Then he thought of something new each year. It went on for about three or four years and then disbanded. That's when he first showed his three blank canvases. And we'd all get on the phone with him, you know, "What are you up to now?" So he was trying to decide. We had these moving people who all had dirty hands, and these blank canvases naturally had all these fingerprints. So we had a great soul searching whether he should paint over the dirty fingerprints, then decided, no, that was the experience of

the work, it had gone through this. So he left them. The other thing I can remember that he showed was he did a combine that had live plants in it. We'd take turns calling him up to remind him to water his art. So he was sort of like a court jester, really. He was adorable, loads of fun, but he didn't have tremendous importance.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Wasn't taken so seriously?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, he was just a load of fun, loads of ideas, charming, exuberant, and funny and witty.

JULIE HAIFLEY: He wasn't in the shows like "Twelve Americans?"

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, no. Dorothy Miller put him in, I think later, one of hers before she stopped doing these American shows. I think he was in a later one. But the "Twelve Americans" that I was in had Kline and Guston, who else was in it? I know Larry was in it. I got to be very friendly with Phil Guston and Kline after we were in the "Twelve Americans" show together. And then we were all in the "New American Painting" show that traveled throughout Europe. That's the show that had the big impact on European art and everybody started painting New York abstract expressionism in Italy then, and in France. Somehow, it didn't get to England that much, a few artists picked it up but not many. The English are really too literary to think very abstractly and emotionally, I think.

JULIE HAIFLEY: But those international shows really established the reputation...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, yes, through a combination of that show, which was powerful, and the Documenta shows, and there was the Sao Paolo Biennale (but that was South America) and there was a show in Tokyo, I think, too. Those shows established the American artist. And that's the reason that we all started to sell. And the Museum of Modern Art was a powerful influence. Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller were literally the taste makers in New York in the '50s. And Nelson Rockefeller, as it happened, when I had the "Twelve Americans" show, Nelson Rockefeller bought the largest painting in the show and then his sister-in-law bought the next one and then Philip Johnson bought... You know, it just mushroomed on and on and on. And practically every museum on the East Coast and then even the Chicago Art Institute. So by the time 1957 came around, I was selling every single thing I painted.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Hard to keep up with it.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes. I had people who wanted paintings, and I just couldn't produce that much. I literally do not have a painting from 1950 to 1960, not one of my own. Nothing. Couple of color etchings and that's all. I couldn't afford not to sell them. I didn't get prices that big and I don't produce that much. I still don't produce any more than a painting a month. So to support myself - I'd like to live more comfortably than I had before, not in the lap of luxury but to just support myself like someone who worked as a clerk, say, would support themselves. I've had to sell everything. Prices just weren't that high.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you find that in order to do that you had to spend almost all of your time painting?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, I always did that. I'm a day painter, not like Franz, who painted at night. I paint in the day and I always painted. I lived in the studio from 1950 until I married Win in 1960. Well, I lived in the studio in the late '40s, too. So that you're right there all the time. And I'd get up in the morning and paint all day and usually in the evening have people over. By then I'd gotten to know all the poets, especially Frank O'Hara. Or I'd walk over to the Cedar Bar and just see who I'd run into.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Tell me a little about your poem paintings.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I met Frank in, let me see, he came to New York, I guess he came right from Harvard, and I was introduced to him at John Myers', and John Ashbery was there, and Frank and I hit it off immediately. I guess that was 1951 or so. And we started to meet in the Cedar Bar and he'd bring a poem in and we would sit around and read a new poem over a beer, and he'd come down to the studio every time I'd do a painting. And we just got the idea one day, we were sitting and having wine, talking, and I said, "It might be fun to do something with you." I felt this sympathy with his work more than any of the other poets, a kind of madness that attracted me, a confessional quality.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And that earlier predisposition with poetry.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah, with my grandmother and my aunt. I'd always been a tremendous reader and still am. So Frank said that he had a series of poems - they hadn't been printed yet - called "Oranges, Sweet, a Dozen." He brought them to the studio and I read them, and I was still very poor then and I had really crummy paper, large sheets of paper, and some of them, oil on paper, some of them I wrote the whole poem, made the writing part of the imagery, and some of them I made images from a few of the works and the thoughts. And John showed them in, I guess, in 1953 on the one wall. Then they started to fall apart, and due to the niceness of a

collector, Guy Wally, had them restored in exchange for a couple of them. Since then I've sold them all except one that I have at home. Then later on they were shown again with Larry Rivers, who then had done the stone lithographs. But in those, Frank wrote the words of the poems on the stones. In mine, I did the writing. So in a sense, Larry and Frank's collaboration was more of a collaboration because Frank improvised the poems and Larry the images together on the stones at the same time. Frank just handed the poems over to me and I did what I wanted. He liked it, but it wasn't as much of a collaboration. And then everybody was always painting Frank because he was marvelous to paint with oil with the broken-looking nose, high forehead. I did a painting, "Frank O'Hara and the Demons." Oh, and the time I did "The Grand Street Brides," I had some costumes around, like I put him in a jacket and did a painting called "Master." Frank was a powerful force in the New York art world. De Kooning was very fond of him, and Pollock.

JULIE HAIFLEY: He published something, "In Memory of My Feelings" or something like that?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, that's the title of one of his major poems and the poem's dedicated to me. But that's the title of the volume the Museum of Modern Art put out after his death where all the artists had a poem and they did some kind of a, well, it was a sensitized paper that you could print from that looks like a lithograph when you're finished. And that book was a "Who's Who" of the New York art scene because just about everyone you could think of did something. Rauschenberg and Johns who by then were very good friends of his.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And you did some stage sets, too?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, that was a brief time. A friend of John Myers, Herbert Makeschib was a director and they got a small theater to lease downtown in the Village in New York. There were a series of plays by the poet Jimmy Merrill. I did a set for Kenneth Koch, Larry did the set for Frank O'Hara, I think Jane did the one for Jimmy Merrill, Elaine de Kooning did one, Jimmy Scholar did a play, all the poets did plays. It was fun, it was insane. I had a budget of $25 to do the set with, so what I did was I got huge sheets of brown paper and taped them together, and a lot of brush, and I did a gigantic backdrop. And then I emptied my studio of all my furniture, easel, stools, drafting table, and I just set up the theater with my furniture from my studio, just spent the $25 on the backdrop material. Larry spent all his on pipe and did a gigantic pipe sculpture in the middle of the stage and that was all there was in the set. Quite effective. I think he got paper and did a big backdrop, too. Those, of course, didn't survive. It's a shame because they were quite exciting. So then we just got involved with it. We were there every day in rehearsals, and the madness of the theater, actors and actresses screaming at each other and crying and yelling at the director and him yelling, and temperaments.

JULIE HAIFLEY: It seems like a combination of your earlier interests?

GRACE HARTIGAN: After Studio 35 was given up, the artists around that area, particularly people like Milton Resnick and Bill de Kooning and Philip Pavia, definitely wanted a place where we could meet as we did in Studio 35 and talk. So I think they started it because Pavia had a little bit more money and I think he put up the original amount and then the members would chip in to pay the rent. I never became a member. I don't know, I hate joining things.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I thought that you were a member.

GRACE HARTIGAN: I went all the time but I wasn't a registered member. They voted me in but I said I wanted to go but not be a member, so I just went.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I guess that's what I read, that you had been voted in and I assumed that you would accept.

GRACE HARTIGAN: I said no, I won't.

JULIE HAIFLEY: What was the difference? Like a voting member?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I don't know, you had to pay the rent, I guess. That's the only thing I could think of you had to do. I went all the time, to parties, and then I was on panels and listened to the panels.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were those on Friday nights?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I think it was Friday night. Some of them were arranged, they would arrange a panel, but sometimes there'd just be, if someone was in town, like they'd give a party for Dylan Thomas when he was in town. And then it was open nights where you could - I guess the members had keys, but it was open every night and you'd walk by and see if anyone was there and come up and gab for a while. They'd have a party sometimes and we'd dance, they'd buy terrible liquor and set it out for 25 cents in these little paper cups. A lot of ideas went on in that place.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you go there most every night?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No. Generally I'd go the night there'd be a panel and sometimes casually drop in. I went most of the time casually to the Cedar Bar because I was always sure - and a lot of the time they'd have a very cheap dinner, steak for, I think, $2.75. Wasn't bad. So after a day of working, I'd just take a long walk over and have dinner there and wait for someone to show up.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Do you recall any specific anecdotes about some of the members of the New York School?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, the thing you must understand is that these people didn't talk like art historians. Let's see. When I went out to see Pollock, I asked him - I'd been to his gallery, Kootz had been showing rather well for a while - and I asked Pollock who was good. He sort of muttered a little bit about this one and that one, and I said, "Do you mean it?" And he said, "No, nobody's any good but Bill de Kooning and me." And so then I said, "Who's Bill de Kooning?" And he sent me over to Bill's address to meet Bill. Pollock never ever said anything about any esthetic advice of any sort. The only thing I remember, being in his studio, it took a long time for me, looking, to distinguish one painting from another, as you could well imagine. One time, I ventured that I liked a painting, and the only thing he said was, no, no, no, he had to get back into it. And that means a plunge of total involvement, it doesn't mean he picks up a little corner or something. And when Pollock had the second drip show, Harry Jackson and I were back from Mexico then, and he took my studio and we stayed in it, and we helped him hang the show. Home Sweet Home was his shipper from Long Island. Home Sweet Home came in with a painting in one hand and a lump of paint from the center of the painting in the other hand. So Pollock liked the painting, so what he did was, I think I loaned him some colors and he just patched it. Not as thick as it should have been, but he patched it so no one would know the difference. Well, an artist named Alphonso Ossorio had moved out to a beautiful estate called The Creeks, and Alphonso's father was, I guess a [Philippine] Cuban sugar king, had given him $1,000 as a birthday present. He went to the Pollock show and bought that painting. Pollock fumed about it for a while, he said, "He'll never know, never know." So he got it out to The Creeks, Ossorio's estate, and he called Pollock and said, "There's something wrong with the center of that painting." So Pollock said, "All right, get to the studio and I'll fix it." So Pollock repainted the whole thing, again saying, "He'll never know. No one knows how to look at my paintings, he won't know the difference." He sent it back to Ossorio, and Ossorio called him and told him every single thing he did, and said he liked it even better. What a relief.

Pollock is known for being a heavy drinker. Most of the abstract expressionists drank very heavily. Pollock had true alcoholism, and he would have times when he would drink so heavily that he would be a monster, he'd just roar. But he was always a free spirit. He'd drive a car and he'd see a field at a corner, and he'd have to go around the corner of the road, he just had to cross the field. And when he'd mow his lawn - then you didn't have power mowers, you had hand mowers - he'd mow it like a pelican, in circular, rhythmic form. It all got cut eventually, but no boundary in which to go in horizontal.

And I met Bill de Kooning and Bill's mind, as I said, is remarkable. He showed me some beautiful drawings, Renaissance - kind of meticulous drawings like silver point, it was so fine. He said, "You can't do that any more. You'd go insane doing those." I have a couple of "Women" stories: he was trying to make the woman sit but not sit, look as though she was sitting because he said foreshortening made him throw up. And he met Frank one day, had a box of cotton under his arm and Frank said, "What are you doing?" "I just bought some environment for the painting." Of course, he was very serious about this, too. You know, you shouldn't laugh, sort of to yourself. But I mean, he says, "The shoulder's impossible. Looks like a little pig." All these things were perfectly, you know, very worried about it all.

JULIE HAIFLEY: What did you think of those paintings?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I loved them, all the artists adored them. I had a big fight -and this has been printed somewhere - with Jim Fitzsimmons, art critic, who said that they were the Death Goddess and hatred. And I said I thought they were very funny and kind of mad laughter. I thought they were very humorous, Bill thought so too. We were at the show and Jim pointed to one of the women who had a lizard in crimson slashed across her breast, and he said, "Look, he stabbed her. That's blood." So I went to Bill and I said, "Jim Fitzsimmons says you stabbed that woman." And Bill said, "Blood? Gee, I thought it was rubies."

And Franz was a charmer and filled with - oh, Phil Guston and I got talking, telling Franz Kline stories. Phil told this: Franz also was a great drinker, and they went out, he and Franz were on a panel at the Chicago Art Institute. Franz stayed up all night the night before, drinking all night. When they got on the panel, Franz's head was nodding like a dormouse, he was so sleepy, and they were fighting back and forth, the audience. Franz didn't say much. Someone says, "What is painting, anyhow?" Franz lifted his head and he said, "Painting, painting's like stuffing a mattress. Didn't you ever stuff a mattress?"

Another one, this I told Phil, I told Franz one time that Larry Rivers and I would go to the Metropolitan together and we'd trade. I said, "Well, I'll spend 15 minutes in the English landscape room with you if you'll spend 15 minutes in the Spanish room with me." Franz said, "Hm, English landscape. Yeah, you know how it is when

you're walking in the country and you're looking at your feet and it begins to rain, and you bump into somebody and you say, "Excuse me," and that person says, "Oh, no, excuse me." Well, that's English landscape painting." Isn't that marvelous? One time, Tom Hess was doing an Art News Annual on Bonnard. He called all the artists for statements about Bonnard. I said, "I don't have a thought in my head about Bonnard so I'm not going to give you a statement." But Franz said, "Bonnard, hm. The woman could never get out of the bathtub." The only artist that I didn't meet in New York ever was Clyfford Still. I met Clyfford Still when I moved to Baltimore because Clyfford Still was - and still is - in Maryland. Did you know that?

JULIE HAIFLEY: Yeah, down in New Windsor.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah. And he was in Westminster then and my husband got in touch with him because I was so lonely when I moved to Baltimore I thought I'd die of solitude after a life like that in New York. Desert. And I hadn't started to teach at the Maryland Institute then so I didn't know any young people. So Win wrote Clyfford Still and Clyfford Still suggested we meet for lunch halfway between Westminster and Baltimore, and he brought along his wife and his daughter. Clyfford Still's wife writes down every single thing Clyfford Still says, except she doesn't write down what anybody else says. So if you ask Clyfford Still a question and he says, "No," she writes down "No."

JULIE HAIFLEY: During the meal?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yep. And both those women were like the old thing, "A woman should be beaten hourly like a gong."

JULIE HAIFLEY: I knew that she was sort of the keeper of...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, she's just absolutely - incredible. Anyhow, it was very uncomfortable and Still was quite hostile. It finally got out that he had heard that I didn't like his paintings. I said, "Oh, Mr. Still -" always call him "Mr. Still" - "Oh, Mr. Still, I admire you tremendously. I thought you knew that." Well, then he relaxed and said, "I want to tell you something. You're better than most of those boys you know." (Laughter) So we got on. Then he gave me advice, he said, "Now you know what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to be like someone in a cave, like a caveman or cavewoman, the first people sitting around a fire, and you reach into the fire and you pick up a charcoal stick and you go to the wall." And I said, "Mr. Still, you know, I can see how you do that, but if I did that I'd just end up with a lot of messy brushwork." But Still is a megalomaniac. I mean, he put down Cezanne because Cezanne wanted the Legion of Honor. That showed that Cezanne was a lousy artist, as though that worldly idea has anything to do with it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you see him again after that?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Just once. By then, I'd gotten to know Bud Leake who was the president of the Maryland Institute, a very dynamic guy, terrific painter. He resigned as president just to devote himself to painting. And I believe we hit Baltimore around the same time, around 1965, I guess. Well, I'd got there a little earlier. I'd heard things, that the Maryland Institute was getting very lively. He called me and asked if I could have a show, but then I was tied up with Martha Jackson and I couldn't. But I said, "Listen, I'm lonely. Let's meet for lunch and see if there's anything you can think of for me to do. I want to meet some young people. I'm going crazy of solitude." So over lunch he said he'd just gotten five graduate students, would I look at them one afternoon a week for a very small amount of money? I started doing that and then out of that I built Hoffberger, which is now a very well- known graduate school in America. There's a new president and we're taking over the Cannon Building and I'm going to have a floor, a whole floor; there'll be 30 students. That all came from 5 students I looked in on. We got almost 200 applications for 15 openings.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you critique their work or how did you work that?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I did various things. I'd look at their work. What it is now, the way it's going to be set up - and I've just evolved that over the years - they have individual studios. I'll be around more than before. It was a full-time, 2 ½ day a week job. I'll go to their studios and talk about the work. Once a month I'll give a seminar on various things, poetry in painting, the avant-garde esthetic ideas of the 20th century, color ideas, professional ideas - how to get a gallery, museum, shows, how to become a professional young artist. Probably now that there're so many women, I'll always give one on feminism. That'll be once a month. And we'll plan to do things, see shows, go over to Washington, maybe go up to New York a couple of times, I want to go to the Barnes with them. Then I'll give individual counseling, personal and professional. Then they have a show. Also, we're going to have a room where they can show slides, show all our slides to each other the first week or so that we get together to make a community. Really, I think what I'm doing is trying to reproduce what I had in New York, make an environment for young artists. It's a little bit forced, it's not as natural, but it's all they have in Baltimore.

JULIE HAIFLEY: A one-year program?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, it's a two, they get an MFA at the end of two years.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Back to Clyfford Still, you were saying about...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, well, Bud Leake had hired Clyfford Still to do this advanced idea course. He was going to sit in the cafeteria and drink coffee and then kids were supposed to come up and talk with him like we're sitting over a table talking. Well, he was so intimidating that they'd sit way over on the other side of the cafeteria looking at him, not daring to approach him because he's filled with rage about how he's the only pure artist in the world and everyone's corrupt.

JULIE HAIFLEY: He was willing to do that, though?

GRACE HARTIGAN: He was willing to do it because he did teach in California. However, I leaned on my students. I said, "I'll fail you if you don't go once to sit with this - he's a great artist." They went once and they said, "Okay, we've done it. Never again." Finally he stopped because he saw that somehow he's just gotten so much older and is so intimidating a personality that he can't contact young people.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you talk with him at all?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, I'd go in and sit with him for a while and talk, sure. But I mean, I got tired of hearing how corrupt my dear friend Dorothy Miller is, who is the purest creature in the world, and how corrupt the Museum of Modern Art is and the Metropolitan and the Whitney and the Brooklyn Museum. He was just a one-note thing. And I haven't seen him since that time.

JULIE HAIFLEY: That was in the mid-'60s?

GRACE HARTIGAN: That was in the mid-'60s, yes.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I think he pretty much keeps to himself.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, I think so, yes. I wrote him one time and asked him if he'd go look at my students' work and he wrote back, "Uh uh," spelled U-H, U-H. I sat with the students and they said, "Maybe he means 'uh huh.'" And I said, "No, 'uh huh' is spelled U-H H-U-H." (Laughter)

JULIE HAIFLEY: I wanted to ask you about moving to Long Island. Was that in the late '50s?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes. I was buying - another great marriage, Bob Keene had a gallery and a bookstore in Southhampton - a huge Victorian house called Ludlow Grange in Bridgehampton.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I didn't even know about that marriage.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes, it was very short, only a year. I wanted to get out of New York; I was going to keep the Lower East Side thing for just when I went into town just as a pied a terre in New York.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Had it become too frantic?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, it was just different. As I said to a newspaper woman, what did I say, "Everybody'd gotten either rich or famous or dead." And that doesn't make for a very nice community. The whole thing had broken up and artists were at each other's throats if someone was showing more than the other or selling more than other people were. You have to understand, there were a lot of marvelous artists that you don't know about in that time. I can name names like Landes Lewitin and Herman Cherry, powerful, dedicated artists with great intelligence, who just didn't make it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: What happened to them?

GRACE HARTIGAN: They just didn't make it. Cherry's still alive doing wonderful paintings, but nobody knows about it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Is he still in New York?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Lives in New York, uh hum. Lewitin is dead now but he was a great intellect. That's why, if I have any sense of irony, it's because you had to be on your toes. I remember Lewitin saying one time I met him - he was in the Cedar Bar all the time - he called me over - he liked to talk very privately to you, he was much older than I was - he'd just seen the "Twelve Americans" show and he said, "Do you want me to tell you the truth?" I said, "Of course." He said, "Can you take it?" I said, "Try me." He said, "Transubstantiate." I said, "That's the truth?" I thought that one over for quite a while. I realized what he meant, and that was something to do with the paint, that is, you're not supposed to just make paint look like paint, you're supposed to make a world

with it, move it, try to transubstantiate, to beyond the point. Like Rothkos, it's not paint, it's light. And I thought that was a very - I mean, the Impressionists were involved with that, it's not just paint, it's light. So when you think it over...one time Bill de Kooning went to him. He knew more about the craft of painting. Bill wanted to know something he could mix with the paint to keep it wet for a long time, it wasn't sand oil - sand oil is very oily. So Lewitin said, "Yeah, I know, but I'm not going to tell you." So Bill said, "Why aren't you going to tell me?" He said, "Look, I had to read all those books, why should I hand this over to you?" So Bill was kind of disgruntled. Lewitin had a bad heart and they were at a party and Lewitin was starting to look a little pale. Bill got him some brandy, got him into a cab and got him home, tucked him into bed. As he was leaving, Lewitin beckoned to him, Bill went over, and Lewitin said, "Oil of cloves." Bill's reward. But there were lots of people like that.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did he die soon after that?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, he went on for quite a while, another ten years. But that's what makes the milieu. I met with sculptor George Spaventa, you might not have heard of him. There was a memorial for him at the Studio School. And he was a great intellect, powerful, wonderful, sensitive, highly intelligent man with a terrible series of crippling depressions that would keep him from working very much. His work was completely sensitive; a bit too influenced by Giacometti, whom he'd known in Paris. Well, I spoke at the memorial. A lot of those people were there, Cherry was there, Vincente we don't hear too much about, and I said that this is what's made American art, the people in this room, the Spaventas. It's not just the stars that make art. The Cubists could be Cubists in Paris because there were so many people doing marvelous work. For instance, take an American painter like Blakelock - if he hadn't been a solitary artist, he would have been a genius. If he'd had a milieu, an exchange of ideas, something to build on, to encourage him, a place to go to talk it all out. You'd just get that much better for it. And that was the reason why New York was that way.

JULIE HAIFLEY: How did you like being on Long Island?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, it was lovely because while Pollock had died by then, there were loads of friends out there and it was just - well, even now, Harold Rosenberg and my very dear friends are out there, Saul Steinberg is out there, other artists you don't know about like Vincente and Marca-Relli, Mary Clyde, loads and loads of people. And lots of New York people'd come out and summer out there so it was like moving yourself to a potato field, moving New York to a potato field. But then I met Win Price and Win and I fell very deeply in love with each other.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You met him on Long Island?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, I had a show in Washington. I was still living in New York. I was just getting the house set up, going out weekends and summers, one summer. I had a show in Washington and Win was a collector, a professor of epidemiology at Hopkins. He's a medical scientist. He bought the largest painting. He called me in New York and said he wanted to see more, he liked to buy several things through the artists. So he came up to my studio in New York, and we just got involved immediately. And still are. It's almost years ago. And then I moved. Win wanted to marry me and wanted me to move to Baltimore. I came down to Baltimore to see if I could stand it. Visually, I like the city. This neighborhood is very much like my Lower East Side neighborhood. My landlord even owns the bridal gown shop. Poetic justice. Gypsies, windows, gypsies live in stores around here.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I wondered how you felt about leaving your New York scene behind.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, you see, since I was moving to Long Island anyhow, I was leaving the environment. I don't think I could have gone on painting potato fields, to tell the truth.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I remember reading that you said something about it being too beautiful.

GRACE HARTIGAN: I fall apart in nature. I just get all soft and yummy and gummy and gooey. (Laughter) And I really am more stimulated by a city. My work now in the last year or so is more subtle than it's been, the color's changed, but I'm still working from around here.

JULIE HAIFLEY: That exhibition in Washington, where was that?

GRACE HARTIGAN: It was a gallery that's no longer in existence near Dupont Circle, Gres Gallery run by a woman who was a sculptor, a very good friend of mine, Beatrice Perry. She had a show of Larry Rivers and some Polish artists. Nice gallery.

JULIE HAIFLEY: That was the first time you had shown in Washington?

GRACE HARTIGAN: First and only time I've ever shown in Washington. I've never shown since.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Of course, at that time, there weren't...

GRACE HARTIGAN: There weren't many galleries. There's loads of galleries now.

JULIE HAIFLEY: That was 1960?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah, '59. Since I've moved to Bethesda, in the three years I've been in Bethesda, there are three galleries in Baltimore on Charles Street, good galleries. I'm going to show with a young Greek, Costus Gramaldus, who shows some of my former students. I want to show with my kids. I like that. I feel that that's been my role in Baltimore as director of Hoffberger, and an older artist with younger artists. I like to feel that that's when I have my show in Baltimore. And then this area can be...when my studio's been here for 20 years, and I've only had one show in the institute. There weren't any galleries; a short-lived one that only lasted about six months. I just had one painting in it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: So when you moved here, it must have been really...

GRACE HARTIGAN: It was, I mean, terrible, it was. Wonderful, interesting city I love the waterfront, love the markets, and I love the shop tower, I love the harbor and the ships. But intellectually...

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you keep in touch with any of the...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, I'm still - I've revived the art of letter writing. I'm in touch, I kept in touch all the time with Phil Guston and I'm now with Bill de Kooning.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I wondered if you went back to New York now...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Not at all, because you must realize that by then everyone was scattered. Phil had moved up to Woodstock, Bill de Kooning's moved out to Springs. [Phone rings] Excuse me. Can you turn that off?

JULIE HAIFLEY: We were just talking about how desolate it was in Baltimore when you came and how you sort of survived that period.

GRACE HARTIGAN: The going to Long Island would have been just - but there were a lot of friends out there, but then I would have been painting in the middle of landscape. I was building a studio in a barn, overlooking potato fields. For someone who likes to look at gypsy windows, I don't know that that would have worked out too well. Because when I married Win, I was right in the middle of downtown Baltimore, around the block, which was nothing but one burlesque house after the other, pornographic bookstores. I mean, I felt right at home. Yes, I did. So I love the environment. I like Baltimore visually. It's a human-scale city like the Lower East Side of New York was. I mean, I didn't live up with all those skyscrapers. And that was good. But I literally knew nobody. Until I went to the Maryland Institute where I started to meet some young teachers there who were interesting to talk to, and then I started to get terrific students. Now, I've built up a whole repertoire of older students, middle-age students, and my contemporary students, and many of them have stayed here. So that I have a community of really just young friends and friends my own age - one very good friend here was a woman my age who took her MFA - she had a MA in Art History - took an MFA with me. Took her three years. Fay Chandler, who's the wife of Dr. Alford Chandler who got the Pulitzer Prize for a book on Eisenhower. But Fay ran a little gallery down on the waterfront - Maryland Institute Gallery, and had her studio over it and is having her first show in New York this fall. I'm so happy for her. Isn't that nice? She's moved up to Boston. We were great pals when she was here. But now it's the young people in Baltimore that I see, and then my friends in New York who are still in New York. Then one summer we spent a month on Long Island, and I certainly have loads of friends in Long Island.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You go to Maine still?

GRACE HARTIGAN: We still go to Maine. I went to Maine when I was living with Ike Muse when I was a kid. Then Win loved Maine and we've been going to Maine every summer since we've been married. For a while, we had a place on a lily pond. I did the softest paintings of my life there, believe me. Pike's Cove. That was lily pads.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2
TAPE 2, SIDE 1

JULIE HAIFLEY: I think since we've just been looking at your work, it might be good to talk about how you approach your painting now and how you approach each new painting. Where do you start?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I think the thing is that I'm a restless artist. As soon as I know how to do something, I get bored and I want to do something else. One of the things about the paintings in the last year and a half, I'd say, is that I've been known for my high colors, clashing colors, and I thought, "Well, what would it be not to do that?" One of the things that I did was, I have shelves of colors, and a lot of colors that I've had for years, I've never used. So I took down all the colors I haven't used and thought, "Now, what am I going to do? Why have I been neglecting these nice colors? What is it about them?" And that was intriguing. So I took out all kinds of

cobalts and titaniums and now I've gotten into madders and lakes and things that I always was in primaries. So I'm trying to find out what these neglected colors are, the orphans in my life of color. And all the things come out of that. And then I, for a long time and especially in the '50s, I must say I was influenced by de Kooning. I worked with what he calls the Rubens brush, a heavy, thick brush with a lot of brushwork. And then I think, "Well, instead of making fat paintings, how about skinny ones?"

JULIE HAIFLEY: You mean really narrow?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, I mean the surface. The surface being not go up but rubbed down, rubbed down. And the painting that I think is upstairs is the largest. We were discussing Celtic painting. I did - you wouldn't know from seeing the thinness of that painting - I worked on it at night. I scrubbed it and scrubbed it, and finally I was so desperate I took a big ball of twine and I just scrubbed the surface to get down, to get this kind of look of glow, and the melting edge. One of my former students said that I had become the authority on the soft edge. (Laughter) It's just really restlessness, still with much of the same subtlety - well, I've worked, since we talked about the time when I worked from the Masters, I worked, aside from urban life, store windows, I work very often from old art. And one of the clues to old art in the early '50s, was really looking at paintings and reproductions and working from them. About seven years ago, I was in the Walters, a very nice museum in Baltimore, looking at Greek art and looking for postcards. Instead of postcards of Greek art, I found a coloring book for kids called Dragons and Other Animals. I took it to the studio and it was a coloring book based on old prints of creatures, imaginary creatures. And I did a painting. Now certainly there wasn't any color, I just took off from it. Since then, I've found that there are coloring books on every art imaginable - a coloring book on art of ancient Greece, I did a painting of that that's in the Detroit Art Institute. I did ancient Egypt, that's the painting there. That's from a coloring book.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I was going to ask you about that because that's also in the sort of more subtle colors.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I started this kind of technique of - then with the ancient Egypt one, I rubbed the entire canvas which begins being white, I rubbed it with that deep, smokey green and then rubbed down and drew. Did you know that the Egyptians trained baboons to pick figs? That's what they're doing, they're picking figs, and one of them is sneaking one on the side. I've done the Middle Ages, the Old Testament, the New Testament, American Indians - these are all from coloring books. So that's now my second thing aside from urban life, I'm taking the art of Master coloring books.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Is that where the sort of outline comes from?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, the drawing come from - I mean, it's my translation of the drawing in the coloring book. Now, I don't want that much drawing to surface so I'm subduing the drawing, keeping it under, and then when the drawing comes up, I'm drawing in paint with charcoal, the line is finer.

JULIE HAIFLEY: The ones we looked at upstairs were much...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah. A friend of mine is a critic, who was for a while the director of the Corcoran, looked at these and said, "You're homogenizing the surface." I thought that was what you did to milk. I think he means that it's coming together now, that the drawing doesn't surface much above the color and that the things all sit in the same relationship.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Your way of applying color is to put it on and rub it off rather than to put it on lightly to start with?

GRACE HARTIGAN: What I'm doing now is, first of all, with the subject I begin drawing, but not with black anymore. In the painting I'm working on I drew with gold. This is a gypsy window and a lot of the glitter's on the things they put in the window and on their own self, golden earrings and that sort of thing is gold. So I would draw. Then I begin to put on very loose washes, I'm using Japanese soft brushes and I wash colors in all over the canvas. Then I go back in and now I'm going in with light, very fine steel wool and I'm scrubbing down and a lot of soft rags. I work and work and work and work an area. I flood in color, then I blot it, then I draw, then I rub, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth until I have something that I can't describe, something I don't know about, something that - this is where you can't talk about painting; something that looks, in my eyes, very interesting, very new.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I read somewhere that you said that there comes a point where you know that it has taken over.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah. I've loosened and get into an unknown, and then I surprise myself. Then it looks to me marvelous. And then I move into another area and try to get it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You know that that's all you need to do in that?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I just think that if I've seen something that I've never seen before in my work and it

looks fascinating and right to me - I don't know whether it will to anybody else, but to me -then I know that I've sort of captured that area in the painting. I work all through the areas, if I've found some way to set the tone for a painting, then I try to key the rest of the painting to that thing that I found.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Would you ever then come back to an area that you thought you were finished with?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I think that by the time tomorrow comes and I've finished that area that we looked at upstairs that I know is unfinished, if I color that to the feeling and the surface and the glow of the rest of the painting, I think that I'll have it. Now, I'll sit with it and maybe there'll be something that is lacking, but I have still the abstract expressionist logic, which is that you don't fuss with a painting once the emotion is over. I remember this painting of mine in the Whitney Museum called "Sweden," and that's dedicated to Franz Kline because Franz and I were very good friends and he used to tease me in various ways. I'm Irish but he says I look like a Swedish skier. And he came into the studio one time and I had this painting, and I was worried because I thought maybe the lower right hand corner wasn't up to the upper left hand corner, and I was complaining to Franz. He looked at me with disbelief and he said, "You mean you want to make it better?" I thought, "Oh, God, that is humiliating. I'm supposed to be some little shopper who's trying to get the best bargain in a grocery store." And I've never forgotten that, that once the impulse, once the emotion is over, that to fix it up is a rather humiliating plan because then it's just a patch-over and you're a shoemaker or something, not an artist.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You don't feel like you could ever go back to a painting if you maybe overwork something, and then what? Or does that happen? You know when to stop?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, I've overworked paintings and often I've destroyed them because you lose the spontaneity, you lose surface, you lose the light, you've killed it and you dump it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I would think it would be hard to know when...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Fortunately, it's not your problem, it's mine. (Laughter) Don't worry that much about it, let me worry.

JULIE HAIFLEY: When you were talking about using different colors and darker colors, it sort of reminded me of a lot of times in therapy you hear about you darker side or your shadow side or parts of yourself that you've neglected. I just wondered if that had any connection with how you paint?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, the first thing that occurs to me is a running disagreement that I had with Francis O'Connor, who did the catalogue raisonne of Pollock, and he is a Jungian, and he wrote something and I object to it very strongly, his saying that de Kooning's black and white paintings were death paintings and Franz's black and white paintings were death paintings. Well, first of all, de Kooning's black and white paintings came because Bill couldn't afford any colors, didn't have any money, so he had to do black and white rather than not paint at all. What's that got to do with death? That's life, he was battling for creative survival. Franz's black and whites came because he did a drawing of a rocking chair and I think Bill or someone else had a strange projecting machine where you could project a small drawing on a big scale - you put in a drawing on this machine and you project it on the wall in large scale. Franz saw this small drawing of a rocking chair, black and white drawing, projected it eight feet high, and he suddenly got this idea of what a fantastic painting that would be, just do that on that scale. And that's why he did it. It just came out of that drawing. It had nothing to do with death. So I think to read into things - now I think with Rothko when we're talking about the retrospective, I don't think that the plums and browns were death, I think that was like the mature Rembrandt, that great glow of the mature artist in the autumn time. We know that maybe after autumn comes the leaves are going to drop, but autumn is lingering and beautiful. And we see Rothko's late things, grey and black, those late things of Rothko, he'd lost his spirit. But the black and whites of Franz and de Kooning are filled with vitality. So I think to approximate those things psychoanalytically is really reading it too simplistically. I think possibly that my daring to be more subtle is a sign of maturity. I don't have to prove that I have to be clamorous and throw all the colors in and prove I can do that. Maybe I'm just arrogant. I've earned the right to be subtle in my mature years. That might have something to do with it. I think that just seems interesting.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you know Rothko? Were you close to him before he died?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, I'd moved then to Baltimore and I didn't see him anymore.

JULIE HAIFLEY: That was in 1970?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, he died in '70 and I'd been here for ten years, and I'd only seen him occasionally when I went up to New York. I only know his state of mind from friends; he was quite depressed. You see, the '60s were a very bad time for all the abstract expressionists.

JULIE HAIFLEY: It was just a very bad time when you get right down to it.

GRACE HARTIGAN: I agree with that. So we suffered. (Laughter) But it was a time of one movement after another. Op, pop, minimal, the art public seemed to be desperate for new movements and new ideas. And artists seemed to provide them. And each one pulled off the previous one, abstract expressionism, which incidently we never called it, but it was called by other people. That was a time of tremendous rejection. Now, I was here sitting it out in Baltimore, but Mark was in New York and evidently he just was devastated by the fact that young people wouldn't admire him. He'd had admirers beyond belief, museums and collectors loving him, wanting his work. But it evidently hit him very hard that he wasn't respected by the young. I don't know why. We don't know why people become depressed but that was a contributing thing.

JULIE HAIFLEY: He had had periods of depression before that, sort of off and on, hadn't he?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Possibly, but when I knew Mark in the '50s, I always thought it wasn't depression as we know it clinically, it was - I think we're allowed to be sad at times and thoughtful and introspective. I thought it was a philosophical state with him rather than a medical state. He was a very serious man going into himself and thinking deeply, questioning. He was a tremendously ethical man. Like the decision about the Four Seasons restaurant. That was an ethical decision. [Pause] Well, what else do you think we should talk about?

JULIE HAIFLEY: I really did want to get more into your teaching, what it's meant to you being in Baltimore, what it was like before you started teaching, what is it about the contact with the younger artists that you like?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I find that for my age, I'm unusually energetic, a changing, mobile, thinking, feeling artist, person. I find so many people of my age, even many of the artists, are bitter or tired or sad or displaced. And my kind of energy and enthusiasm seems to sit very well with young people like you, and we get along fine. I find that with the young I get along extremely well. And then there is the teacher-mentor, of course I've been accused of being mother - but then it would also be if I were a man, it would be father - in me that loves to encourage and the joy of seeing someone that has had a tender, young, tentative talent grow into a fine - I don't feel - many men my age do feel rivalry, I don't. I truly love seeing my students grow and get shows and become well-known and make a living as artists, hopefully, and see their work triumph. I get a lot of joy out of that.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Do you, at the same time, sort of impart to them the struggle that's involved?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I think they know that pretty well. The atmosphere's one of total seriousness. The work is the thing that counts, the dedication, and then hopefully the profession, that is, out of the studio, struggle to get the work into the world because you're not doing this just for yourself. You're communicating something that will need other people, and that's what people who don't paint see in painting. They see something that is a common, human experience of struggling and triumphing. That's why people like to buy paintings because it reminds them of what they feel, it's a visual approximation of their life.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Which they can't express.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, people like you, say, live your kind of your life which is involved with struggling and working and being interested and involved, but it's not visual. But then you see someone who's done it visually and you say, "Well, that approximates my experience, but it's a visual way of saying it." So you'd like to have that. I want that. So that's visual, like what my life is like and I want that because that explains visually what I go through. So artists do have that. And that's the contact to fulfill, the visual expression, "Oh, that's what I've been through and it says it all visually and I'd like to have that to remind me of myself." So that's what artists do when they put the work in the world. So with my experience I help the young people find out various avenues of how to get the work from the studio into the world. And then, as I've said before, I also had such a remarkable experience as a young person in New York, that I like to provide, if I can, an atmosphere like that for the young here. And I think they like it, too.

JULIE HAIFLEY: In the three years that you've been in Bethesda, you haven't been too much involved in the Washington art scene?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, I found that the Washington scene - it seems to me, I may be wrong, but - they're so terribly involved with the loss of Ken Noland and Morris Louis that their guilt still hasn't caught up with them, and that the color field idea and the stripe is still a dominant concept in Washington. I find Baltimore much more mobile as far as the kind of work that's being done. It's much more of what I see in other places, of an open mind about what art is, what painting is, what sculpture is, what constructions are, what anything is, the freedom which I think is much more characteristic of the '70s. And we'll see what the '80s have. But I hope it stays open like that.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Has your teaching had any sort of direct influence on your own work, or is it just more an exchange of ideas?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I don't think it's had a direct influence except that it's kept me on my toes. My students,

present and former, are pretty ruthless about my work. I get some hard knocks, and they kind of keep me from getting lazy, maybe. I don't know that I would by myself, but it's a fact that the young eyes are always sort of checking up that I'm not repeating myself and that it's still lively and vital. I think that's helpful if there's a young audience around. And not an admiring one, let me assure you, I mean, a very critical one. And I like that. I think that's good.

JULIE HAIFLEY: You were saying earlier that Helen Frankenthaler was very nice or something about your venture into painting from the Masters. Was that it?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, the thing about Helen, and Helen and I were very good friends and I regret that we don't see each other any more, but Helen and I had different creative sensibilities. Helen very early decided her esthetic, what she believed in, and she has not moved from that position. One of the understandings in her mind was "no subject material." And she's quite strong about that position. My moving in and out of abstraction and imagery, back and forth, she took as indecisiveness, as did Joan Mitchell. I mean, talking about three women that were friends, I think that both Helen and Joan feel that my moving in and out of imagery and abstraction shows an indecisiveness. I feel it's a mobility of creative mind, and I certainly have precedents for it, like Picasso, de Kooning. Even Jackson Pollock - they forget about all the image Pollocks, only the drip ones. But in North Carolina, I gave a whole lecture on two screens: the woman in Pollock and the woman in de Kooning. Pollock's woman comes from myth, the moon goddess, Persephone, the mythic woman; de Kooning's comes from the street woman, the billboard woman, the city woman. But it's two women. All the women in Pollock and all the women in de Kooning. But people don't like to think that about Pollock. You'd be amazed. That's the bulk of Pollock. The abstract Pollock was a very short period. All of Pollock is the Jungian myth, the collective unconscious.

JULIE HAIFLEY: What about the woman in your work? I know that earlier you said that there wasn't anything distinctly feminine about your work, and I was just wondering if that's still...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, feminine...I don't know.

JULIE HAIFLEY: It's one of those really awful questions.

GRACE HARTIGAN: For instance, I just went through slides submitted from almost 200 young people for Hoffberger, and I screened with - I had my students help me select the students for the next year, and we screened visually. I tell you, I didn't know which was a woman and which was a man, I didn't know who was black, who was white, who was yellow, anything. We just chose on the basis of interesting work.

JULIE HAIFLEY: How many were you able to choose?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, we're taking 15. I still don't know whether they're women or men or American or African or what they are. And I truly - and that's why I disagree with Judy Chicago and Mimi Schapiro - I truly do not think that there's any link. Certainly a woman has experiences that a man doesn't. I don't know how it looks. I know you bring your experience to your work. I don't know that the experience of life as a woman would make a work that looks like the experience of a woman. Surely it has its qualities and, I think, richnesses, naturally. I love being a woman, but I just don't think it's - well, to be blunt, I've said that I don't think you're more of a woman artist if you paint vaginas than you are of a man artist if you paint penises. I think that's coarsening the issue. I think the issue's much more subtle than that. We bring as human beings the enrichment of our experiences; the woman brings hers, the man brings his, and we bring our art. And I don't know you can tell that specific thing about it. Tell me if you can. I don't know. Do you think you know that?

JULIE HAIFLEY: No, no. Have you become more interested in the feminist movement recently?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I am to the point that it's brought to my attention constantly because I'm always being written to by young women and women's groups and so forth, and being asked questions because now, at my age, I'm a role model. I mean, I'm one of the achieving women, which I never intended, but here I am.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Do you feel like a role model?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No. No, but I'm sympathetic, of course, to all people. And if young women want to know things or feel about things...I do have very strong feelings. Mimi Schapiro's starting a feminist school in New York, and she wrote me an S.O.S. letter, "Send me just one student." She wrote to men and women. Unless a woman wants that, I don't believe in separatism. I really don't think that a young woman should be trained only by women because I don't think it prepares her for the real world. She's going to have to meet men out there after she graduates and gets out of school, and I really don't see how four years of working only with women is going to prepare her for the reality of working with men when she gets out of school. That's my objection to it. I mean, I wouldn't keep a woman from doing that as a young woman if she wants to do it, but I wouldn't guide any young woman in that direction because I think it's unreal.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Have you had a predominance of women in your classes or is it pretty balanced?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, just recently in Hoffberger, for the first time in the last two years, the women outnumber the men. And I don't know what it's going to be next year because I haven't figured out who is accepted of the men and women. In the beginning, it was more men, then it balanced out evenly, this last two years it's been more women. I don't know the reason for that. First of all, the women seem to be better artists that I choose, and that's something. I think that maybe the women are still going through the more traditional academic training thing and the men realize you can't get a teaching job anyhow so they're going off on their own a little bit more. I don't know. I haven't analyzed it completely. I think there're more women applying for MFA degrees than men right now. There were a lot when men could avoid the draft, that was when, in the '60s, I had more men, almost all men because if they were in school they weren't going to go to Vietnam. But now it might just be that women are going through that academic procedure with the idea they might be able to get jobs.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Back to your own work, there was a point at which you were concerned with creating an image but yet on the surface without the illusion of any depth. I was wondering if that is still a concern?

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yes, don't you see that in the work upstairs? There's no recessional space, there's no perspective. That comes out of the abstract expressionist idea of projecting surface. Of course, not everything is all on the surface but it's a very shallow, loose, moving, mobile surface space.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I think you said something about - I'm not sure how long ago it was - that you no longer wanted people to be able to step into your paintings, that you wanted the surface to act as a wall.

GRACE HARTIGAN: I think that was a particular time of hostility. (Laughter) If anyone has any room to walk in my paintings now, I think I'd like them to come in. I think I was a little defiant then, that particular statement.

JULIE HAIFLEY: That's a quote that's used a lot. I guess they pick up on things...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, that and the vulgar and the vile...

JULIE HAIFLEY: Yeah, that was the vulgar and vile in American life - although still, you're still using it.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, yes, and I think a lot of the pop artists were influenced by that attitude.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, the things we looked at, I mean, the ring.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah, they're pretty vulgar and vile. A high-heeled shoe with shells on it. A lot of that is picking up on some essential symbols of our American culture, the unconscious, like the Barbie doll symbol and the Ken, the castrated man; the Barbie doll where you can buy all these clothes to dress her up to be a hooker, really. I mean, I saw an ad for a Barbie doll where you could buy a bridal gown for her. The Barbie doll costs something like $10 or $15, and the bridal gown costs $100. Can you imagine a little girl having a $100 bridal gown? Can you imagine that mentality of that's what a bride is? An expensive wedding? It really says something about our society. Dolls always have, actually. That's why I'm very interested in dolls of all cultures, because a doll is an essence, really, of what society thinks you should present to your little girls, about what they're supposed to plan for, how they're supposed to think about themselves. And if you're supposed to think about yourself as a bride that deserves a $100 dress and you only cost $15 and your husband is a castrated man, boy, that tells you something about American morals! (laughter)

JULIE HAIFLEY: You've also talked about the fragmentation of contemporary life.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, a lot of that is visual. A lot of that has to do with speed: planes, trains, cars as different from walking or riding on a horse or bicycle. Certainly your visual comprehension of what you see at a speed of 60, 70, a thousand miles an hour is different from jogging along at 5 miles or so and slowly taking things in. I mean from that point of view, just driving six hours from Kansas City to Iowa City instead of flying for a half hour, I know that landscape the way I'd never have known it. And it isn't fragmented, that's a complete landscape. A lot of the fragmentation is our speed. And then a lot of it is not country life, it's city life, or what you get out of the side of your eyes, the billboard, a store front, things that are presented to you. The store across the street, for instance, was a furniture store. I looked out of my window, I saw a round bed covered with something that looked like mink, and next to it was a stuffed seal. Now what do you make out of that? What does that all mean? Now, that's a fragmented world, a round bed for long people; a seal that belongs in the sea. We take these things for granted. That's why I like gypsy windows. I don't know what those things mean. A stuffed lion, a mannequin draped with crummy material, some fine little Madonna from central Europe, a plastic yacht - what is the mind that makes all that, what does that all mean? Shakespeare said, "Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look, he thinks too much, such men are dangerous." I guess what I'm doing is thinking too much about it all. But that's the imagery, that's the logic of everything.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I haven't seen many of your collages, really. I wonder how much you're working in the [unintelligible].

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well, the collages are usually a summer experience now. I usually do them in Maine, and I'm going to do another series. I usually do about a dozen or so collages, watercolor collages of different sources, and I usually do them in the summer. I almost never stop working. Even when I'm in Maine I like to take a room and do watercolor collages. And that's a different thing, different scale. Watercolor is its own now, after all these years. I love it very much, feel familiar with it at last. It's a way of tearing and cutting, getting it sharper, chance and edge, a jump of space, a jump of imagery.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I think I've about covered the questions that I had, but I just wondered if you had any other stories you wanted to tell or comments you wanted to make about either the art community here or ...

GRACE HARTIGAN: I think that the thing that I feel very strongly is what I said to you before, and that is that now that I've done some traveling again - I had a year of illness, I had pneumonia and flu and various things - so for a year or a year and a half I didn't travel much or do seminars or lectures. Now that I've begun to visit Kansas City and Iowa, now that I'm seeing things I've had students submit not only from all over America but from England and the Near East, I have a feeling that the vitality of creation is not any longer centered in New York for, say, American artists, that in the '50s and late '40s it definitely was. Now it's still the market and selling place, but I think the vitality of American art is dispersed and in different cities. And that's why, even if I had the choice, I would not work in New York. I have a strong feeling that increasingly Washington, Baltimore, maybe Philadelphia are going to be kind of great centers of creation. The young people are going to be here. They might have to go on marketing their work in New York, but the way to create is not in New York any more.

JULIE HAIFLEY: From what you say, it sounds like there's a lot of activity in Baltimore.

GRACE HARTIGAN: There's a lot here. I'm sure in young people that I haven't seen in Washington. I know in Philadelphia because a former student of mine, Ira Yibon, a fantastic artist, Dan Reynolds. And from what I saw in Kansas City, those were young women in their early thirties, marvelous artists. I know I haven't been to Chicago recently but I've hear that there's a lot of young work. These are young people, of course, because the people my age, if they're going to do anything, they would have been in New York. But the young people, I think - and I'm sure in the West, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, I'm sure that these places are going to be places where young artists know that they can live, make a living, and create vital, important work. I think that's what the future of American art is going to be.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Have you traveled on the West Coast?

GRACE HARTIGAN: No, that I haven't. I'm very curious. But from what I've seen now from the Midwest, and what I see around here, I know there's going to be important, vital work coming out of these areas.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I wonder if any of your students came from the West Coast?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I'm having some come in next year and some just returned. A few have gone there. But we're such a big country, the West Coast tends to stay pretty much on the West Coast. Most of my students come from the Midwest down to the East Coast. And then I always get a lot of English applicants, and that's always quite interesting.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Have you traveled the world?

GRACE HARTIGAN: I was only in, other than Mexico, I've only been to Europe in 1959, just for a couple of months. Never been there since. It's really too late except for wine or food. (laughter) But for art, I mean, I had my European experience in the early '50s in the Metropolitan Museum. But I don't have any great - aside from again, food and wine and friends - I prefer to travel around America, see what young people are doing in different parts of America. That's more exciting to me. The art of the past is always a lure and mystery and unknown and known. There might come a time I'd feel a deep need to reinvestigate some of it as Phil Guston feels for Italy, for instance, to see Piero della Francesca again. The only lure I have is to go back to Madrid and see Spanish art. Some time, maybe. Meanwhile, I'll see what the kids are up to.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, that is the end of this side of the tape, but I do want to thank you for your time. It's a wonderful interview.

GRACE HARTIGAN: It's nice to talk to you.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I'm going to let this run out.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Now on to Clyfford Still. [Pause] He might do it, you know, because I think that his ego is so

strong. I think he would like to document himself before he dies.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I wonder if he has had an interview.

GRACE HARTIGAN: I don't know who could get to him. You have a good combination. You're young and I think you're strong but you're skillful at hiding it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Not too pushy.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Yeah, that's it, not that aggressive. Cindy Nemser is. Have you met Cindy? She's a powerhouse. You really have to sit up straight to talk back to Cindy. But she really guided those interviews because she is a militant feminist. She didn't get it out of me, that I was mistreated by men or anything.

JULIE HAIFLEY: I sense, though, that she has her own idea of how she wanted the interview to go.

GRACE HARTIGAN: Oh, yeah. And I like Audrey Flack very much. I like her work. But she really led Audrey into sounding like a militant man-hater. And Audrey's not like that at all, but Cindy just skillfully - I just wouldn't do it. I don't feel that, and I'd be damned if she'd let me say that I felt it. I mean, I didn't have a terrible time with those men. I had a fine time. Pollock was nice to me and no one's going to make say that he wasn't. Cindy really wanted it to come out like that. Two of my former students helped me fix up the studio and we were putting books away and came across a book of poetry by a young woman poet in Detroit. She's not a lesbian, but the title of her book is Man is a Hook, Trouble. I think Cindy wanted all women to say man is a hook, trouble, and I just won't say it because I don't feel it, and I won't be led into it.

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, I hope that if you do have other papers and things that you haven't given to Syracuse that you'll consider...

GRACE HARTIGAN: Well the thing is...

JULIE HAIFLEY: I know.

GRACE HARTIGAN: ...it's been sort of two lives: the New York life and the correspondence with quite well-known people in the New York art world, and that's in Syracuse. The life of the '60s and the correspondences has been all related to here, all related to Baltimore, a lot of letters to and from students...

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