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Oral history interview with Al Held, 1975 Nov. 19-1976 Jan. 8

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Transcript

Interview

PC: PAUL CUMMINGS
AH: AL HELD

[PART 1]

PC: Let me put on the statistics: it's November 19, 1975 -- Paul Cummings talking to Al Held in his studio on West Broadway. You were born in Brooklyn in 1928?

AH: Right.

PC: And went to public schools?

AH: Right.

PC: Did you grow up in Brooklyn? Did you always live there or did you move around in the city?

AH: I was born and raised in Brooklyn. I'm very bad on dates. When I was around thirteen years old my parents moved to the Bronx. I lived in three places in Brooklyn. I was born, I think, in Bensonhurst, then we moved to Brownsville, and from Brownsville to Bedford-Stuyvesant, and from Bedford-Stuyvesant we moved up to the East Bronx. Then when I was seventeen I left home and joined the Navy.

PC: Do you have brothers and sisters?

AH: I have one sister.

PC: Is she in the arts?

AH: No, she's a psychologist. She figures it out!

PC: Aha. Well, what schools did you go to?

AH: Well, basically none. I went to grade school, went to public schools in Brooklyn. By the time I was twelve I became very restless. I was an habitual truant. So at the age of sixteen I was asked to leave school. That is the legal age in New York City. I remember the very phrase clearly. My mother was called in to school. The assistant principal said to her, "Mother, it would be better for the child, better for us if he left. Good.

PC: Sweet and simple.

AH: So I left school, that was the extent of the education.

PC: Now you grew up in the 1930's during the Depression. Do you member much of that?

AH: Yes and No. I was just going on this with some other people. But I never hunger. My parents were on what in those days was called relief today it would be called welfare. My earliest memories are being on relief. I always had enough food. We lived very poorly, modestly. My father was out of work. Thee was a lot of anxiety I remember the investigators coming to the house, my earliest memories are of coupons for shoes and coupons for clothes and what have you. But in a jewish family food was important

PC: Food was there.

AH: You were never without food; you did without things but you did without food. They were hard times but I don't remember being hungry of being without things. And of course the whole world around me was poor so one never felt poor. I remember growing and thinking that the Irish were the Establishment. They were equivalent of the Wasps. The only other Protestants I knew were the blacks. The Irish were the ones who somehow knew their way around the world. The Poles and the Italians and Puerto Ricans and Spanish or the Jews or the Russians they were all immigrant families. The families of all the children who were my friends were all very poor, working class. They would never imagine anything else. ... began to work like sixteen, seventeen hours a day seven days a week. They wanted me to work there, too. I remember revolting, being very, very unhappy about it. That's when I began to kick up my heels. And then I'd say, oh, around 1942 World War II was already on. My father got his job back in the jewelry business. The economy had just begun to come back. That's when we moved to the East Bronx, which was coming up in the world, to the East Bronx.

PC: Well, what was school like: What do you think made you rebel so much against the system?

AH: I don't know that I rebelled against the system so much as -- I don't quite remember. All I remember is that I was miserable. It was more of an escape. I spent a great deal of time on 42nd Street. By the time I was twelve, thirteen, fourteen until I was about sixteen I used to go to two double features a day. I became expert at sneaking into all the Times Square movie houses. I managed to get in for nothing. The rebellion was a quiet one because, aside from running around with gangs -- which I did --but I was able to go off by myself. I didn't want any of my friends with me. I would get on a subway and go to 42nd Street at eight o'clock in the morning and instead of going to school I would go to a double feature, get out at twelve, go to Grant's for a hot dog and a soda and then back to another double feature.

PC: And that was the whole day.

AH: That was the whole day. So I spent a great deal of my adolescence in dark rooms looking at screens.

PC: But did you have books, did you read, were you interested in things like that?

AH: No.

PC: Any kind of -- ? Newspapers?

AH: No, nothing, Zap. Just zap.

PC: Were there any people in school that you remember, any particular friends or teachers, activities, subjects that were -- ?

PC: There was one teacher, and art teacher that I remember only because -- well, I don't know, maybe she wasn't an art teacher -- I remember her because she was buying -- I was behind the pickle barrel on a weekend and she arrived in a chauffeur-driven limousine to buy something and I was shocked out of my head. And that's the only teacher. . . I remember one other teacher who was an old maid who I remember was an anti-Semite. This was in a school that was probably 90% Jewish kids. I remember her, too. But that's about all. The only other thing I remember about school was, again, the pickle barrel sequence which was that from Tenth Avenue if you run an extension of it down through to Brooklyn downtown it goes very close to Pratt. I was twelve or thirteen years old. I remember there was a class came up to sketch the marketplace. The herring pickle stand was in the middle of two long blocks of markets. I remember being sketched by these kids and being very impressed by it. I had absolutely no interest in art, I had never been to a museum, I had never seen a painting. It wasn't part of my consciousness. That's about the only early memories I have.

PC: So school never had any particular interest? I mean none of the subjects or anything? It was just to get through it and get out of it and see what happened?

AH: That's right.

PC: How did you pick the Navy?

AH: Well, you have to remember that all through the war I was searching for something. I was inundated with all the war propaganda. So when I got to be seventeen it was a chance to get away from home and there was the adventure and it was very very glamorous. It turned out to be very lucky for me because -- if you can visualize it -- I don't know what it's like with other cultures -- but for a Jewish father to sign for a seventeen-year-old -- a parent had to sign for a seventeen-year-old to join the Navy. . . For my father to sign this paper was scandalous.

PC: It was like giving you away or something.

AH: Yes. It was something out of his culture, something that he couldn't possibly understand. But to do it he must have been terribly desperate to get rid of me. At any rate, it turned out to be one of the luckiest things that ever happened to me. I got into the Navy. I was a terrible neurotic, malcontent. So I got into the Navy, I signed up for two years. By the time I was nineteen I was already out. And the Korean War had started. Now it i had been nineteen, a high school dropout during the Korean War I would have been killed in Korea because --

PC: Perhaps, yes.

AH: I would have been right there, the right age -- right into the infantry, ready to go. So I spent most of the Korean War in Paris on the G.I. Bill. So the events worked out beautifully for me; by this series of accidents.

PC: Well, what happened in the Navy? What did you do? Where -- what bases did you go to?

AH: During the time in the Navy I was at boot camp at Camp Perry in Virginia which turned out to be a CIA camp now. At the time it was a boot camp, it had been a Seebee camp during the war. It's down near Richmond, Virginia, near Williamsburg, near William and Mary College.

PC: This was your first trip out of New York, wasn't it?

AH: It was the first trip I ever made outside of New York. Well, actually once before in my whole life I had ventured outside of the neighborhood. That was when I was much younger. I must have been about ten; my uncle took me to the country, to the mountains for a week or so. The interesting part about that was that I was there for two days -- the first time I had ever been outside of the city -- and a dog attacked me and bit me. I got sent home. I hadn't left the city again until I was seventeen.

PC: And went into the Navy.

AH: Right. Well, in the Navy I was sent to Camp Perry and at Camp Perry I was assigned to a ship that turned out to be in the submarine service. So I was assigned to a submarine squadron for most of the time I was in the Navy. I ended up striking forward in electronics. It was the beginning of radar and sonar and that stuff. So I got involved with that. Then the squadron went down to Panama. Spent a lot of time around Panama in the western. . . all through there.

PC: How did you like all that? Did you see much of it, or was it -- ?

AH: Well, I was a kid and all I saw were bars and whorehouses. That was all I knew. Not much else. The only real adventure was that I had about three or four months to go and I had a chance to get on a submarine to go on an expedition tot he South Pole in 1947. I wanted desperately to go but they wanted me to sign up for another two years and I wouldn't do it.

PC: Enough was enough.

AH: Yes. I learned very quickly that I didn't like the Navy. So I got out of the Navy and came back to New York. That's about it.

PC: Now you were in the Navy for two years, you were now out, and you now had the G.I. Bill.

AH: Yes. I was nineteen.

PC: Did you have any plans? Did you have any interests?

AH: I still had no interests. I remember the only book I ever read in the Navy -- by coincidence I was on night watch and the only book I read in the Navy was that Ayn Rand book on the Architect, a very famous book, they made a movie out of it about the architect. I've forgotten the name of it. It's a very funny thing that I would have picked up that book of all books and read it then.

PC: It was a novel -- Point Counter point or something like that? By what's his name?

AH: No, that's a Huxley book.

PC: It's not a Huxley book?

AH: No, no, it's by Ayn Rand.

PC: Oh, Ayn Rand -- *Fountainhead*.

AH: Yes, *Fountainhead*. The one book I read in the Navy was *Fountainhead*. At any rate, I was out of the navy, I was nineteen. And there was another set of circumstances: my father all his life was a leftist. And I was raised in an environment where when I was a child, a baby, I was pushed in a baby carriage in the May Day parades. The reason I'm going into this is that it has something to do with my getting out of the Navy. What I'm trying to say is that when I was nineteen and was back in my parent's house int he East Bronx I was hanging around, I was getting unemployment insurance, that business they call 52/20. And I didn't know what I wanted to do. A couple of kids came to me and said they were going to go down to the Village to build May Day floats. The reason I bring this up is that the idea of building May Day floats for leftist programs was not something that was fearful or that was strange to me, it was something that was very common. My father kept putting me into these organizations all through my adolescence, which I would then skip out on and go to the streets and run with the boys. He kept putting me in all these youth progressive organizations at which I looked around, saw a bunch of creeps and left. But what I'm sort of suggesting is that the culture was not foreign or alien to me. So when kids came to me and said they were going down to the Village to build May Day floats I went with them not necessarily to build the May Day floats but for what the Village represented -- girls, sex, action. So I accepted and went down to the Village because of that kind of attraction. I was nineteen years old. And we did build May Day floats. That was okay with me, too.

PC: Do you remember where they were?

AH: Oh, yes, very clearly. We went down to Pete Seeger's house. That was right down here where the N. Y. U. Law School is, right across the street. It turned out that some of these kids belonged to this cultural group called Folksay.

PC: Oh, yes.

AH: Do you know about Folksay?

PC: I've heard about it.

AH: Oh, really!

PC: Somebody else mentioned that.

AH: Nick Krushenick? Have you interviewed Nick Krushenick?

PC: Yes.

AH: Okay. Now what happened was that I met these people down there and stopped _____ at all the girls because I was promptly rejected as being a yokel kid from he Bronx, unsophisticated, stupid. I was terribly put down, et cetera.

PC: Here you were an old Navy man -- right?

AH: Right, an old Navy man. But I was just a very dumb, innocent kid. So what happened was that I got involved with them. As I said before, because of my father's background it wasn't a strange, dangerous business more like everybody knew that.

PC: Right.

AH: I started going to some of their meetings and some of their dances and what have you. And there I met nick Krushenick and his brother John Krushenick. Nick was living up in the Bronx at the time, too. Now you have to remember this: that in the Bronx and Brooklyn neighborhoods are marked by subway stops. Nick lived on the same line that I lived on but one stop away. So I was going to these meetings and meeting these people. Then I decided that I wanted to go back to high school to get my high school diploma and become a social worker.

PC: Hmmm. That was through the influence of these kids?

AH: Of these kids, yes -- well, they weren't really kids. They were college students mostly. The Weavers came out of this group.

PC: Oh, yes, right.

AH: So I started going back to high school. But the interesting thing is that I would come down every Friday night and I met Nick Krushenick. He had just gotten out of the Army, and his brother John who is a year or so older had just gotten out, too. Nick was very interested in art all of his life. He was planning to go to the Art Students League. At that point I had never seen a painting in my life. I had never seen a real painting. The only paintings I ever saw was the *New York Post* in 1940 offered a portfolio of Van Gogh prints to their subscribers which my mother got for a dollar. Those were things in my mother's house that I was raised in.

And that was the only art that I ever actually saw. So then nick had started to go to the Art Students League. And I was going back and forth to these meetings with him and he was boasting about these great paints he was going to paint. And I was talking to him about the great paintings he was going to paint. And I was talking to him about the great paintings he was going to paint. What happened then was that we would go home together and we would stop at the subway stop and have a cup of coffee late at night and sit around he would talk about the great murals he was going to paint, the social things he was going to paint, et cetera. I got more and more interested in his art. By that time I had realized that I had this GI Bill extension but I was very stingy about it, I was very protective of it. I didn't have any money. I knew I needed it so I was setting it aside to go to college to study to be a social worker. Then I decided to take a course at the Art Students league. An anatomy course. And that's how it all started. To tell you how naive I was the first day I went into this anatomy course -- I knew there was going to be a nude model there, usually a female -- and I was nineteen. And a friend of mine said like, you know, in those days his prick was so erect [loud laughter] that he tripped over it. Like, you know, anything that moved, _____. So the first few sessions I wore a jockstap to the sessions to make sure I wouldn't embarrass myself.

PC: Oh, marvelous! That was just a drawing class though, wasn't it?

AH: Yes. I mean I still couldn't take myself seriously. I would do it as an exercise, do it like fun. I paid for it myself. I didn't want to start the GI Bill. And all my friends raised their eyebrows when then heard that I was going to take this little class. Wow!

PC: Well, what happened? I mean Krushenick obviously somehow created some interest?

AH: Mmhmm.

PC: Did you know what it was? Or was it just his enthusiasm? Or --

AH: I just got interested in his dreams. Hew was fantasizing about these marvelous paintings he was going to paint. And I got more and more interested in those marvelous paintings he was going to paint. Then I started taking this course as a summer course. By the time summer was over I had decided to enroll in the Art Students League, and invoke the GI BIll, get it to live on.

PC: Right. So those first few sessions in the summer you paid for?

AH: Right. I paid for it. I wanted to make sure that I was really serious about it. I didn't want to use it up on frivolous things.

PC: How long did you go to the Folksay? Or how long were you involved with that group?

AH: It must have been a few years.

PC: Oh, really? It was quite a --

AH: Well, it must have been at least two years. By that time I had gotten, through this group, socially oriented and politically oriented and I became politically active.

PC: What was the appeal of politics?

AH: I don't know. My father tried to interest me in it. During all my adolescence I was totally uninterested. I would imagine it was the peer group that I had associated myself with. It was a kind of lucky coincidence of getting connected with this cultural group, it was a folk culture, Folksay. They're the ones who started singing around -- . But they're the ones who started doing that. They used to have these public square dances at the -- to raise money. And that was around the time of the Wallace campaign and we were very active in the Wallace campaign. We had a big -- truck and went all over Harlem and we campaigned very strenuously for Wallace. And, as I said, i was enrolled at the Art Students League. At that time I studied with --

PC: Nicolaides?

AH: Yes, Nicolaides. And then from there went to Harry Sternberg who was a social realist painter. And then after about six months with Harry Sternberg. harry Sternberg lovingly called me up -- well, he didn't call me up -- asked me to come visit him at his studio which was in Union Square and sat me down and talked to me like an interested father and, in essence, told me to give it all up.

PC: Really?

AH: Yes, that it was not for me. It was like a kick in the balls.

PC: What did you think though -- I mean what did your family think, for example, when you said you were going to go to the Art Students League?

AH: In the beginning I told them I was going to commercial art because I didn't want them to. . . Very quickly after that I moved out of the house, I moved down to Col_____ Street to a cold water flat. I shared a cold water fate with two other kind of leftist-oriented kids from the Art Students League. I tried to persuade Nick to take an apartment with me but he didn't want to leave his parent's home because it was cheaper to live there. But I moved out and we got --

PC: Who were the other two?

AH: I've forgotten their names now. I forgot who they are. But by that time I was deeply involved in the whole political situation and I was already deeply involved with the social realist fellow students. But by that time I was interested in going to Mexico to study with Siquieros. As a matter of fact, that was around the time that the Rosenbergs got picked up. They were living down the street. They were living in the lower East side too. I remember there was a kind of hysteria among leftist circles. It was the beginning of Fascism and ____ this was a big conspiracy to round everybody up. I had decided I wanted to get out and go to Mexico and study with

Siquieros. I had all the papers all drawn up and I was about to go to Mexico when Siquieros got into a gunfight with some people and they closed up the school and threw him into jail. I couldn't go to Mexico so I decided to go to Paris. But I didn't particularly want to go to Paris. I remember that to get enough money to go to Paris I was going to the Art Students League from nine to four; from four to eleven I was working as a dishwasher up in the cafeteria there. So for about six or eight months I opened up that bloody place and I closed it.

PC: Those were long hours.

AH: Oh, it was a heavy scene. But I did get enough money together for the boat fare and even a couple hundred bucks to live on until the checks started to arrive. And took a boat to Paris.

PC: Now something obviously happened at the League that got you reinterested and committed to doing this. What was that? I mean Sternberg seems to have not been a help.

AH: It wasn't so much the league as it was being with this group, it was this group and Nick Krushenick and the whole kind of idealism of serving the people and being an artists and painting great paintings, with great messages, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

PC: So it was almost a social impetus rather than an art thing? Or was it a -- ?

AH: Well, thing happened very quickly. What I'm saying is that we're not talking about a period of a year or two.

PC: It was all in a few months.

AH: Well, no, it was more like a year or so. But things happened very, very quickly after that. When I started painting I started reading and I started thinking about all these things that I had never given any serious thought to before. And so getting involved with painting actually sort of got me involved in reading, got me involved in educating myself.

PC: What kind of things did you start reading?

AH: In the beginning it was mostly political things, philosophical books and essays and political things, and then novels by the Russians obviously because of the whole political orientation; and gradually expanding to other things.

PC: So the Folksay group was really an important kind of cultural beginning for you?

AH: Right.

PC: It broadened all your interests?

AH: Right. And, as I've said, Nick was the first person I ever met who was interested in art. And that's when I started looking at paintings. I had never even looked at paintings, I had never seen an original painting before that.

PC: Did you start going to museums then?

AH: Mmhmm. Then I became an art student.

PC: Went to all the --

AH: Museums and everything else.

PC: What was that like? I mean you started that somewhat later than most other people do. So many start drawing as a child and keep on drawing and going through various things in high school.

AH: What was it like?

PC: Yes. What was your experience/ The Museum of Modern Art was already established very well. The Metropolitan Museum was there.

AH: Well, the Modern was really the most important, not the Met. Just to jump ahead a year or two, I started going to the Modern and those were paintings. I didn't know good from bad; those were the paintings. I told this to Dorothy Miller once. I wanted to tell this to Alfred Barr but by the time I got enough out of my shyness to tell him, he was senile. When I got to Paris I was still a very, very dumb kid. I was shocked at the quality of the work in Paris because as far as I was concerned, modern painting was what I saw at the Modern. I had no other criteria but what I saw at the Modern. I realized that the French student of my age group never saw the quality

of painting that I saw. So I was raised on top quality painting, top quality French painting actually, ut not knowing that there was anything worse or better. I mean it wasn't like; oh, that's a good Picasso. That's Picasso. Or: that's not a good Matisse happened to be the __ Piano Recital, or the Studio. And so the Modern was absolutely marvelous. Like one of my roommates on -- street was copying a Vermeer at the Met but that didn't interest me at all. I had a lot of trouble with Pollock. Pollock was the devil incarnate as far as leftist kids were concerned.

PC: In what way?

AH: He was a modern artist who said nothing but the painting texture and all that shit. I had a lot of trouble with him because when I first saw my first Pollock it really hit me, it really kicked me in the head. But I couldn't justify my reaction to my program. My program was social realist and here I am getting emotionally connected with this thing, and yet i've got this whole ideological thing over here which says that's shit. And so I had a lot of trouble until I was able to rationalize it. Then I was able to bring the two together and say to my self that Pollock was the personification of speed and violence. And if you remember back when Pollock first appeared, that wasn't hard to do. Now it's lyrical, & poetic, sensitive. In those days it was violence and gesture, it was all that. So it took me a while to formulate some kind of rationale to fit into my program that Pollock was able to grab me because he really was expressing that kind of content that I was interested in. But the Modern was crucial in the sense that they weren't good paintings or bad paintings; they were the only paintings. It wasn't until I got to paris that I realized that I was looking at great paintings. It never occurred to me before that they were either great or not great. My feeling is that Alfred Barr had a great deal to do with American art -- even though Barr is record in terms of recognizing American art is bad -- I think in terms of educating whole generations of artists it was --

PC: It was incredible what he did.

AH: Right. So his education of a whole culture was unsurpassed, just talking subjectively I didn't realize it until I got to Paris. I couldn't see French painting in Paris. Now the Museum of Modern Art in Paris has come up in the world because all those old guys have left their estates to them. In those days, in 1950, there was nothing there. There was nothing in the galleries. So the Modern is an incredible place.

PC: What about the Whitney Museum? Did you go there ever?

AH: Yes. The Whitney was there and there were good paintings there, like Pollock; I had already begun to look at Pollock and de Kooning and things like that. But it was more random, it was more scattered, it didn't have the same power that the Modern had. I remember sitting in the cafeteria at the Art Students League. In those days there were a lot of ex-G.I.'s, a lot of more mature people around than they have now. I was very, very young and very innocent and I remember listening to conversations that these guys were having about different painting styles, about issues, you know, and they would sort of pile up a dozen issues and talk at length about them. I remember very clearly walking away from one conversation and saying? I'll never be able to think about time, space, influence, color all this at the same time, I'm putting the thing down. How can you think about all those things? I mean it was that kind of innocence.

PC: But now you were really then at the League for how long?

AH: I'd say about a year and a half. Remember the political climate. It was about the same time as the Rosenberg-McCarthy thing. There was quite a bit of agitation and what have you.

PC: Right. Who else did you study with besides Sternberg?

AH: He was the main one. Then I took some classes with Tanen-_____ And Charlie White occasionally came in and I worked with him. Once in a while. He was a black artist.

PC: Right.

AH: He was actually very influenced by the Mexicans. And who else? I used to scurry around to different studios but basically those were the ones.

PC: How did you like Sternberg? Was he useful to you? Or --

AH: No.

PC: He didn't -- it didn't coincide with what you saw at the Museum?

AH: It coincided very well in terms of the social realist thing, but I never liked his painting. Even from the very first, paintings were not something I respected. But thinking back now that you've asked the question, there wasn't anybody in the Art Students League, with the exception maybe of Charlie White who I liked only because of his big boldness. But that had to be from Mexico which I was very involved with. But there wasn't anybody

really at the Art Students League that I would take on as a master. There wasn't a painter there whose paintings were something that I would emulate. Not that I had anything to emulate, I mean there wasn't any desire to --

PC: What kind of things were you doing in terms of subject or images?

AH: Well, it went very quickly from crude figure drawings to paintings the very first things I started doing were related to the Mexicans. And I remember. . . I'm sorry that I've destroyed them all now because they wer --

PC: None of them exist any more?

AH: No. I destroyed them all. I mean I deeply regret it.

PC: When did you do that?

AH: Oh, you know how you are when you're young, you don't want to carry them around, they look terrible to you, you look back on them two months, or five months, or a year later and they look terrible. You say: oh, Cripes did I do that awful thing. I regret it now. What happened was that, as I've said, I was getting ready to leave the country, I was going to go to Mexico rather than go to Paris. I was going to use the G. I. Bill. I had no money.

PC: Right. That was it.

AH: On painting I did was of a big asexual monster, it was a nude, it must have been a male figure, sort of a monster, it had no genitals. The monster was stride two buildings, one was a church and one was a bank. He had two outstretched hands and from each finger of the outstretched hand, like this, hung a black, lynched, you know --

PC: The whole imagery.

AH: Visualized the whole imagery. And then another painting I remember was a figure that was broader than the frame in the manner of the Mexican things that Siquieros and Charlie White blocked out big massive block figures. I mean these were terrible, terrible paintings. I'm only describing the image and not the ability to create that image. I remember these being packed in the space almost larger than the canvas. Those were the only two paintings. I also remember very clearly that when I first started to paint I was drawing at the Art Students League for quite a while and I got terribly fearful of making a painting. I couldn't. I was very scared.

PC: For what reason?

AH: Well, it just was intimidating for some reason.

PC: You mean switching to oils and canvas?

AH: Right, I bought some canvas and oils and I couldn't touch them. Clean while surface, couldn't touch it.

Yes. So what I did was I got kind of desperate, I was in painting class, I wasn't painting, so I stole a half-finished painting and brought it home and painted on it.

PC: Oh, I see, somebody else had started it?

AH: Right. Somebody else had started the painting and I stole it and brought it home and painted on it.

PC: Oh, I see, somebody else had started it?

AH: Right. Somebody else had started the painting and I stole it and brought it home and secretly worked on it at home and brought it in. But that was the way I used -- It's a terrible thing to say, but --

PC: Well, you know --

AH: But I was so intimidated by that white canvas that I had sitting in my room that I couldn't touch it. So in desperation I stole this half-finished canvas and brought it home and finished it well, finished -- . So those are the kinds of experiences I had to in the Art Students League.

PC: Do you think the League was useful to you in any way? I mean it did get things going but --

AH: I think so. I think the League was very useful. I use the experience not only for myself, I use it in terms of teaching now in terms of how to design an art school, in this one sense: I learned much more from my fellow students than I did from my instructors. So that whole atelier situation at the Art Students League with a mix of inexperienced people and experienced people in the same room I learned more from watching another student

paint than I did from my instructors criticizing my work. I think it was very useful in the sense of the mixed bag of the --

PC; Young kinds and the old ladies or whatever.

AH: Well, as I said, in those days there were a lot of older guys who had come back from the service who used the G.I. Bill and worked there. So there was lot of activity that I'm sure is different now. So I learned a lot just from osmosis, just being around these people and picking up ways of putting paint down, watching, not even talking, just watching them. And then my introduction to art history was in the cafeteria just sitting around listening or participating in conversations about this painting or that painting or this man or that man. That's how it all began -- how I got started. I think it's a very good way to get into painting. As I've said, the instructors did teach something I'm sure, but my memories of things are that I usually got easily as much, if not more, form other students than I did from my instructors, just working with them side by side, day in and day out. That kind of mixed bag I think was very good.

PC: You really must have had some schedule working in the studio and dishes and classes?

AH: I didn't set foot back in the Art Students League for fifteen years.

PC: You'd had it.

AH: We went to galleries and museums, groups of friends of mine and we discussed all the paintings. As I've said, I was very, very naive.

PC: Were there any students who became particular friends of yours at that point?

AH: You mean aside from Krushenick?

PC: Yes.

AH: There were a couple of people that I remember. You wouldn't remember him perhaps -- Rocco.

PC: Oh, yes, a sculptor.

AH: A sculptor. He's now living in Woodstock. He has the Woodstock sanitation garbage truck.

PC: Oh, really? I wondered what had happened to him. And there he is.

AH: Who else There were not too many people there. More in Paris. Paris I guess would be like my graduate school. That's where I really got turned on.

PC: Well, before we start there, which is obviously the next step, what did your family think of this?

AH: As I said before, for about a year I lied to them. I told them I was going to commercial art. My family knew nothing at all about art. They never had any interest in it. My father started getting me jobs. He'd round up little commercial jobs. Embarrassingly I had to sort of turn them down. Finally I had to tell him. And he got -- they were both very upset: what am I doing , to myself and so on.

PC: The most impractical thing in the world.

AH: Anyway, they had no power over me because I didn't need money. I had the G.I. Bill. So the couldn't do much more than moan and groan and create the emotional pressure, but they couldn't do anything else besides that. They were very disapproving. They didn't like the idea of my going to Paris, they didn't like the idea of me painting, they didn't want me to move. When I moved to Monroe Street my mother and my father refused to visit me. My mother was raised on Hester Street. She said, "My God! thirty years! It took me thirty years to work myself out of Hester Street and now what does he do! He goes right back there!" Not that she had -- the East Bronx was no piece of cake, but in her terms it was a great accomplishment to get out of Hester Street. And there I was right back where she started from.

PC: I've had a couple of people tell me that, that the same -- that they got a loft down there and their parents say: I don't believe it. It's fantastic.

AH: And down there there were all kinds of people. I remember meeting Harry Jackson down there. He had gotten very involved with Pollock. Guys like him always do things that I am envious of that I could never do. I remember he got interested in Pollock and decided -- well, he got on the train and went to East Hampton and knocked on Pollock's door and said, "Here I am." And Pollock too him in for a week. I remember thinking with absolute fascination that here was something I really wanted to do because even though I was a fan of Pollock I

was too shy to even dream of doing something like that. Just incidents like that.

PC: The whole growing art world.

AH: I wasn't hanging around the downtown art world except that I would go to the Waldorf and sit around there for a while but I was too young and too naive to really understand what was happening. I keep going back to the fact that I was very, very naive. I don't know where you're from, but being raised in Brooklyn and the Bronx is like being raised in Oshkosh, [Wisconsin] Michigan. It's so provincial, it's incredibly provincial.

PC: It's another world.

AH: It's a very provincial place.

PC: Well, how did -- you know, New York as a city must have changed for you during this period. Did it, in terms of living down on the Lower East Side, being involved with the Art Students League, knowing different kinds of people? Did it change? Or was it that you were just so busy doing what you were doing that it didn't -- ?

AH: It was a series of radical growths but it was a kind of growth which is not conscious growth.

PC: You were just busy carrying on and doing, doing, doing.

AH: I was busy doing and busy taking on attitudes. I was too busy taking on attitudes and just absorbing to really analyze what I was absorbing. I wasn't analytical at that time. That's why I keep going back stating how naive I was. There was no analytical process involved. It was more like I was a sponge, I was just simply taking it all in, taking what I could and leaving what I didn't. Like, for instance, down on Monroe street there was a big movement besides the political movement there was a big movement of the right _____.

PC: Oh, yes.

AH: Stuff like that. I would argue on a conceptual, intellectual level but it never interested me, I'd never get involved with stuff like that, really.

PC: No commitment?

AH: Oh, yes, I'd sit in the box once in a while if some girl insisted before we had sex. Why not? But it wasn't something that I. . . It never interested me. It was all around me; all that stuff was around. But I was still very, very much a provincial kid. The New York culture didn't catch up to me until I got to Paris.

PC: Why did you decide to go to Paris? I mean you wanted to go to Mexico?

AH: Right. I wanted to go to Mexico. I couldn't go to Mexico because of the Siquieros incident. I was very much a leftist. I felt very strongly that McCarthy and the whole cold war was at its height and that the world was coming to an end. So then it was just simply a matter of getting out.

PC: I see. Paris was the logical --

AH: What happened was: there was a guy at the Art Students League who had just gotten back from Paris. When the Mexico thing fell through I asked him: what school did you go to? He told me the school, the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere. So I sat down and applied to the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere. I got back a letter of acceptance. And that was it. I didn't speak a word of French, not one solitary word. I still can't speak a word.

PC: Well, you know, this was a whole new thing, getting on a boat, going of to France.

AH: Mmhmm.

PC: How did it happen? What happened in terms of leaving New York and going there and setting up?

AH: Well, I was anxious to get out. My friends were -- I was already restless with my friends. The leftists that I knew, even the Folksay group, were too bourgeois for me. I remember pleading with Nick Krushenick to come with me. I had something like three years left on the G.I.Bill. He had only about six months left on the G.I. Bill. I said: "Nick, we'll both live on my G.I. Bill; come with me." He had just met a girl who is now his wife and he didn't want to come. But i was already restless and wanted to get away from that place. It was an instinctive urge to start a new life. Which is essentially what I did do in paris. What happened was -- do you want to stay in New york before we talk about Paris?

PC: Well, if there's more in New York. And then we can --

AH: Not really, except that by coincidence just before I left New York I had looked at a loft on East Broadway which I didn't take when I decided to get out. It was when I was on Monroe Street. The reason I bring it up is that on the boat coming back from Paris three years later I was thinking about that loft and went back to it to rent it and there it was still thee waiting for me.

PC: Oh, really? Fantastic.

AH: Yeah, it was fantastic, I burnt it down, a year later. So I was restless. I had no ties here. I was anxious to get away from my family. My friends were, you know. . . I was restless. I was restless and anxious to get out. Well, it was kind of like when I joined the Navy. It wasn't something that was thought out; it was more just like a nervous, anxious, neurotic kid sort of itchy. It was a good way to move. But i promised my self by the time I left for Paris I still wasn't sure about being an artist. I mean I was one of those kids who was so serious -- well, "serious" isn't the right word -- so insecure that at parties when I'd meet new people and they'd ask me what I did -- you know the new york syndrome "What do you do?" I would tell them anything but that I was an artist or an art student.

PC: So there was still some ambivalence.

AH: Yes. As a matter of fact, I promised my self that I'd only stay in Paris for six months unless I got down to work and cut out the shit, but that I'd give myself six months to prove myself to myself. THere was no other -- I had no other -- I wasn't like saying well some teacher or some institution will test me. It was more like I gave myself six months to either prove myself or not. Oh, one thing I've left out was at that time Nick and I. . . You have to remember that the New York art world was not like it is now, the wasn't this kind of prosperity. Nick's father was a carpenter, and old Ukraninian carpenter and he got Nick and I jobs as apprentice carpenters in the construction trade. And what Nick and I planned to do -- and we were very serious about this; it wasn't a question of being serious about it because it was some kind of idealistic love, it was more like we worked this out in terms of economic necessity -- we had planned to become carpenters and work six months, make enough money and then live six months off the money we saved and paint. That was the plan. We did become carpenters, or carpenter apprentices, and nick actually worked many more years at this then ____ I did because I went off to Paris. But the plan was to be a carpenter and paint.

PC: And have a mode of support.

AH: Yes. Because it never occurred to us, I mean it just wasn't in our consciousness that there was any other way of doing it. Which is radically different from today.

PC: Oh, yes, I know.

AH: Art students bitch if they're not supported in the style that they expect. I don't blame them. i don't think it's their fault. I think they're living in another world. They're only functioning in the world that they're functioning in. I'm not saying this in terms of purity. We weren't even conscious of purity. It was really like this is the most practical thing to do.

PC: Right.

[BREAK IN TAPING]

PC: This is Side 2. Do you have any more about New York or shall we -- ?

AH: Well, there is, yes, but it's --

PC: Well, it may come up at another point. So you did go to Paris?

AH: I went to Paris.

PC: What did you do when you got there? I mean you didn't speak French, you had to find a place to go, to live and work.

AH: Well, I went on a student ship. In those days the cheapest passage was on the Holland American Line.

PC: Oh, right. Everybody's done that.

AH: Did you go that way?

PC: Like $160 or something. Lots of fruit and basics.

AH: Right. Well, I went on a ship of the Holland American Line. There was a whole bunch of students. There was

one student, an art student that I ran into, a Jewish name Friedman something like that. He is now living in London. He was sharp and he knew what he was about. He was a college kid and he knew what he was about. He studied with [Hayler] & he was going there to study with [Hayler]. He knew where he was going and what he was going to do. I didn't. I knew nothing. All I knew was that I was leaving, I was getting away, I wasn't going anywhere, I was getting away.

PC: Out.

AH: Out. I got to Paris. I got a cheap hotel room. It was off Saint Germaine. It was a miserable hotel; as a matter of fact, it was a terrible hotel. I remember we all scattered. . . We landed in Holland -- we didn't land in Paris -- we landed in Holland or Antwerp or some place, I've forgotten now. Then we took the train to Paris.

PC: Maybe at Le Havre.

AH: We might have landed at Le Havre. We took a train to Paris. And we all scattered. I was on my own, I didn't have a friend I met on the boat. The only experience on the boat was there was a whole group of Mennonite C. O.'s going over to Germany to work on farms or something. I remember the tremendous contrast between the kinds on the ship like myself and the Mennonite kinds. I remember the preacher who chaperoned them saying in his Sunday sermon, "Do not scatter pearls among swine." It got to be that bad.

PC: Oh, boy!

AH: At any rate, I got to Paris. I was enrolled at the Academie de la Grande Chauiere which was essentially like the Art Students League, smaller; basically I would say the Grande Chaumiere is the prototype of the Art Students Leagure rather than the other way around. I got this hotel room in Saint Germaine. I spoke no French. I remember going to a restaurant on the first night, I pointed to something on the menu. The waiter looked at me, he brought it and it was tete de veau. Well, with the amount of money I had I didn't want to make that mistake too often. I think I ate omelettes for about a week until I would figure out some of the other things on the menu. I didn't have enough money to -- waste on mistakes.

PC: All those grand things.

AH: Paris in this days was extraordinary in the sense that there were thousands upon thousands of ex-GI's there. I made friends quickly, met a lot of people, and started living that kind of life. Clement Greenberg many years later when he was talking about Paris & Clem was a guy who I had been arguing and fighting with for several years. He made a very interesting point. I was sort of going on about Paris being a place where I did come of age. He pointed out to me that -- and looking back on it I think he was quite right -- he said that Paris in those days was a bunch of guys like myself who though they were living in Paris in the 1930's and acted accordingly and were really all Americans. You know it was a kind of energy, brought the energy to Paris. And I started very quickly, as did most of my friends, to paint out of New York. Paris was a marvelous place in those days to paint out of New York.

PC: Now how do you mean that?

AH: Well, here's what I mean: When I got to Paris, I was still a social realist but I had this Pollock thing in my stomach, eating away at me, and I promised myself that I would first learn to draw the figure before I did that abstract stuff. I always had the terrific urge to do the abstract stuff. I remember getting a studio in Paris -- I've forgotten where it was. There was a courtyard, somebody told me Modigliani & Saitine used that studio it was a courtyard with very narrow ____ studios -- off the courtyard. It was a long narrow room maybe about six feet wide and ten or twelve or thirteen feet long. And then there was a hotel room, too.

What I did was. . . I remember the key thing was. . . I put very large pieces of paper up on the wall so I had a large tableau about ten feet long. I did four battling figures after the manner of *Guernica*. Which to my mind worked out so well that I had done the figure.

PC: Oh, I see. That was it.

AH: I had done the figure. And I'm sure that if I were ever able to see that again -- which I have destroyed -- they were awful figures but it was my key, my rationalization to get away from the figure. So I then started to paint abstractly.

PC: Now but this was --

AH: I've lost the train of thought. What was the question you asked? Oh! what happened was I realized very quickly that Paris an easy place to paint everything else because I had all the New York experience, all the New York painting that I had seen, but being in Paris alone with new friends, I didn't have to explain my self to my old

friends, all betrayals, of leaving them and their aesthetic, you know, in the sense -- Do you follow me? --that I was able to hop, skip and jump because I was a free man. I didn't have to --

PC: There wasn't somebody saying: he --

AH: Right. I am a little confused about the time sequence, but _____ So I had the hotel room and the small studio but very quickly I found that there was a place, an American Student Center on the Boulevard Raspail. Do you know it?

PC: I was there once, I think.

AH: Okay. On the top floor of that -- it has now become the American Art School run by Roger Barr.

PC: Right.

AH: Schmuch of monumental order. In those days the American Student Center on the Boulevard Raspail was a mansion. And it was very WASPish. Protestant ministers had tea at four o'clock every afternoon. It had a gym that stood for a library. The top floor had a very large atelier, I'd say it was about as big as this studio; that wasn't used. We were able to talk the custodian into getting us into it in the morning when nobody was there. Sy Boardman was there. And there was a girl, she was very well known, she's disappeared now; do you remember Stankiewicz's girlfriend, a strange girl, very thick -- ?

PC: Oh, I'm trying to think of the name.

AH: Do you know who I'm talking about?

PC: Yes. She's in Minneapolis -- St. Paul now.

AH: Do you know her?

PC: Yes.

AH: She's a strange girl. She lived with Stankiewicz for a while. In the 50's.

PC: Right.

AH: She used to squeeze paint out of the tube, make big lines. You know who I'm talking about.

PC: I know, yes. I can't remember her name offhand.

AH: She worked there and a few other people worked then. It was a marvelous studio. It had a skylight. There was lots of room and everything else. It was terrific. And by that time I had gotten in the swing of the whole American art life in Paris. I had met Ed Coats, he was there. Sam Francis was there. George Sugarman was there. Bill Brockman was there. Dzubas was there. Those people I knew and met. There were lots of other people there that I found out later were there that I missed. Like Olitski was there, and Noland was there, and Resnick was there. I mean I could go on and on and on. Anyway, it turned out that everybody in my age group spent time in Paris in this years. With the G.I. Bill one could live quite well there. It was seventy-five dollars a month. It was all art, art, art and more art. Oh, what I've left out was: when I first arrived in Paris I had some names of French Communists. I had decided that I wasn't going to have anything more to do with the Americans that I had left America for good. I looked these people up. Well, within two monts I had gotten involved with them and had gotten involved with a political club and had participated in a May Day parade with those people. But I quickly got disillusioned that the French Communists were as bad as the American Communists. And, as I say, within the space of two months I left them and joined the American colony. And I actually became Americanized there.

PC: How do you mean that?

AH: I began to really admire American art and admire American culture. When I was in New York I was very, very critical of American art and of American culture through the whole leftist thing. When I got to Paris and saw that the European leftists were as bourgeois or as corrupt as the American leftists that I got terribly disillusioned and then began to look into this other aspect of culture like Pollock and de Kooning who, as I've said, interested me. I never quite could adjust my interest in them with the ideology, but then when I got disillusioned with the ideology I was able to embrace that culture completely. But I think that experience wasn't just unique to me, I think it happened with a lot of guys, now that it was easier to absorb New York. You didn't have the fights that you'd have here. One could pick and choose there with a great deal more freedom.

PC: You could change your mind more easily.

AH: Right. You could change your mind much more easily because you didn't have all the pressures, you didn't have the peer pressure, or the social pressures. And that's what happened.

PC: Did you start going to the Grande Gaumiere right away?

AH: Yes.

PC: And what was that like? Did you have drawing class?

AH: There were drawing classes, free drawing classes and sketch classes. Oh! do you know who else was there who was a terrific influence? And that was Earl Kerkam.

PC: Oh! was he there then? I didn't know that.

AH: Oh, yes. And Sal Romano was there. And Ed Clark was there. And a lot of the people were there. But Earl Kerkam -- do you know Earl?

PC: Yes. I didn't know he was there then.

AH: The Earl of Kerkam. Well, Earl Kerkam was an older man at the time.

PC: I know. That's why I couldn't --

AH: He was older than all of us. We were kinds really, art students. He was an artist. But he took over that sketch class.

PC: Oh, really!

AH: Oh, yes. He would sit and criticize you the the French teacher had nothing to do with it . But he would sit and criticize all our drawings and he was like a nasty old man.

PC: He must have been -- what -- twenty years older almost?

AH: Oh, more than that. He must have been in his fifties. When I knew him. Loved him absolutely incredible man. One had intimate stories about Kline, de Kooning and these people and he also had his own. I used to follow him all over Paris. . . He had made up his mind that the only way he could become a great artist was to be French, and he was going to change his citizenship. I remember following him all over Paris trying to talk him out of it. He'd say, "No, I've got to do it, I've got to do it, it's the only way to become a great artists is to be French. Earl very important. The other contingent that was very important there was -- there was a contingent from San Francisco. They were connected with Clyfford Still and Rothko and the San Francisco School of Fine Arts. They had flown over bypassing New York because of the Clyfford Still incident and gone to Paris. They spent a year there. I didn't see many of them but they left a big influence there in the sense that. . . And Sam [Francis] never studied with Clyfford Still but was very influenced by that. So that ideology, that whole thing with Clyfford Still and Rothko was very strong. So we had all of those discussions, you had the New York contingent far more involved with Pollock and de Kooning and Kline, and you had the West Coast people who were very involved with Still and Rothko. But it was mostly American art. I mean that was the irony of it.

PC: To go back to the Grande Chaumieere, what did -- ?

AH: I studied with -- I took a class with. . . I didn't like any of the French painters and I enrolled in. . . YOu see, by that time I was already like feisty and knew everything. Most of the Americans there were on the G. I. Bill so they had to enter a school. Some enrolled at the Grande Chaumiere, others went to Leger, and others went to Andre Lhote. At that time I hated Leger with a passion. I thought he was absolutely disgusting artist. I went to a couple of his crits and disliked him intensely.

PC: Continuation. Continuation.

AH: Sam Francis was a student of Leger's. Now I think he's -- I'm a great admirer of Leger. It's interesting that when I had a chance to study with him or see him or be connected with him in some ways I absolutely couldn't stand him, couldn't abide his things. And now I just feel like I'm sitting in his lap.

PC: What do you think brought the shift, what do you think brought about this change of attitude on you part?

AH: I grew up. I began to recognize good art. I was very opinionated in those days. Then what happened was that you had that whole crew of Americans there and then --

PC: You didn't go there every day, did you? Did you just part of the day at the Academie and then you were on

your own?

AH: I spent part of the day there. I spent part of the day there and then depending on whether I had a studio, if I had a studio I would work in the studio and paint. But there was nothing else to do. In other words, everybody there was either fucking off, totally fucking off, or they were working. And I found myself working. It was an ideal existence in the sense that I had no career aspirations. You had that check coming in once a month, you might run out of money in the last few days of the month but you knew that the first of the month -- bang! -- there it was. So you had nothing to do but eat and sleep and paint. And it was like an incredible existence. I did that for two and a half years. I really think that that's what got me to paint and that's when I really began to pain. Then I met a girl -- well, she wasn't a girl, she was a woman. About the first six months I was there she picked me up in -- where was it -- the cafe that doesn't exist any more -- you know, the cafe where the Drugstore is now in Saint Germaine -- what was it called -- there was a big, big cafe there right across the street from the Deux Magots. She was a Argentinian living in Paris. She was older than I, about ten years older. Her name is Alicia Penalba. Actually she's a French sculptor, of the School of Paris. And she was studying with Jackson. That's how I got to Jackson. Jackson had a class at the Grande Chaumiere. I moved in with her and lived with her for about a year. It was an idyllic relationship until I started speaking French. We used to nod each other's heads in complete agreement on everything until she taught me all the French I know. That's when things went bad.

PC: Did you get involved with French society then, I mean the French world?

AH: Absolutely not.

PC: Nothing?

AH: That's the interesting part about it. The only superficial contact I had with French society would be comments like: You're a very niceboy but it's really too bad you're an American because, of course, you can't be a great artist if you're an American. I mean this wasn't said maliciously; it was said almost sympathetically; it was said like "too bad." Or the other comment I received was, "Yes, I know you're an American." I often realized that what they were really asking was, "Where are your parents from?" If you said they were Jewish or Polish, never an American. As I say, it wasn't said with a bite, it was said more with --

PC: Just like a fact.

AH: A fact stated sympathetically. But the contact with the French art world, with French society outside of the first two months was extremely minimal. I never did grow to like the French. I love Paris and I do go back to paris. But the French turn me off. But Paris is marvelous. Paris is a marvelous city because they have all those other people there: Italians, English, German, Japanese, a lot of Israelis. But we had very little contact with the French. We were wild and we had the world in the palm of our hand. And, as I said, there was no concern for a career or even to show.

PC: It was just working.

AH: It was just working and just the people that you knew and were involved with. There wasn't any career concern. That was outside of our consciousness. The only one who had a career going a little later on was Sam Francis. But nobody else had a career and Sam first having a career and it was he, through empathy, we began to realize the other things like showing and selling --

PC: And galleries and all the rest of it.

AH: Yes. I mean not that he introduced us to the evil's of the world. It was all like just watching things happen to him.

PC: Well, what where you doing in terms of -- you went to the Grande Chaumiere, you were doing figure drawing -- right?

AH: Right.

PC: And then once you got your studio what did you do there?

AH: Well, it's very funny. I was sitting in a movie house -- it was like a cartoon -- and it was like a ball lighting up in the middle of your head -- b__ng! I had this brilliant idea, absolutely brilliant idea that absolutely turned me on. I rushed out of the movie house and went back to the studio and started painting. I'd had it! I had the idea! I just had it! And what it was, a clue that was most beautiful. It went like this: if Pollock was the epitome of the subjective, and Mondrian was the epitome of the objective, if you took the two and put them together you'd have the universal. Wow! that's it! Which I proceeded to do in very direct terms: I would take the canvas and divide it up into geometric planes of rectangles and triangles: no circles. Just rectangles and triangles of different colors.

And inside of that, inside of each geometric form I would drip a whole matrix of paint but it was only contained inside of these geometric forms.

PC: Were they flat or did they have Mondrian bars between them?

AH: They were very flat. I've destroyed all of those too, although I have one, and the reason i have that one is because an ex-wife of mine got it away from me and I discovered it years later down in the basement here. I remember we had a -- there was a co-op gallery --

PC: Oh, Galerie Huit, yes.

AH: It predated, I think, I'm not sure about the date it was either at exactly the same time or it predated Tenth Street. There was a co-op gallery in Paris called Gallery EIght.

PC: Right.

AH: Do you know about it?

PC: Oh, yes, that's a famous one.

AH: Oh, really!

PC: Yes. 1952.

AH: I didn't know that anybody had ever heard of it.

PC: Oh, yes.

AH: Well, I belonged to that. Gallery Eight.

PC; There were eight people -- right?

AH: No, it wasn't eight people, it was the house number of the street. And the street was that little street just across from NOtre Dame, a tiny little street, I've forgotten the name of it. I remember taking those paintings and showing them and selling them. By coincidence I had shown those drip paintings in Paris before Pollock showed his drip paintings in Paris. They were very, very dumb paintings but I was very hot, I was very hot on them. I had found my "universal". And I did all those paintings up in that loge, you know, that studio at the American Student Center and showed them at Gallery Eight. And was treated -- I got some reviews in the French press, never sold. But one characteristic of the gallery was that one had to sit at one's show, that is, is the show was on for three weeks you were the sitter for the show. Well, after sitting in the gallery for three weeks looking at those paintings, I never painted another one of them. I remember very clearly getting very disgusted with them after sitting there day after day for three weeks. I remember when I took the paintings down I decided that what was wrong with them was that they had no form and that what really needed was organic humanist form with out its being figurative. And what I found was rocks; I found the rocks on the streets of Paris, little rocks, tiny little rocks. And then I set out. . . By this time I had gotten another studio and the studio I had gotten was really a spectacular studio for Paris. It was near Le Notre Saint Grenelle . The man from whom I got the studio was an old scenic designer, he was an Italian who had spent most of his life in Russia. He was called Dante Alighieri.

PC: Called -- ?

AH: Dante Alighieri.

PC: Oh, marvelous.

AH: He was an old, old man who lived upstairs in another studio up above with his son and his wife, his daughter-in-law and his grandchild. It was quite a large studio, there were beautiful antiques in the studio. I know I was so poor I didn't have enough money to paint the place. So I scraped all the paint off the wall to clean it up but what I did then was I abandoned all those paintings. I took these rocks and began to draw them mostly with pencil or ink and ended up with, and they became the model form and so they were abstract forms.

PC: What would you do -- draw one or a group, or make a composition?

AH: Just one. They became monolithic. Those I still have. I made literally hundreds, thousands of them. I spent about three to six months -- I'm very bad on time sequences -- about six months just drawing. And then I started to work with paint. I remember I started painting them with impasto. The same forms -- but done wet into wet. And those things very quickly became elongated into like flat paintings with horizontal lines, little white lines leading to the center.

PC: Were those with a kind of dark background?

AH: Red.

PC: And white?

AH: Red. You saw my show at the Whitney?

PC: Right.

AH: One of the earliest paintings was a painting like that. At any rate, so then I had to make a decision whether I would stay in Paris or come back to New York.

PC: Did you travel around any place or go anywhere?

AH: I only made two trips during that time. I hitchhiked down to and through Italy for a month hitchhiked all through Italy and back again. And then I went to Spain, the other trip I made was to SPain. Those were the only trips I made in the two and a half years I stayed there.

PC: Did you do any drawing or paintings or anything?

AH: No.

PC: That was it. Just traveled.

AH: Right. Just hitchhiked. I couldn't hitchhike in Spain? I hitchhiked down to the Spanish border. And then you had to take the train from there because they wouldn't let you hitchhike in Franco's Spain. I had a terrible time deciding to go to Spain because of the Fascists. Oh!!!

PC: I was wondering.

AH: Uhh! I was full of guilt. I went to SPain at almost the last month or two I was in Europe.

PC: Right at the end.

AH: Right at the end. And I went to Italy right at the end. I spent all the rest of the time in Paris. Never traveled. I was busy, I was about to use the word "catching up", but it wasn't a matter of catching up, I was just busy working and living and painting and everything was like a new experience. I was a very exciting time. I was really like tasting a lot of stuff that I had never even been conscious of.

PC: What was your world like? I mean you were at the studio, you were going to the Grande Chaumiere, and you would -- what? -- go to cafes -- ?

AH: I would go to cafes to meet people, I would go to cafes for lunch. I would go to the Grand Chaumiere in the morning, I would work at the Grande Ghcumiere in the morning, I would leave there and go to lunch, usually at the -- around the corner that's where I learned how to play chess. I'd meet people for lunch. I wouldn't have a lunch date, it was more or less meeting people who were there. Then I would go back to my studio and work all afternoon and evening. Then go back down to the cafes for dinner and for the rest of the evening and sit around and bull shit. That was the way it was. And it was all centered around art. There was nothing else. There were no trips. As I've said, I got separated from politics, too, in the sense that one would read about it but it would be a sense of separation. The fall of the French government interested me but it didn't affect me and I didn't get involved with it. I kept track of it but --

PC: It somehow happened outside your --

AH: Yes. I witnessed riots and what have you -- but they were sort of outside --

PC: Oh, yes, those were the days of the great Bastille Day riots.

AH: Yes. I was more of a witness than anything else. It didn't grab me emotionally. It was more like I was interested or curious.

PC: Well, you never really got interested in French culture or anything, did you?

AH: Not really; only through some people I knew. Like there was another guy there I met -- Allan Temko -- is that his name?

PC: Yes.

AH: He is now an architectural historian on the West Coast.

PC: Yes, right.

AH: Well, in those days Allan -- I haven't seen Allan in fifteen years -- was an aspiring young writer. He was one of those like Jewish intellectual types -- the type who in my youth I had never met, who came from another world. I remember very clearly that he wrote this book on Notre Dame. And he wrote it for money; he wrote it only because he wanted to make enough money to write and he'd write this novel. But then with his own intellectual curiosity he got more and more involved in research on Notre Dame and he really got interested in the history of every cobblestone. I remember taking some walks with him and his lecturing me about the history of a every mark and every thing. It was quite interesting. Oh! I did get involved by coincidence in the early days when I was in Paris with Rocco Amento. Rocco showed up. He was really a very, very interested in Paris. The two of us met this Polish artist couple. I've forgotten their names. They were the two French artists who I knew very well in Paris. They had a studio where they entertained a lot of Americans because they sold a lot of work to them. That's how they lived. They were both basically originally from Polish. I remember being very impressed because he knew Picasso. I was very impressed with that. But he was part of the French art scene. But what happened was that through him, Rocco met this guy who is now here in this country. A very interesting story. You have to remember that we were about twenty one at the time. Another Polish sculptor, a Jewish Polish sculptor who spent the whole war in Russia working as an artist. He had left after the war, gotten out and went to Israel and then immediately went to Paris. At the time that we met him he was doing a commission for some kibbutz of three striding figures. With "Tommy _____" was a Russian monument to be done for Israel but the insig_____ were different.

PC: Yes.

AH: And Rocco bragged to him that he knew how to enlarge -- he had worked for an enlarger on Staten Island and enlarged in a one step measure from a small maquette to a full s_____ figure without any steps in between. This guy had commissioned Rocco do to this and Rocco hired me as his assistant.

PC: Oh, fantastic.

AH: And he found this -- Rapaport was his name -- I met him here in New York maybe three or four years go, he was in New York looking for work. He's one of those survivors, he's one of those guys. . . He did the Warsaw Getto Monument that's in Warsaw.

PC: Oh, my goodness.

AH: He's that kind of character in the sense that he thrives wherever he goes. I want to tell you a very funny story. He found a studio in one of the most enormous incredible spaces I've ever been in. It had all the plaster casts of all he monuments in Paris in this one place. Can you imagine all these generals on horseback, all of them, they were all sitting around --

PC: Oh, fantastic! It was like a warehouse.

AH: Yes. Well, we had this corner. He set us up, Rocco and I. None of us knew any French. Rocco built this machine, this enlarging machine, it was essentially the principle of the Jeffersonian _____, you know?

PC: Oh, right.

AH: It's essentially that. You move here and if you get the ratio right you move here one millimeter and it goes here ten millimeters. That is essentially the principle. But Rocco had more hudspeth than information. He spoke no French. Rocco did the machine -- I was just his assistant -- he machined instrument, and we started doing this thing from the maquette. And we did it in two halves, I remember from the feet to the waist and from the waist to the head, in two pieces. I remember they cast it in plaster, but the two pieces of plaster together. Everything was fine except there was a little -- everything was sort of leaning a little to the left. The machine and everything else ended up in the flea market. It was a fiasco. But every French fabricating firm came out to see it, they were interested in it because they had fantasies of making millions of dollars.

PC: Doing all the enlarging.

AH: Right.

PC: That's incredible.

AH: That is one story about Paris, about living in Paris and working in Paris introduced us to this Spanish couple. But mostly all that was in the beginning. The latter part of my stay in Paris mostly was spent with the Americans.

PC: You never met many French artists, critics, writers, collectors?

AH: Very few. Only toward the end. What happened was that toward the end of my stay it was a little more materialistic. What happened was that already things were beginning to happen. There were American shows there and people were already going to see American art. Then what happened was that things changed somewhat. There was a group in Paris. I didn't know him very well, but I knew him, I met him several times, the two people he picked up on, I'm talking now about the French critic Duthuit. . .

PC: Oh, yes.

AH: He was matisse's son-in-law. He became a Fa__re champion and was very hostile to Cubism, and had connections with the French surrealists. There was another American there, a writer, he had an Irish name, who was close to him, too. He was basically a spokesman for the surrealists. What happened then was there was a little cafe around the corner from Saint Germaine on a small street. They all met there. I used to go there occasionally. Across the street there was a bookstore with a gallery behind it. And that's where Sam [Francis] first showed. And Riopelle showed there. And Duthuit picked up on Sam and Riopelle. And those were the two hot young artists. They were already in revolt against the School of Paris and Duthuit was their mentor. Duthuit, in a sense, was like the Clement Greenberg of Paris but in a smaller sense, I mean he was like Greenberg was then in the sense that there wasn't that kind of central power. But in this group were a lot of surrealists. Buthuit was associated with them but never really believed. It was through these people that I went to the opening night of *Waiting forGodot* when it first opened in Paris. I had peripheral contact with that French world. That French world was more interested in American art at that time than it was in French art and that's the reason I had contact with them. The only other person in Paris they were really interested in was de Stael and by the time Riopelle had replaced de Stael as the shining light in terms of Duthuit but I had already left.

PC: That was later.

AH: Right. And so the only contact I had with the French culture was through that group. I had seen Sartre and those people in cafes but I had no real contact with them. That was the only real contact I had and it was not a profound contact. Sam had deep contact, he was a far more mature artist by that time. He matured very, very young. And Riopelle. The only other French contact I had was with this girlfriend who was located in French circles but I was simply her boyfriend and didn't speak very good French and was easily ignored and, I wasn't very interested anyway in their ideas, they never appealed to me. I was far more interested in Duthuit's ideas.

PC: I want to ask you about Gallery Eight. How did you all get that going?

AH: I wasn't in on the original conception of it. But as I understand it, there's a guy in New York who really was involved in it, a black _____ artist, I've lost his name; he was an old friend of mine and Sam's. Oh, cripes!

PC: A painter?

AH: Yes, he's a painter. He's living in New York now. He just had a show across the street.

PC: I can't think who that would be.

AH: He named one of his daughters Cezanne.

PC: Oh, really!

AH: Yes. He's not a bad painter; he's a good painter. Anyway, he's very gutsy because he had a painting. . . I remember all the details but I can't describe the work --

PC: What does the work look like as you remember it?

AH: Thick impasto paint almost like -- what's his name? -- Al Jensen. As I heard the story, as I understand it, there was a rich kid in Paris -- Rosenberg? Rosen. . . something? _____, a sculptor who had that store as a and studio. You remember that real estate in Paris was very, very prime then you just didn't gp get a place.

PC: Right.

AH: And he was leaving Paris. He was a sculptor, he was quite serious, and he also had a lot of money. It was his proposal to make it into a co-op. H got hold of a bunch of guys, including this one guy, and the original group had their shows. Then they just wanted to have more shows with other people. I came in on the second wave. That's my understanding of how the gallery got started.

PC: How long were you a member -- just for the one show? Or --

AH: For about six months. It wasn't like a co-op here; it was more like a showcase. But that's my understanding of the thing as it was handed down from person to person that way from the original group. IT was started by this guy whose name was something like Rosenberg.

PC: I can't think who that is. But that was your first exhibition, wasn't it?

AH: Yes, that was my first exhibition. There were some other Salon things, Salons de [May] I had painting in there, and some small shows. Again, none of us were terribly interested in having shows per se. Then after that the next career thing in Paris was a man called Peeppiat.

PC: Oh, right.

AH: Do you remember Peppiatt? He appeared. He appeared in the heels of Duthuit. He sort of followed Duthuit around and he picked up on things and then would branch off by himself. I remember being in an apartment of his right on the _____, it was a very elegant apartment full of art. Mostly it was different movements, the communist movement and all kinds of crazy --

PC: All the group ideas.

AH: Right. I remember him wanting to get interested in my work but he never got interested in my work. IT wasn't like going to a gallery here, it was sort of like: okay; you know, not terribly important. It would have been nice -- it wasn't like going to a gallery here and being rejected, it was a different psychology. Then what happened was that the G.I. Bill had run out.

PC: Did that last you all the way through Paris?

AH: Yes. I had to make a decision. I had a good studio, I had a lot of friends and alot of contacts. And I remember clearly I made a very clear decision, a very conscious clear decision. I said to my self: do I want to stay in Paris and hustle, or go back to New York and get a job. I remember sitting down and analyzing and saying: well, I'd better go back to New york and back to reality because if I have to hustling paintings as I would working in a part-time job in New York. So I said: it's time to go back. If I had known then how rough it was here then I wouldn't have done it that way. But I felt it was time. I remember clearly saying: it's time to get back to reality. It was an idyllic existence. I remember deciding that the choice between hustling a painting a month in Paris -- at that time I had sold one painting my life to an American tourist -- and I decide, well, I'll go back to New York and get a part-time job some place and work and paint. So that's what I did.

PC: We haven't talked much about the imagery and the development of the thing as it moved along. Since you had all this time and you really worked, how quickly did your images change and move and shift and evolve?

AH: Well, I went from the heroic figures, battle figures and other kinds of figurative things, to this Mondrian-Pollock synthesis, to the rocks; from the rocks to the very think impasto paintings, and from the thick impasto paintings evolved to the monolithic forms very quickly to these colored night things, overall pattern night things into this strip of black. And then from there it stayed thick and I began then to whip paint -- I remember painting -- I would take the knife and throw paint on the canvas, whip it across and have a kind of linear thing going.

PC: How do you mean -- you would put paint on the knife and then the action -- ?

AH: Yes, snap it. But basically the work stayed impasto like that until. . . It was not until I got back -- when I got back here it developed more and more into sort of -- If you saw the show at the Whitney?

PC: Right.

AH: It evolved into that very large painting it was all knife it became like a the overall pattern, and then from there to using the knife and began to work into the structural paintings making forms again.

PC: So you came back here really in -- what? -- 1952 or thereabouts?

AH: My dates are so bad -- I think 1952, I think so, yes.

PC: The show at Galerie Huit was in 1952.

AH: So it must have been like 1953 or late 1952 sometime around there.

PC: I'll ask you one more thing about the studio in Paris: did you find the criticism you got at the Grande Chaumiere was better than you got at the League, or different? or --

AH: Oh, no.

PC: Or not as good, not as useful?

AH: I never got any criticism except from Earl Kerkam and _____? _____? very encouraging for the first couple of sessions until he found out I was a painter and then he abandoned me like zap. But he was very encouraging at first. Actually I remember the first clay head I did -- I can't remember what it was -- but I remember that he gathered the class around the head and pointed out how good it was. It must have been terrible. Never liked _____? _____? But then when he found out that I was a painter --

PC: You were lost.

AH: I was lost.

PC: Did you go to the Grande Chaumiere all the time you were there, or just for the first few months or -- ? So many people seemed to register at a place and not go there very often.

AH: I don't remember. I guess after a while I just registered and never went. But I can't honestly remember. Once I got a studio the activity centered around the studio. That was it then.

PC: Okay. So but you did decide to come back to New York and pack everything up?

AH: I packed everything up in two crates, two huge crates and shipped them back to New York by boat. I arrived back in New York at the Bronx. I remember uncrating those paintings in my parent's home and my parents saying --

PC: "What have you done?"

AH: "What have you got here?"

PC: Did you write to them during your years there? Or have much correspondence?

AH: Well, maybe about once every month or two months. You remember my parents were working class people, were very poor. I remember getting money from them enough to -- that's how I was able to make the trip to Spain. I blackmailed my mother into sending me money for my ticket. I used it to go to Spain. That kind of thing. That sort of in New York. So when I got back here the only friends I had were the friends I had met in Paris.

PC: When you decided to come back. Right.

[TAPE 2 - DECEMBER 12, 1975]

PC: Let me say this is Side 3. It's December 12, 1975 -- Paul Cummings talking to Al Held in his studio. I just wonder if we could retrace a little bit and talk about the people in the establishment in Paris that we've kind of glossed over; if you have any thoughts about them out of context.

AH: There wasn't anybody that I really studied with in Paris. It was one of those situations where --

PC: Well, it was just the Academie?

AH: Right. I enrolled in a class with Jackson --

PC: Right. But he gave you up when he decided that --

AH: He gave me up when I wasn't terribly serious. But most of the G.I.'s were obliged to enroll in a school in order to fulfill their G.I. requirements but most of us were simply painting on our own by that time. And actually I guess educating each other.

PC: You mean buy sitting around at dinner and having --

AH: Yes. Bull shitting. There was much more of that going on.

PC: You have named a whole group of people that were there that you knew. Who would you say your closest associates were, your closest friends?

AH: Well, it varied from time to time, depending on who was there. In the end that last year or so I would say I saw a great deal of Sam Francis. And I saw a great deal of Boardman. I'm trying to think of some of the other people. George Sugarman.

PC: We're back in Paris.

AH: Who was I seeing in Paris?

PC: You've mentioned Boardman.

AH: Mostly Sam. There was George Sugarman. Who else was there? There was a whole flock of people. I can't remember any of them.

PC: Did you go to the studios or did you meet in cafes usually?

AH: Mostly we met in cafes. None of us had really any kind life. We were all very young, we were all bouncing around. Our studios were pretty raw and rough. We did hardly any cooking in the studios. We ate out mostly. Seventy-five dollars a month in Paris in those days was enough to eat out on. I mean we didn't eat well, I mean we ate in cheap restaurants but we were able to eat and sit in a cafe with a beer or two a night. It was a very good life. It took me fifteen or twenty years to say to myself: I'm living better than I lived in Paris in 1950. It was a good life, it was a very good life. It's the kind of life I highly recommend to any graduate student, you know, in the sense that the G.I. Bill provided security, so even if you ran out of money you know a check was coming in the first of the month. It wasn't high on the hog but it was enough to eat and to paint and to have a beer or two, a drink or two at night and sit around and talk, talk about our dreams and aspirations, you know, measure each other's egos. The whole thing. And it was very, very good three years.

PC: What do you think that kind of discussion brings to somebody when they are able to have a circle of friends and sit around day after day for a couple of hours or so and -- ?

AH: Well, I really think that. . . Well, just the other day, yesterday I saw two shows, one was that Russian Imigre show that Andre Emmerich just put on and it was perfectly awful and you ask yourself, you know, how people even sustain themselves in that kind of isolation. And then the Arthur Dove show which was absolutely shocking to me, shocking, I had never known Dove.

PC: In what way?

AH: I mean I didn't know of his work, I mean I didn't know him as an artist really. Shocking in the sense that he was incredibly intelligent. I mean you can see it in the paintings. Fantastic. He was very talented but a very provincial artist. He predates Georgia O'Keeffe, he predates [Clyfford] Still, he predates Rothko. He was painting ideas that Still and Rothko -- the early paintings of Still and Rothko come right out of those paintings. And yet those guys were like, you know, flues, grand master. And he remained a provincial artists as intelligent and talented as he was. That's what discussion is all about; that's the value of discussion. The feeling of camaraderie, of like: we're all in this together, exchanging all kinds of ideas, testing ideas with your contemporaries -- [Someone in the studio is hammering on metal very loudly.]

AH: Had we better wait until this thing is over? Modern Music. (Tape recorder turned off.)

PC: But, you know, it interests me because you were not in the group that was exhibiting, you were not necessarily getting criticism from the outside so it was all self-generated in a way?

AH: Well, we weren't showing, we weren't exhibiting and we didn't get criticism from outside, but again going back to the thing we talked about the last time: we were full of ourselves, I mean really full of ourselves. Also we had just come from America and we were really working off New York with Sam and maybe with some other people who were there from San Francisco with impetus and drive, but we were really working off that kind of energy. And it just was a very good thing. We were egocentric and what we felt seemed like the center of the universe. And it's a great feeling to feel like the center of the universe.

PC: True. Did you visit each other's studios and talk about your pictures?

AH: Yes, sure. The talk was more of the great masterpieces the great art that one was going to paint.

PC: The future?

AH: We were exchanging aspirations.

PC: Do you think there are ideas that move around a group of people like that that one might pick up on that might have been spawned by a different person or a third person and you pick up on it?

AH: Oh, sure; oh, absolutely. Oh, sure. Of course.

PC: So there are all sorts of interrelationships.

AH: Oh, yes, of course. Al the ideas, all the styles and techniques and everything else that I ever used came out

of some kind of culture, came out of somebody either suggesting or telling me or showing me a way of doing something which interested me.

PC: You mean showing you a way to paint or doing a certain kind of -- ?

AH: Any level. And level from stretching a canvas to handling paint, whipping pain, staining paint, to the theory, to any level. Oh, sure. I mean I take your question -- you're really asking me: is there such a thing as an isolated artist.

PC: No. I'm really more interested in what might have gone on in the discussions. What were the interests? You can't be an isolated artist.

AH: I can't remember. All I remember is that they were very spirited and very exciting. Oh! There was Sal Romano; I saw a great deal of him. Ed Clark. A lot of these people ended up in the same co-op gallery in New York -- the Brata Gallery.

PC: Right.

AH: They were in Paris at the same time I was. I saw them. Who can remember what we talked about? It was life, living and the pursuit of happiness and art in the grand manner. And we were all very romantic and very naive but because we didn't have any other problems we were essentially very well off. We were sort of like a kind of aristocrats in a low way, aristocrats in the sense of economic aristocrats, not cultural aristocrats. We were very romantic, very naive, but we were full of ourselves and it didn't make any difference what it was we discussed, it was very important because we discussed it. It was that kind of thing.

PC: Did you read *Art News*? Was that available?

AH: No.

PC: Anything.

AH: I remember reading *Art News* occasionally.

PC: The _____ was around then?

AH: The which?

PC: The _____ -- the French bilingual.

AH: No. I don't know that one.

PC:*Art International* hadn't started yet?

AH: No, I didn't know that one. Art _____ was the only magazine that I remember seeing in Paris. We were too full of ourselves.

PC: We are going to do it.

AH: We were the center of the universe. There were these terrific painters in New York, you know, like Rothko and Pollock and de Kooning and those were people we admired. To think a painter was okay. Maybe there were four or five living painters that were okay. The rest -- there was nothing else but a great wasteland of shit out there. There were like, as I said, four or five painters that were just about okay. Everybody else was just absolutely out, out! I mean it's the arrogance. . . I see this in my graduate students. The cycle hasn't changed.

PC: Why were all the other people rejected?

AH: They weren't rejected. They were insignificant.

PC: Well, it was a form of protest.

AH: Well, one didn't sit around to reject them, I mean it was sort of like we didn't bother with them -- it wasn't exactly important. I see it in my graduate students now -- a arrogance.

PC: Who do they look at, for example?

AH: Well, it depends on the year.

PC: Oh, really? Fashion has an influence.

AH: Oh, sure. Oh, sure, the thing is that fashion plays a great part. There's no doubt about that. But also I think that the brightest artists inevitably pick up on very hip things. Now they may be right and they may be wrong. But they usually start very quickly, they go through a lot of stuff, they start very quickly on that kind of like in parentheses "hip" level. Sometimes they almost work their way backward. Only the very bright talented ones.

PC: Like the smorgasbord they round around and try a little bit of everything and decide this is what they like.

AH: Right. They like it and they go for that. Then they may work their way back like into old masters. But I'm talking about very bright kids. They really bounce very quickly, they just bounce like over hundreds of years; you know, just in a matter of weeks or months they just go through that stuff like. . . Not that they understand it or feel it but they really can go through it until they come to what they want to relate to. Now in their maturity they may even work their way back into old masters and away from this. But most of the young kinds, the brighter ones, the smarter ones -- well, I wouldn't say the "smarter" ones -- the brighter and faster ones go through that kind of thing very quickly depending on what's hip at the moment at the time, whether it's magazines or anything else. And I guess I was the same way. I mean going to Pollock was being hip. I didn't think of it in those terms. I skipped over a lot of things to get to Pollock. I worked my way through cave drawings and onward and upward up in history. And some people have suggested that I should, or still suggest that people should sort of work their way through art but they usually move starting with the Renaissance and going down from there. My answer is always like: why start in the middle, why don't you start with the cave drawings and slowly work your way up to the Renaissance? But it was a comradeship, it was massaging, you know, each other's egos and lifting each other up and it was full of dreams, aspirations and dreams and it was very romantic. Great art, that's the only thing that was important was great art. Everything else was insignificant. It was marvelous; it was marvelous. And it was very, very arrogant; I mean very very arrogant.

PC: Anything was possible.

AH: Anything was possible and, as I said, there were only four or five really good painters; not necessarily great, just good.

PC: So the competition wasn't too difficult.

AH: Right. And, frankly, I don't think it's changed much.

PC: I think you're right. I think that's almost a factor that has to exist for an art student if they're going to push their way through.

AH: Well, as I've said before, over and over again, it's a kind of egocentric sense of the world. It's a marvelous feeling to feel that you're the center of the world. You can be perfectly rational. Usually you're more rational when you're not in the center of the world. But when you get in the middle of the world, in the center of the world and things revolve around you it's sort of like just a deliciously, absolutely marvelous feeling.

PC: Well, all that changed now though when you got back to New York -- right?

AH: Uhh, God, did it ever!!!

PC: You arrived in the Bronx with -- what -- you said three or four large crates.

AH: I don't know if I've mentioned this before, but I had to make a decision in Paris. Did I mention this in the last session? I had to make a decision in Paris whether to -- I could have stayed in Paris. My professional contacts were growing, I had a life there, I had friends there. I could have tried to stay there, at least, like many people do.

PC: That's interesting. So that was a real possibility?

AH: It was a possibility. Whether it was a possibility or not, I made it a possibility; let's put it that way. Other people subsequently did stay there and did eke out a living there and what have you. I remember very, very clearly making a very conscious decision to go back to New York.

PC: Why was that? I mean you must have -- ?

AH: It was a phrase -- I mean it boiled down to one phrase: getting back to my roots, getting back to reality, and reality led to new York. Well, I was born and raised there. And it meant that I had had enough of my ivory tower, so to speak. And three years in Paris was an ivory tower in a sense. So I came back to New York. It was a very, very conscious decision. If I had known what would happen to me when I got back to New York I never would have come back.

PC: What made you -- I mean going back to one's roots, why did that take precedence over -- ?

AH: It had to do with reality.

PC: It was a more real choice than staying in Paris?

AH: Right.

PC: A degree of reality in a sense?

AH: Right. I mean Paris was -- the way I said it to myself was: things didn't affect me there. A change of government didn't affect me. I was intellectually interested but I wasn't emotionally connected. A girl chewing gum in the subway in Paris didn't mean the same things to me as a girl chewing gum in the subway in Brooklyn. I wasn't emotionally connected. It was that kind of --

PC: There was still a cultural space between you and -- ?

AH: Right. In Paris ultimately I would be a stranger always. I would always be a voyeur. This is not to say that I don't enjoy that role. It's very strong.

PC: It didn't feed you the way that --

AH: Right. I made a very, very conscious choice; I remember that clearly; it was a very, very clear choice of saying: no, I won't stay here, I want to go back. As I've said, if I had known how difficult New York was I never would have come back.

PC: Well, did you find it any easier than Paris, for example, after you were here for a while?

AH: No. I would say that I got back to New York in about 1953 or 1954 -- I've forgotten the exact date -- and I'd say that maybe it was only two or three years ago that I could turn around and say that I'm living psychologically as easily as I lived in Paris; making twenty or thirty times as much money, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and with a big studio like this and everything else. It took me years and years to really feel. . . Again, to get back to Paris, it was a very free life, seventy-five dollars a month, enough time, I mean no other obligations, none whatsoever. It was fantastic! There were no teaching jobs, there were no galleries, there were no sales, there was no careerism.

PC: It was just do it.

AH: Just do it. And that's all there was. It was incredible.

PC: Well, what was it like packing up in Paris and closing down and actually leaving?

AH: Oh, one gets excited. I got excited. Well, to give you a small example of what I mean: six months before I left Paris a man came to see me. He was brought to see me by a Swiss art student who I had known in Paris. The man was a museum curator in Switzerland. Ultimately years later, that man turned out to be a very important man to a lot of people including myself. He was sort of like a very, very strong-willed and very dynamic man who took a great deal of interest in American art. He was one of the first European curators to be interested in American art.

PC: Who was he?

AH: His name was Arnold Vollenweider. He was from Basel. Ultimately years later he came to New York and bought the first collection of American paintings to bring back to Europe. This was before any European museum had ever done that. It became a big thing. So with that kind of -- I remember his coming to my studio and saying things like: oh, it's too bad he hadn't known about me before, he would have given me a small room in a large show he was making, but could he come back and see me again when he next visited in a Paris. I said: sure. But, again, being romantic and naive it didn't mean anything to me. I'm not holding myself up as a kind of unique, pure person.

PC: Well, you had no experience of what --

AH: Exactly. It didn't mean anything. Years later he did come to New York and he did help me out a great deal and he supported me. With some backing or what have you. So, at any rate, what I'm saying is that I came back to New York and stopped in the Bronx with my paintings at my parent's house.

PC: What did they think of all this now? Coming back with crates of pictures and --

AH: I remember clearly my father sitting there. . . My father used to call me a bum, "for twenty-five years you're just a lazy, fucking bum." The one thing he did say to me. . . He looked at the paintings for a long time and said,

"That took a lot of work." That's all he said and that was a terrific compliment coming from him. "That took a lot of work." I remember some uncles of mine coming to the house and saying, "You know, if you'd take these things to Macy's. . ." I mean seriously. And they were very concerned. They were really trying to be very helpful. They were trying to be older relatives giving the young kid some advice. They weren't patronizing at all. They were really very serious and extending themselves trying to figure out how one could merchandise these things.

PC: Right. Where do you go but Macy's.

AH: Right. "Maybe you can get an order for a dozen." Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. It was that kind of thing. I'm just trying to think. There I was off the ship, got tot he Bronx. And then how did I get down to manhattan? I can't remember. I know I arrived in New York broke, dead broke. I didn't have any money.

PC: Was there any more Army or G. I. Bill or anything going?

AH: No.

PC: So that was over with, too?

AH: Yes. I'm trying to think of. . . You know, just going back to these discussions in Paris: there were a lot of discussions basically around action painting and around New York art of San Francisco art or Clyfford Still or Rothko or de Kooning or these people, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But what I find interesting about my own development is that I was very involved with these things. I mean don't misunderstand me. I was also getting this idea, this very naive idea that I told you about before of the synthesis of these two elements of the subjective and the objective and conceiving of it and then trying somehow to do it in a very, very naive way. But it's not unlike some of the thematic things I'm still dealing with. I mean in some way that kind of notion even though I was terribly involved with all the whole New York School and all the spontaneity of this thing and that thing and putting on the paint, et cetera. That kind of notion of kind of synthetic art form was in my mind, as I say, when I did those paintings. THey're very crude and very naive and what have you, but in a peculiar way there is that in ; my work, too, at this point now also. So you've got that kind of thing where if those notions were in my mind in a very naive way I wasn't making a construct against action painting. That was really the center of our whole existence. But then other thoughts came into my mind. At any rate, I just wanted to go back to that thought. The only thing I can remember is that there was a group of people in Paris who I had known. One of them was called Daniel Yankelovidh. You may know of him as he does a lot of survey research for the *New York Times* opinion section et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Do you know who I'm talking about?

PC: Oh, right.

AH: Okay. Daniel Yankelovidh when I knew Him was a young psychologist out of Harvard who had done to Paris to write plays.

PC: Oh, really!

AH: And failed miserably. A total failure at it. And had a marvelously blonde WASP, -- as Daniel was Jewish; this girl was WASPY. I mean Daniel was the epitome of a kind of Jewish intellectual, you know, roly-poly, fat, given to fat, very bright, very verbal. And there is this WASP tall, six inches taller and total WASP. A great pair. But in Paris there was another guy called Dick Dale who was the photo editor for either UP or AP -- I've forgotten. And he was an Okie, a terrific guy, and Okie. And then there was another couple and I can't remember who they were but the guy was a musician and the girl was, you know, married to him or living with him or something, and the father of the girl came over to visit them. They were all sitting around trying to figure out what to do. They went back to New York. The father of the girl had a lumber yard here some place, an import-export business, something like that. He used to import Swedish doors and a lot of them were damaged on one side. He suggested to this crew: why don't you take these Swedish doors, which are flush doors on the surface, and you can make marvelous desks and table tops with them. Dan Yankelovich thought that was a brilliant idea because the home furnishings business, the do-it-yourself thing, was hotter than a firecracker. Remember this was 1953. And he had already analyzed the suburban market as an expanding market. He was very, very bright. So they all cam back from paris and they started this business in a cellar right here on -- is it Beechwood Street -- is there a Beechwood Street?

PC: Bedford.

AH: Bedford Street. Right.

I knew them and I got a job with them. I worked with them rather than become a partnership or anything like that. They called the place the Door Store which thrived tremendously. So I went to work with them. As a matter of fact, they had a loft right here on Prince Street where I used to do the welding thing. Dick Dale and I taught ourselves how to weld to make the leges. It was one of these kind of like real shoddy operations. The whole

thing was started with a couple of hundred bucks. To make a long story short that's how I got back down to Manhattan. I got this job. It was a part-time job and they were able to sort of carry me. We were all very friendly and it was all one big happy family. We had all been to Paris and we were all sitting around moaning and groaning about how marvelous Paris was and how terrible New York was. Meanwhile the business never really got involved with the Store. He was like the senior partner but he was always out making money to support the Store. The Store was supposed to be the grand moneymaking proposition to get us all into creative work. Daniel was still trying to become a playwright. Dick Dale was into something I've forgotten. There was a whole bunch of women around and it all had to do with those Harvard Radcliffe girls and this thing and that thing, and there were some white Russians. There was one girl whose father was an instructor at Harvard. It was all Harvard graduates. They were all from Paris. I'm trying to figure out how I got down to manhattan and how I got the money. Daniel Yankelovich got this job in market research to support the Store. It turned out he was so good at it he finally started his own company and he became a management consultant. As a management consultant he began to sort of advise large corporations how to run their business more effectively. Finally after dealing with these multi-million dollar corporations and coming here every night and trying to bail out this honky Store, he finally gave up and gave it to Dick Dale who I think still owns it. I worked for Dick for years. It was a very good deal. The arrangement we used to have was that he used to fire me every six months. It was a nice comfortable place because we were all very friendly. Then he'd fire me. We used to make up these marvelous job categories so I couldn't get a job. I think one year I was a mosaic table designer.

PC: You went to the unemployment and they said --

AH: "No way". No way can we get you something like that. And so that's how I got down to manhattan. Now when I got down to Manhattan it was like an act of faith. Before I left for Paris I had seen a loft on Last Broadway that I liked very much. But then I went off to Paris. Before I left for Paris I was living on Monroe Street so I'd seen this loft right around the corner on East Broadway. On the ship coming back from Paris I asked myself: gee, I wonder if that loft is still available.. This was there years later. And, sure enough, it was available. It was forty dollars a month. It was aloft about thirty-five by a hundred feet, two skylights, beautiful, forty dollars a month. The Manhatten Bridge ran right alongside of it. The elevated trains go by every three minutes.

PC: One after another.

AH: One after the other, right. At any rate, that's how I got down to New York and that's how I made my money. And then I sort of started hanging around the art world. I went to The Club and to the Cedar Bar. I did the whole number.

PC: How did you meet people or how did you find them? Did you call up people who you remembered or knew?

AH: No. I started hanging around.

PC: Harold Rosenborg's favorite phrase "hanging around with the boys."

AH: The Krushenick brothers I had known before I left. And a few of the people from the Art Students League. I made contact with them again. You sort of hear that? The Cedar Bar is the place to go; Friday night is a good night to go to The Club; Tenth Street is a good place. You hear these things very quickly. Information is exchanged with the speed of light. Within a very short time you know where to go if you want to see or hear different things. That's exactly what I did. And I fixed up the loft and I started painting.

PC: You lived there -- right? I mean it was a living loft?

AH: Yes. I remember there were two people I called up when I came back to New York. One was Kline, and other was Rothko. That was really a terrific experience. I just called them up -- something I usually don't do. I did that one in Paris with Brancusi, I called up Brancusi and went to his studio and that was a marvelous experience. But usually I was too shy to do that.

PC: Why did you pick those two?

AH: One was because of Earl Kerkam who was a great friend of Kline's. Earl told me to call him up. And Rothko, I can't remember now. But both received me very cordially. Kline told me where to buy the worst, the cheapest, lousiest Japanese color paints one could possibly buy.

PC: How to stretch every dollar.

AH: right. And he told me where the good free lunch counters were. There was a great one, the Fifth Avenue Bar over on Eighth Street and Broadway. For years there was a cafeteria at Eighth Street and Broadway, and just down the street from the cafeteria, you know, it was the same part as the cafeteria you know the cafeteria ran a hundred feet down Eighth Street and just there there was a bar adjacent to the cafeteria and at the cocktail hour

they served one hell of a great cocktail and free lunch.

PC: Buy one drink and all you could eat.

AH: Oh, one drink and all the caviar, black and red caviar. Oh, my gosh! fantastic! fabulous! So Kline told me all about that. He showed me some paintings, we talked for a while, he was very very gracious and very nice. I went to see Rothko and Rothko also was extremely gracious. Rothko treated me like I was like a prince. He sat me down, literally pulled out every painting in his studio, showed me all his paintings, was very patient, spent the whole afternoon with me. Then we went down to a bar, he bought me a drink and a sandwich, and we talked for a while. Then I sort of realized that it was time to go. I as sort of making my goodbyes, was thanking him profusely and I "Well, Mr. Rothko, in about six months perhaps we could do this again", you know, really thanking him. He said, "Oh, no, no, no, you shouldn't see me; you should find your own contemporaries and build your own world, your own life like I did with my contemporaries. It's very unhealthy." And I felt like a terribly rejected lover. I felt like I had opened up my legs and spread them wide apart and he said: no, thank you. I was absolutely enraged, I was furious with him. And for years when I'd run into him I'd give him an elbow. Always like elbow him. It took me years to realize what a for he had done me. Other artists in New York were very, very seducing people.

PC: Elders?

AH: Right. I'm not saying that Rothko didn't seduce people; he might have. I don't know. I know what he did with me and it was like I now consider it was a great service. It was a terrific thing that he did. He gave me a chance to see all his work. Anyhow, many years later he asked me to come to his studio. In later years I came to his studio maybe two or three times a year.

PC: How much later?

AH: Ten years later.

PC: So a real length of time.

AH: Oh, yes. And then we got to be friendly. But I always preferred to see him in his studio anyway. I didn't much care for him socially. He was a very different person in his studio than he was socially.

PC: In what way? I mean how would you describe the contrast?

AH: He was a social butterfly, he was nervous socially, he was all aflutter, like tense and nervous, hypertensive. In the studio I found him far more relaxed. We could talk and gossip and get drunk together. He'd show me paintings and we'd talk about them. But it was on a one to one basis. I found that the minute there was a third or fourth or fifth party in the room I didn't like the change. He changed radically.

PC: Why? Because he was trying to do something?

AH: I always thought he was either uneasy trying to handle four or five people or two or three people and he could handle a one to one relationship much more easily. I always felt far more comfortable with him on a one to one relationship than I ever did on any other -- if there was a third or fourth person present he was awful.

PC: I want to ask you why did you call Brancusi when you were in Paris -- why him?

AH: Well, I don't know. I forget, except that: one, I admired his work, and, two, I had heard that one could do that.

PC: You heard around?

AH: Yes. You heard that one could do that so I took the opportunity to do it. The irony, or course, is that somebody who I admire tremendously now -- Leger -- was available but I stayed away from him like the plague. I hated him, hated his work, hated his attitude, hated everything about him.

PC: Was that when he was active politically so much?

AH: Yes, he was active politically. And he also had that school that so many Americans were enrolled in. I once went to hear a criticism of his. He was bored and irritable didn't like teaching, hated himself for doing it, he needed the money and was doing it for the money. And I didn't particularly respond to his painting.

PC: What happened at the Brancusi meeting?

AH: Well, you have to understand that my French is abominable.

PC: Well, his French wasn't all that great.

AH: My French is absolutely terrible. But there wasn't really too much of a conversation, it was a very primitive conversation. But it was a piece of theatre, it was marvelous theatre. I sort of called him up and said that I was a young artist, a student and I admired his work and that I'd like to have the opportunity to visit his studio if it were possible. All I got back was: Tuesday at three o'clock. Well, I presented myself at his door on Tuesday at three o'clock or whatever. I'm making up Tuesday at three o'clock but it was something like that. I rang the bell. There was a crack in the door. I said, "I have an appointment with Mr. Brancusi." The door swung open; there was no answer but the door swung open. By the time the door had swung open all I saw of him was his back. He was already sort of like he was going into his studio and expected me to follow. Which I did. The studio was like a maze. Remember this was about 1952 or 1953 so he was quite old at the time; and ill. The studio was very much like the facsimile in Paris, there were three atelier there, three French ateliers. It was so full of stuff it became like a maze. There was no real open space. He took me around this path and without ever turning around he would sort of reach out and take a _____ off and say "Fish" and then he'd sort of shuffle down the row and his other hand would reach out and take another chamois off, say, "Bird", and he would go through this maze. I would be following this shuffling figure, all I saw was his back and kind of white slippers, and this one word thing and finally. . .

PC: Would he say a word like that?

AH: Yes. And that was it. He slowly shuffled around the whole studio and never once turned around. Then he sort of led us to a kind of opening and the opening was something like where we're sitting now -- I don't know exactly -- but I think it was some of his stools, you know, and a kind of carved table, a little sitting area. That's the first time I saw him as he turned around and gestured for me to sit down and he sat down. All I saw was this maze of white: white beard, white smock, white trousers, white shoes, white hat. He had one of these little -- what do they call those? They're not yarmulkes, they're not sitting on the back of the head, they're sort of like modified baker's caps -- well, anyway, that was white; and it was white beard, white hair and only those two black eyes. And that was it. It was a maze of -- the whole thing was white. I'm sure he was totally conscious of the theatricalness of the whole thing. We had a very superficial fragmented conversation in French. He complained to me about Philadelphia. It was about *The Roosters*.

PC: Oh, yes.

AH: He said they were done for Philadelphia but finally he had to reject the commission because he wanted the whole thing cast as one whole thing and they wanted to weld it together. He didn't want seams, he wanted the whole thing cast. He was very bitter about it. And that's all he talked about.

PC: So, you got it.

AH: I got it, right. I was dutifully very sympathetic to the problem and cursed Philadelphia roundly for their. . . Actually, of course, they were wrong, they could have had those things but they didn't want to spend the money for the casting. The casting would have cost three times or ten times as much as the welding. They were quite large; they were floor to ceiling in the studio. And, you know, those French studios are kind of high. They must have been a good fourteen or fifteen feet.

PC: Now if they wanted to do it --

AH: Yes. Well, that's always the story. That's always the story. But there was some public place for them. I remember he was very agitated about it. He was pissed.

PC: You didn't visit many other European artists while you were there though, did you?

AH: No. As I've said, one, the French were not very sympathetic or available. The only other European artist I met was a Polish artist actually who made it their money or survived off American tourists. They were very accessible to. . . But most of the French art world was very difficult to enter. The only part of the French art world that I had any contact with was, as I said before, Duthuit and people like that who were interested in American art. But the basic French art would couldn't care less and cared less.

PC: I wonder how aware they were of all the students and all the G.I.'s and people?

AH: I think they were very well aware of it because even when I had that show at Gallery Eight I got reviewed in all the French press -- not a lot -- usually a little paragraph, but still --

PC: They knew what was happening.

AH: Yes. Oh, yes. And even though Pollock had not been shown in Paris at the time I had shown those pseudo-

Pollocks in Paris, most of the French reviews were already making reference to this young American painting out of Pollock even though they had never seen a Pollock in France. So they weren't that unsophisticated. But it was more like we created our own world. And perhaps it was our own fault because we had no need to go into their world because there were so many Americans there. You know, we created our own openings, we created our own feuds, we created our own --

PC: A world that just happened to be in Paris.

AH: It happened to be in Paris, a marvelous place to be. So there wasn't a great need to kind of like even search out that other world. We knew about it. We went to the galleries and what have you. The only person I knew who was part of the French art world -- but he was a kind of bridge character -- was Riopelle. By being French-Canadian and then being taken up by the French as French rather than as Canadian, he in some ways bridged the two worlds, so he was able to. . . But he was totally paranoid about Pollock and so on.

PC: Oh, really?

AH: Well, he wanted to sort of be his own man and the Americans always referred to him as being influenced by Pollock and he always made these claims that he had never seen a Pollock and cared less, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I don't know how he feels now. I'm sure it's all mellowed. But in those days he was gaining a reputation and was being bothered by that kind of thing.

PC: Well, to get back to New York and the Door Store studio, what kind of working program did you have?

AH: By that time I was painting very thickly.

PC: Those were the darks and the -- ?

AH: Yes, with all the light. But I was very poor, I didn't have very much money. So I devised this medium. . . Actually I think it was Franz Kline who suggested it to me -- the bastard! Which was taking these cans of, well, he actually suggested the Japanese ___apan colors which were disastrous -- I can't remember now but he might have even suggested the whole process, which was to put wax in it to extend the paint. Remember I was painting very thickly; I was very poor and I didn't want to go through the process of using all that paint, piling it on. So in one way or other I devised this process of three different kinds of wax, damar crystals and turpentine and linseed oil all cooked up and made into this medium which would then be used as an extender. I would take a blob of that, let's say, in the palms of my two hands, I could take, let's say, a thumb's much of pigment and I could extend the paint that far; it would be a kind of buttery mass which I could then use with a palette knife and paint very freely and paint into it and out of it and keep it very fluid, and still --

PC: Held the color and --

AH: Right. Exactly. And actually I got very fond even of the translucence and the transparency of that --

PC: All that wax made it kind of strange, didn't it?

AH: No, no. It even picked up a kind of translucence; the light was able to penetrate it in another kind of way. I got interested in the whole thing. Well, a number of things happened to me simultaneously. I must have been ready for this because I met a girl and married very quickly. Which was a disastrous mistake. And then she got pregnant. She's the mother of my only child.

PC: Who is that?

AH: Mara. My daughter is called Mara. At the same time I fixed up the loft down on East Broadway at the same time I devised this painting process. And I was into working. I started painting again very quickly. I remember I had a lot of paintings done. I'm leapfrogging, I can go back to this if you'd like me to, but the ultimate upshort of it was that the marriage was about three months old, she was two months pregnant, I had fixed up the loft, I was painting away, and I was cooking up this five-gallon can of this stuff and it started a gigantic fire. And all the years that A.I.R. kept going around saying that no artist ever had a fire in his place, I kept saying "don't say that". So I leapfrogged over that whole bit. That was a period of maybe a year or two, my first year or two in New York.

PC: That was -- what -- 1953 -- right? OR thereabouts?

AH: No, it must have been -- well, when I came back it must have been about 1954 or 1955. I had met this girl and got married very quickly. It was a disastrous marriage.

PC: Where did you meet her? Where did she -- ?

AH: I met her at some party, a loft party. It was just one of those kind of like, well one is ready to get married, one marries the first thing that comes around. It was an absolute disaster. And I wasn't ready to have a child. I was told all these stories, and she was, too, I mean I'm not laying it on her in the sense that. . . I remember clearly that she was told. . . Well, first she went out to get a diaphragm, you have an infantile uterus and you'll never be able to have a child unless you really work your ass off at it and try to have one by getting all kinds of injections. She promptly got pregnant.

PC: Proves medical science right.

AH: Then she was told, or I was told by her that: oh, it's okay, you'll never be able to carry the baby because of your infantile uterus you'll abort within two or three weeks. Well, to make a long story short, my daughter is a very healthy young lady at this point.

PC: She's about twenty something, isn't she?

AH: Yes. At any rate, I was painting away --

PC: What did the fire do? I mean did it just destroy everything?

AH: Yes. I got wiped out, absolutely wiped out.

PC: Were there a lot of paintings there?

AH: Most of the paintings from Paris got destroyed. And then all those wax paintings just melted down. And the Sam Francis, by coincidence, had applied for a Guggenheim and left about ten paintings in my loft and they got wiped out. And what else? I forget now. It was a mess.

PC: Well, what did you do?

AH: Well, friends came around. Somebody moved me for free. Then somebody found this apartment over here on Sixth Avenue at Bleecker Street. And somebody else got me a loft. People were very good and generous, they really rallied around me. It was a bad few years. Then the marriage broke up. And I went to Hoboken.

PC: How did you pick Hoboken? How did that -- ?

AH: Well, Hoboken -- I didn't pick Hoboken. First of all, I ran away, I was sort of getting away from my wife. She had threatened to sort of bring me to domestic court to get two and a half dollars a week from me, my salary for some kind of child support. I was making fifteen dollars a week and she wanted like eighteen of it. But at any rate, Al Leslie was already living in Hoboken. Sy Boardman was living there. What's that guy's name -- Jules Lefkowsky? Is there a name like that?

PC: Right.

[BREAK IN TAPING]

PC: This is Side 4.

AH: We were talking about Hoboken.

PC: Right.

AH: I've sort of skipped over like there are two or three years there that were packed full of a lot of shit.

PC: Yes. Well, I want to get more. . . Well, anyway, let's finish with Hoboken.

AH: I didn't pick Hoboken so much as -- Hoboken at that moment was sort of like it had the makings of a new village, the new SoHo.

PC: Yes. Pre-SoHo.

AH: Pre-SoHo. It had attractive cheap lofts. That was it; I mean you could go no further. It had attractive cheap lofts.

PC: It was not so difficult to get to either, was it? With the trains?

AH: well, on paper it wasn't so difficult to get to. You had fast trains, you had the ferry running then and the buses running. And I got this place, subleased this place just on the square where the ferry slip is and the bus terminal. It's a beautiful, beautiful place. [Alfred] Leslie was upstairs; he was living with Esther at the time. It

turned out that Esther, who is now married to Hilton Kramer. . . Do you know Esther?

PC: I don't think so.

AH: It turned out that Esther and I lived in the same tenement in the Bronx and was raised in the same tenement. So when I moved to Hoboken there was Esther living with and married to Alfred. Alfred at the time was a hot shot abstract expressionist, one of the de Kooningites of the first magnitude. If you know Alfred you know that he doesn't do anything by quarters or by halves. It's sort of like gung ho all the way.

PC: Big biz.

AH: Yes, big biz. So Hoboken was not something I searched out. It was more something that was in the air. As I've said, there were three artists that I knew already there; there was Alfred Leslie, Sey Boardman, and Jules Lefkowsky. It was a terrific place. The only trouble with Hoboken was that on paper all the transportation looked great. But when I moved there I spent more time in bars because I kept saying: well, I missed that train, I'll have another drink. . . And you end up going to town, you're always going to town. That river became a real barrier. Unlike -- like I'm over in Brooklyn now, it's not quite the same barrier because the Bridge is really not a bridge if you choose to not think of it as a bridge but really as a street, there are no tolls, no stop and go or anything. It's really a boulevard.

PC: Do you drive back and forth?

AH: I drive back and forth and park at the building. It becomes like a big boulevard. Whereas Hoboken was a trial, it was a fight getting in and out. At any rate, I don't think I lived in Hoboken for more than a year; less than a year probably. From there I went to San Francisco. But if you want to go back now we'll get into a lot of stuff that was happening, if I can reconstruct it.

PC: How long did you have the loft on the Lower East Side before the fire?

AH: It couldn't have been more than a year. As I've said, I got the loft when I got back from Paris. The loft was sitting there waiting for me because it was empty when I left, I had seen it. And I went straight back to it, I didn't look at anything else. I knew that I wanted it and it was there waiting for me like fate. And then I met this girl. I think I must have met this girl and knew her two weeks before I got married.

PC: Who was she?

AH: Her name was Gisella -- what was her maiden name? -- it's blocked out; I've managed to block out everything about her. Gisella Webster was her name. I met her at a loft party.

PC: Was she an artist? or --

AH: Well, no. What happened was she had this authentically crazy mother. They lived in Queens. I remember taking her home to Queens sleeping with her. And her mother -- this elevator door opened and I was saying goodnight to her I remember this hand reached out and grabbed her and yanked her and slammed the door in my face. That was my first introduction to her mother, and authentically mad woman. But I met the challenge well. I mean I was not going to let a crazy old lady keep me away from sort of sleeping with somebody. Oh! I remember now: Gisella said to me: I can't stay with you all night because if I do my mother will call the cops and you will lose the loft. At that time it was very illegal to live in a loft. What she pointed out to me was that if she stayed the night her mother would most certainly call the police and tell them exactly where she was, and most certainly would tell them I was living there and most certainly I would lose the loft. Which I had no intention of doing. So I decided: well, why in hell fuck her, let's get married. I swear it happened just like that. Fantastic. Lofts aren't that precious today but they were then.

PC: That's incredible. Well, where is your daughter now then? Is she in New York or her?

AH: She's in New York. She's just graduating from City College. As a matter of fact, she's living in a loft in the Bowery. She's graduating in January and she's going up to Albany to live with her boyfriend who is into anthropology and taking his degree up there in Albany. So that's where she is now. She just came back from Guatemala. She spent a year down in Guatemala living with her boyfriend and herself and the Indians studying what they call I guess _____ which is the contemporary Mayan language. At any rate, where was I? Oh! So there was that. And I'm trying to remember whether I joined. . . Tenth Street had already started and I had begun to show -- what's that gallery the Krushenick brothers -- ?

PC: Brata?

AH: No, it was the one before the Brata. It's a C --

PC: Camino?

AH: Camino, right. As a matter of act, the first painting I showed was at the Camino Gallery. That's right. And it was the Krushenicks who showed the painting; they got me into a group show. And it was just a year or two of running around New York being a young painter in New York and sort of meeting a lot of people, assimilating a lot of identities and attitudes and what have you.

PC: Now that must have differed enormously from Paris -- right? I mean it was your home city, you knew it in a different way and were part of it.

AH: Well, actually the only thing that really differed was having to work and struggle for money. The other part of it was just simply -- I guess what I'm trying to say is that I was sort of like a big sponge sort of like absorbing whatever was around me and not in a conscious way; it was sort of like just absorbing. I absorbed it in Paris, I absorbed it in New York but it wasn't a conscious plan. I didn't sit down and sort of say: I want to absorb that and not that.

PC: Well, you never do really.

AH: I found myself simply gravitating to certain things and not to other things just like a thick sponge taking it all in. I didn't start thinking about careers -- or did I -- I'm trying to think now when I really began to think about wanting to show besides having the show in Paris. I think it must have been when I came back from San Francisco that I really began to think about showing. It must have been with the Brata Gallery. It wasn't before that.

PC: Well, it was 1956 when you became involved with the Brata.

AH: Right.

PC: Well, what happened in Hoboken? I mean that just didn't work, right?

AH: Well, I had terrific trouble with this wife and child that I had left in New York. I was making very little money and feeling terribly guilty, as all Jewish boys would at having left a wife and child. Through Sam Francis I had heard what a marvelous place San Francisco was. So what I did because of all the difficulties in New York. . . My wife had applied for relief, for welfare. Knowing that they'd come and kick me in the head since she had applied for welfare -- she knew that, too, that's the reason she applied for it -- I thought the best thing to do was to get out, not just out of New York State but to get out of the East Coast. So I took off and left for San Francisco. Now where did I leave all my paintings? I can't even remember where I left them. I must have left them at somebody's place because I came back and got them.

PC: With Al Leslie or the Krushenick's or some place?

AH: I wouldn't have left them with Alfred. I can't remember. I went to San Francisco. And there I felt so guilty that I wrote to her and asked her to come and join me. But by that time she had already found another man that she was living with. Thank God for small favors. In Hoboken I was painting and working. I'm still trying to figure out where I got the money.

PC: How long did you work for the Door Store people?

AH: For years.

PC: Were you still working for them when you lived in Hoboken?

AH: Yes. That must have been it. I worked for them for years off and on. The minute I could have gotten unemployment insurance they would fire me. When I got off unemployment insurance they would rehire me. So they were really very good. It worked out ideally for me because it enabled me to paint. I did paint all those years because I still loved painting almost every day.

PC: How much of those remain? Most of them Or --

AH: No, most of them have gone; most of them were lost one way or another, destroyed. Well, the fire took most of those paintings from Paris and the wax paintings.

PC: Do any of the wax painting exist?

AH: No. They're all gone. And then I got the sublease of a studio over here on Broadway and some place at Eighth Street. From there we moved up to Yorkville actually Eighty Fourth Street and First Avenue -- no Second Avenue. And I was painting in a floor through apartment there for a few months until the marriage broke up and

i took off for Hoboken. And from there -- what was I painting in Hoboken? -- by that time it had gotten black and dark thick painting.

PC: Why was that? Was that because of the material? Or you just liked -- ?

AH: No, no, no. First of all, it was the tactileness of the thick paint, piling on the paint. Of course, you had all of that action painting business going on at the time, and that was certainly very influenced by that. But I started thinking in terms of compression, it had a kind of string of lines, horizon lines through it, a string of like activity of white into a lot of color but very deep dark modulated color that would then gradually go out sort of like a -- it could either be seen as a horizon line or a magnetic field and energy would then come out of that and work itself up. And all of the strokes would be varied, would modulate and mold -- it wouldn't simply be there as texture but to build that surface so that constantly somehow like drawing into it, even though it couldn't be seen, it would be just black on black on black but the strokes would have a kind of structured feeling to them.

PC: Why the black though as opposed to something else?

AH: It wasn't all black; it was dark brown, blue, dark greens, darker -- well, you know, darkness with light, to kind of make it a little. . ., why black? I don't know, I really don't. The paintings got much more colorful later on.

PC: Did you work into the dark colors? Or --

AH: It went both ways. It was completely fluid. One of the theories, or one of the axioms was to keep the painting completely wet. The wet into wet paint process where the painting had to be sort of like wrestled with constantly so it wasn't constructed. The painting had to manifest it self, had to be arrived at. It was all of that stuff.

PC: So those were painting you had to do almost in a very short time?

AH: No, no, because of the oil. These were all oil paintings. No, I could keep the thing wet for infinity, keep it wet constantly.

PC: You had given up the wax? I mean that was --

AH: Oh, yes.

PC: After the fire --

AH: As a matter of fact, there were some people who said, "You can't paint here if you use that wax." I had given up the wax. I tried some plaster as an extender for a short time but that didn't work very well. All it did was it got very pastelly. So that didn't work. Sot eh paintings went from my own ideas to really a lot of stuff that was around. But the tactility of it was all mine. As Tom Hess once referred to one of my shows later on -- and I think actually its accurate -- that I was not really an action painter because one of my aspirations even in those years I remember again saying that I "wanted to be the Cezanne of the abstract expressionist."

PC: What did you mean by that?

AH: I didn't mean necessarily the fame; I wanted to give abstract expressionism structure. I mean I was using the analogy not in terms of fame but in terms of wanting to play the role like Cezane played with the Impressionists of giving the gesture structure, you know, to make it more structural and less -- well, what ever. That was one of my slogans.

PC: Do you have a lot of those?

AH: I have lots of slogans. It was an intellectual thing, it wasn't a careerist thought in terms of wanting to be famous like Cezanne; it was more of what Cezanne did to Impressionism I wanted to do to abstract expressionism.

PC: When did you realize that? What do you think led you to that?

AH: As I've said before, even when I was painting with the knife the paint strokes desired structure it wasn't free.

PC: A quality.

AH: Now I didn't want to lay it down as a brick, that's silly. It was more like keeping the fluidity of the painting, of the action, but wanting to structure it so it would have some meaningful conclusion structurally. And so all those paintings have that quality where the brush strokes or the knife strokes have clusters of form making where Tom

Hess pointed out in either a verbal comment or a written one, I've forgotten now, it's stood out in my mind -- but I remember he said -- and this was later in about 1956 or 1957 -- he said that I really wasn't an action painter because I was too tight assed, that the strokes, the gestures were not gestures, they were too structured.

PC: Which in fact was what you were trying to do.

AH: Exactly what I was trying to do. He was actually right but he had seen it as negative rather than positive. So at any rate, by that time I had come under the influence of a New York downtown thing which was less Pollock and more de Kooning and even though I still had great admiration for Pollock which was rare downtown that whole influence of de Kooning was part of the structure.

PC: Why do you think that shift happened then? I mean the whole business more of greater interest in de Kooning among younger artists? Was it the fact that he was around in a way? Or --

AH: I think that's part of it.

PC: You know, he was at the Cedar Bar or something and Pollock was out in East Hampton?

AH: It wasn't just that Pollock was out in East Hampton. First of all, Bill de Kooning is a very seductive guy. He's incredibly intelligent but he's also very seductive, he's really a seducer.

PC: If he gets into people's heads like that.

AH: Right. That's exactly what I mean. He's very, very seductive. in other words, if a young painter went to him the way I went to Rothko he would not tell him what Rothko told me.

PC: He would be painting small de Koonings. In two days.

AH: Right. Exactly. He would take them into his family, he would embrace them. Which is very, very attractive and very desirable. But that's only one part of it. I think the other part of it is that: one, the paintings were good; two, they were available; not just that he was available, but it was available through not just showing but through Tom Hess through *Art News. Art News* was the all powerful magazine. I remember some years later when Rothko had a show at the Museum of Modern Art there was a small article in *Art News* on Rothko but the cover painting turned out to be a de Kooning. You know, that kind of thing. De Kooning not only was hot, he also was, it was also the figurative element.

PC: You mean sometimes the women coming in and out?

AH: Right. It was not only the women coming in and out, it was also like it was the history of painting. Whatever people want to make of Hans Hofmann now, Hans Hofmann was part of; that culture that de Kooning is part of. And I don't care what Clem Greenberg or Emmerich says or does or shows or doesn't show, Hofmann was part of that other culture, that whole thing of constructing paintings, of the whole old culture kind of painting, that Cubist-based painting culture which Clem used to put down so hard and all so Hofmann becomes something else that's okay. But I guess what I'm saying is that it was available and usable and it was serious.

PC: That's interesting what you said because one never got the feeling that de Kooning ever said no to anybody if they picked up on him.

AH: Right.

PC: You know, he'd say: oh, terrific.

AH: Right. But not just that. It was serious in the sense that it was part of culture where it was very hard to imitate Pollock because that was a gimmick. Maybe it was Bill's word -- I don't know -- but there was a gimmick. Pollock had a gimmick. Rothko had a gimmick. Sill had a gimmick. But de kooning was a painter. Hofmann was a painter coming from a whole tradition. Those other things may have been very good and terrific but it was a gimmick. It was like Kline was a gimmick. One couldn't paint a Kline. One could paint a de Kooning because it had a vocabulary. Hofmann had a vocabulary. Kline didn't have a vocabulary. I mean I'm just repeating the legend of the time. Pollock didn't have a vocabulary; Pollock had a gimmick.

PC: A specific image?

AH: Right.

PC: If you did it, it was like a Pollock.

AH: Right. It was a Pollock. But if you did a de Kooning you could make a different thing out of it because it had -

- the syntax was maybe. . . because in itself it was so related to picasso, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera that the whole thing could be woven in and out.

PC: It's like learning a language you could write your own sentences.

AH: Exactly. Where with Rothko or Still or Pollock it's very hard to imitate. The only guy that really came close and got away with it was Jimmy Brooks.

PC: Yes.

AH: And then, of course, you had people like Joan Mitchell who were influenced by Pollock but used de Kooning rhetoric to modify it. I mean the imagery was Pollock's but the rhetoric was de Kooning's so she was able somehow to change the appearance.

PC:...somehow it didn't work.

AH: Right. The point I'm making is that I don't quite understand it -- well, I do understand it. It had to do with glamour, it had to do with power, he was pushed by a lot of intellectuals, by a lot of art magazines but also the language was very available. It wasn't just that he was available, the language was available.

PC: The studio language, the painting language.

AH: Right. The studio painting language. And Pollock succumbed to it. And Kline succumbed to it in the sense that they abandoned their gimmicks (in parentheses).

PC: Right. Because they, too, felt that they weren't painterly enough or artists enough and, you know, the late Pollocks or even the late Klines show the desire or the effort or the pressure of their peer group to -- and I don't separate myself, I don't say I didn't fall into that vilification -- but the pressure of their peer group to paint a picture --

PC: Well, it was like Kline having to paint with color. I mean he --

AH: Exactly. It wasn't just color, it was also that he had to sort of make it painterly; it couldn't simply be that kind of slash. The same thing with Pollock. Look at Pollock's last paintings.

PC: Right. Surface, art creation with brushes.

AH: Yes. But that was the going thing. The art world was, you know, Bill and Elaine [de Kooning] was -- how she talked --

PC: Talk, talk, talk.

AH: Well, at any rate, that's the problem with all rhetoric in the sense that it's very, very powerful and gets under your skin and it's repeated and it's that kind of powerful publicity rhetoric thing that's going on today.

PC: Oh, yes.

AH: And will go on forever and it's going to go on in our lifetime and in the history of man. And we get blinded by it and it's very hard to separate reality from the rhetoric; it's very, very hard. And we all succumb to it.

PC: I remember people in those days trying to do landscapes and figurative things using that de Kooning brush stroke and having chaos.

AH: Right.

PC: They couldn't get that long --

AH: Right.

PC: Well, what did you do -- you went to San Francisco?

AH: I went to San Francisco. I tried to join the -- I wanted to try to get a job. Of course, I was broke. I tried to get a job in San Francisco. I knew nobody in San Francisco. I tried to get a job in San Francisco. It's an incredible union town. I couldn't get a job except in the construction industry. So I had to go back working at building roads. I built freeways in San Francisco. I got myself one of those flats in North Beach. From a fisherman there, it was right on the beach, a beautiful flat. And met a few artists there. I met Ed Dugmore who was living out there at the time. He had just come back from New York. He was a student out there with [Clyfford] Still. He had come back from New York and was living in San Francisco. Then I met a few other people. That's when the "beat"

poets had come out there and they were functioning. And I met this guy who is now a very dear friend of mind -- Ronald Bladen who was a painter at the time. He was out there. He was living in one of those San Francisco communes. He was actually very close to the poets and the anarchists.

PC: Jack Spicer and King Lou -- who _____ and all those people.

AH: Right. I met most of those people through Ronnie. Then I met a girl out there who I began to live with. That was Yvonne Rainer. Later on she and I came back to New York. She was into acting and she was a terrible actress. Now I'm skipping again. Then I went to --

PC: But you were there how long -- a year or so?

AH: No, just about a year, or a little under. As I've said, things happened very quickly. When you're young they happen very quickly. I remember I was painting. . . I remember moving in with Yvonne and Yvonne had this beautiful house right on Broadway up this hill from North Beach. It was a house that was int he so-called "family" in the sense that it was either occupied, or owned and occupied, or rented for years and years by either poets or anarchists or artists and was handed down from one person to another for many years. Yvonne had it then and the only condition was. . . There was a press in the basement and anybody who wanted to use the press had to be allowed to use the press. That was the condition of renting the house.

PC: Who did it belong to?

AH: I haven't the faintest idea who it belonged to. But it was very cheap. It was a two-story house -- no, it was a one-story house, it had a basement and a roof. It was a tiny flat, it had only three or four rooms in it, but it had a basement with this printing press. All the poets in San Francisco used the printing press. But that was part of the deal: if you rented the place you had to make the press available because no one could move the press out. So I remember I started painting there immediately. In all this time, I remember I started painting. In all the moves I made I never stopped painting.

PC: Did you draw much ever?

AH: Oh, yes; oh, lots and lots of drawing. When I say that I never stopped painting I mean I never stopped working. This house was either one story or two stories, but I think it was one story. On either side of the building there was a little frame house on either side joined to another story. I decided I was going to paint up on the roof and use that for a studio. I remember bring in a big canvas up to the roof and started painting. At that time I was buying pigment and mixing my own oils and pigments; not the wax, just the pigment. I like that very dry surface that you can get from mixing your own pigments with it. So I started this painting, I painted on it for weeks and weeks up there, and I just couldn't deal with it. I had just come from a loft in New York, a dark, dingy loft with one electric light bulb, and here I am in the middle of this kind of beautiful scene in San Francisco with the beautiful light and everything. To make a long story short, I took the painting down to the basement and finished it in the basement. And I painted down to the basement for the rest of my stay there. Then I worked on the road, on the freeways and as a carpenter. I think I couldn't have been out in San Francisco for more than eight or nine or ten months, maybe eleven. Then I came back to New York. Yvonne followed shortly after I came back. I got a loft in New York and started living in New York with Yvonne. And then Ronnie came six or eight or nine months later. San Francisco was very nice and very pleasant, the people were very nice. Except that I found the artists very odd.

PC: In what way?

AH: Totally unsociable.

PC: Really!

AH: The poets and musicians were terrific and they were the scene. The artists were totally anti-social and didn't talk to each other.

PC: That's peculiar. Why?

AH: Just hostile, anti-social people. The same-mother-fuckers would come to New York years later and looked me up and want to be super friendly --

PC: Hey buddy!

AH: Yes. Their style in San Francisco was absolutely like --

PC: That's why it never gets off the ground.

AH: Oh, it was terrible. They were really awful. The artists in San Francisco treat each other terribly. They won't talk to each other.

PC: They're afraid they'll steal somebody's ideas?

AH: I'm not so sure if it's stealing somebody's ideas. It becomes a social style. Really it was awful. The only open scenes, the healthy scenes were the poets and musicians; there was good music and good poetry. The artists were just a miserable lot, just paranoid, uptight, hysterical, just terrible.

PC: Why was that, do you think?

AH: I don't know. The only artists there that I saw consistently WERE TWO GUYS -- Ed Dugmore and Ronnie Bladen. All the rest of those people were like monsters. Those people that I looked up and called up didn't want to see me, wouldn't have anything to do with me. And it wasn't just me; it would be all right if it were just me. They did it to each other. Ronnie lived there for fifteen years and hardly knew a painter or a sculptor. He knew all the musicians and poets, but hardly knew any painters.

PC: I wonder why that is/ Other people have told me that if you lived on this street in San Francisco nobody else would talk to you.

AH: Yes. Well, they were paranoid about new Yorkers, they were paranoid about their position, paranoid about this. . . They were just nuts. Just craziness.

PC: But they don't produce anything. Maybe that's part of it.

AH: I don't know.

PC: Why did you leave? Was it because it was just impossible? Or -- I mean new York didn't offer a wonderful opportunity all of a sudden, did it?

AH: No. There was no telephone call or letter saying: come back to New York, the world. . . You've been selected, you've been picked out of a hat. Oh! I remember what it was. I decided that there was only one art that could be developed on the West Coast. That was the art of living; that all other arts would suffer for it. And I had this notion that perhaps the only reason New York was a great art center was because the environment was so awful you had to paint these idyllic pictures to survive. In San Francisco you can take a car and go to the country in twenty-two minutes and who wants to be a Pollock. Oh! I remember now. I remember having this phrase sort of like two artists meeting in San Francisco would go like this: "Hi, Sam, how are you?" "Oh, fine." "Are you painting?" "Yes, I'm painting." "That's nice. What else is new?" The next day, the next encounter: "Hi, Sam, how are you?" "Oh, fine." "Are you painting?" "No, I'm not painting." "Well, what else is new?" It didn't matter. I mean painting was simply another human activity. In New York --

PC: There was no passion or commitment.

AH: There was no competition, there was no hysteria, painting was simply another human activity. It wasn't the only human activity; it was another human activity just like: well, one day I paint, the next day I swim, the next day I hike, the next day I eat. And it's nice that one paints, it's nice that you weave, it's nice that you dance, and it's nice that you pick your eyebrows.

PC: And it doesn't make any difference.

AH: It's doing your own thing. And in New York it has nothing to do with doing your own thing; it has to do with culture making, and not doing one's own thing.

PC: It's not sitting on the beach.

AH: Well, it's that the culture out there is the art of living; it's like living decently and well; it's life enjoying life. Maybe it's even more human. But one didn't get a sense of walking into somebody else's studio and saying, "God damn it, I've got to get home and paint! this cock sucker is getting ahead of me!" That's what New York has. And the sense that it's important. You asked me about the culture in Paris in terms of what did you guys do sitting around. It became important to paint, it became important that one couldn't fall behind because it was important to paint. It was important to paint good paintings because if you didn't you were going to get left behind so "get in there" and, my God, it was important. That sense of its' being important is cultural.

PC: Do you think it also had to do with the competition and the rewards in New York?

AH: No, I don't think so. I think if the rewards were of a different order -- I think there would still be the same kind of competition if the rewards were, let's say, a Maoist button's or something. It's the pecking order of

wanting to. . . And it's important to do this thing, it's important to do this thing, it's important to sort of say this. What I'm saying about San Francisco and about the whole West Coast is that it's one of the things a human being does among many other things. Here in new York it's --

PC: It's what you do.

AH: You know, it's a cliche, the obnoxious New Yorker who you meet at a cocktail party and the first thing he or she asks is, "What do you do?" and it's not meant lightly; but as a class distinction, they mean exactly that -- "what do you do?"

PC: Right. It's almost like saying: who are you?

AH: Oh, not almost; precisely and "How serious are you?" It's not that you paint or you dance or you pick your nose; but, how serious are you about it. "Serious" does not mean that you have spent fifty-five years doing it, but have you spent fifty-five intense years doing it.

PC: And what do you have to show for it?

AH: And what do you have to show for it. And it isn't just careerism, it isn't just money, or show, or number of snows, or a collection. But it has to do with the depth of the commitment. And it's very, very hard to have that kind of commitment and do it year after year without getting -- the Latin word is "noccus." What I mean by "noccus" it's ___ necessarily galleries or prestige or press, or what have you; but it's from your peers; it is a desire, it is a virtuous thing. Now , sure, it's a greater virtue to be able to do it without getting that kind of virtuous return but I think that's almost impossible. I'm thinking of somebody. . . I don't think I could be an artist in Russia. I don't think I'd have the guts to to on without support. I don't think I could do it.

PC: Or in that houseboat where they couldn't stand up for years painting bent over day after day.

AH: I don't think I could have done it; I don't think I have that kind of strength.

PC: But who knows.

AH: Right. One doesn't know. But I mean it takes really. . . I was born into a world where my peers valued that kind of activity. That kind of rapport with that kind of value is the most rewarding kind of thing you could possibly get, you know, that somebody is really placing value on that kind of virtue. The virtue isn't a scream in the wilderness, it is somebody saying: that guy is a good guy; he's doing it right.

PC: It goes into the world and becomes part of it.

AH: Right.

PC: Why do you think that doesn't happen in California?

AH: Really, as I said before, they have other concerns.

PC: It's just part of the life.

AH: Now a humanist could make the argument -- well, what's his name -- the pseudo-Freudian Marxist -- Marcusi -- makes the argument that when you have an ideal society -- theoretically this is Freudian, marxist, what have you -- that in an idea society the need for art will be negated because art will become life, and life will become art, and the art of living will become a work of art, and you won't need all the other substitutes and languages to express aspiration or anything because it will all be there. I don't believe it. But I think that essentially the West Coast thinking "every man an artist". I first heard on the West Coast. But I don't think its Duchamp____, I think its West Coastian.

PC: Oh, yes. That's the oriental influence.

AH: Right. B "every man an artist" In the sense of the art of living is the real art form. And the humanists, as I've said -- Marcusi and others -- could make the argument, and do make the argument, that maybe that's the most important art form there is. I left San Francisco precisely for that reason. I realized after eight or nine months that it was no place for a painter precisely because of those issues: that a painter needs another kind of culture to exist in. One is the act of competition; the other is maybe a certain kind of irritating environment where maybe all art is. . . I mean if it is only that, that it is only that kind of utopian window or that escapist thing, you know, you make a beautiful environment because your environment is so ugly and terrible; whatever the reason --

PC: So that means that the whole atmosphere of the city, you know, the light, the Bay, the ocean, that kind of

easygoing attitude was just not conducive to serious work?

AH: Well, I don't think it has to do with that; I think it has to do with the people. Now you can make an argument that the environment affects the people. I wouldn't mind -- I think you can do serious work in Provincetown; or even in East Hampton, for that matter, it's beautiful environment if the conditions are right in terms of the people. I think people are important. The people on the West Coast are just too cool, too lethargic for me in my thinking. And, as i said, if you don't get it done today, you'll get it done tomorrow If you don't paint a great painting today, let's go for a swim and you'll do it tomorrow. But it's that putting off, procrastination, that: well, let's do it tomorrow.

AH: Well, there are other things in life. That's what I mean when I said that eh art of living is a high art there in the sense that there are other things in life. And I'm not saying they're wrong, mark you. I wouldn't even mind a little bit of that at this point. As I've said, a humanist could make a very good argument. But in New York it's important that if one went into an artist's studio and saw a good painting they not only got excited by the painting but felt, they felt a sense of: Let me out of here, I've got to get home to my studio and paint one just as good.

PC: Or a little better.

AH: Or a little better. It was that kind of sense of competitiveness and competition in the sense of achievement, of celebration. It was sort of like. . . Well, just all of that. It became important. now it's a very small world that painting becomes important to. But I do think that one is lucky if one gets born into a culture where there is a group of people who consider painting that important. And again to talk a bout the Russians and Dove and those people, you've got to feel for them, you've got to feel that they were strong, they were terrifically strong people but ultimately they failed because of this quirk of time.

PC: But also the society in a way, too.

AH: Sure. Oh, sure. That's what I'm saying. I don't mean by "society" the whole culture, but it has to do with, say, twenty or thirty or forty people who really care. And they can really turn each other on. I don't know -- I don't think i'd even have the courage or the spirit to be an artist during the Depression in upstate new York or in Russia isolated. I'd just feel like a fool.

PC: But these people -- you know, it's funny, yesterday I was talking to Hal Lerner who was on the Mural Project in the 1930's painting in a high school in Brooklyn. He was just out of college. He said it was fantastic. He'd go and work with these two guys; he as an assistant.

AH: Yes. But the mural Project, the WPA -- I'm far too young to know this, I'm just going by the legend -- but there was that community then.

PC: That's right.

AH: I'm not talking about money or success. I'm talking about that sense of like there were all those other people who were sort of like gung ho, you know, this is important.

PC: They were the Artists Union, every week the Congresses that they had and all --

AH: Sure. Contact with other people who really believe in what you believe in and that what you're doing is important. That's the turn on.

PC: So you left sunny California and returned to New York?

AH: Yes.

PC: Where did you set up and what did you do?

AH: Well, I came back to New york broke. What did I do?

PC: Did you go back to the Door Store?

AH: I'm trying to think now -- what did I do. Oh! I remember. I went to this guy I knew from Paris, he was a commercial artist, a guy named Bill Charmats, he was an illustrator. I found this loft on Twenty First Street. Ronnie Bladen's girlfriend still has it now. I gave it to Ronnie and Ronnie gave it to his girlfriend. I rented it for seventy-five dollars a month. Its already skyhigh, I'm really. . . I remember I had to buy three hundred dollars from this guy Charmet and he sweated giving me the money. He didn't like the idea of lending me three hundred dollars.

PC: That was a fortune in those days.

AH: A fortune -- rent, deposit. I'm trying to remember what I did to earn money. I must have gone back to the. . . Of course I went back to the Door Store. I got Ronnie a job at the Door Store. Of course, I was working at the Door Store. And then i left the Door Store. I came back to new York, I got a job at the Door Store, and I got Ronnie a job. I fixed up the loft on Twenty First Street. Yvonne came. We were living there. We got married because my ex-wife threatened. . . She took me to court and said to the judge. . . Yvonne and I had no intention of getting married. We were living together and were quite content to live together. This ex-wife of mine brought me to court because I was giving her support for the kid but it was very little. I had very little. She said to the judge, "Well, your Honor, if he can support his mistress he can certainly support his own child." I came home in a rage and I said, "Yvonne, we're getting married tomorrow. I ain't going to get foxed out of ten dollars a week." So we got married. When I got back to new York the Krushenick brother were starting up the Brata gallery and asked me to be one of the charter members. And then through me brought in that whole crew of Paris guys like George Sugarman, Ronnie Bladen and Sal Romano. And then the whole episode of Tenth Street started. That was around -- what date do you have there -- 1956?

PC: The Brata was started in 1955-56.

AH: Right. So that was like the middle of Tenth Street.

PC: 1956 was the Brata Gallery.

AH: Yes. So that's when I started becoming interested in showing, in publicizing and selling. That's when the thing really started.

PC: That was a co-op, wasn't it?

AH: Oh, yes, it was a co-op. What I'm saying is that before that -- I wonder who did that -- the Tanager [Gallery] had already been operating.

PC: Yes.

AH: I remember being invited to an invitational show.

PC: Right. That was 1955.

AH: That was 1955. I remember being in that show but I'm trying to remember who invited me to that show. I've forgotten now. At any rate, that's when I started becoming a professional. What I mean by "Professional" is in the sense that I began to get conscious of career, selling, publicity and galleries. All of that stuff started then.

PC: Was that because of Tenth Street, because of the Brata and the Tanager? The Tanager was a place where everybody on that strip could show, for example?

AH: Well, everybody who was on Tenth Street. There were lots of other people. Ben Shahn didn't show there.

PC: Well -- And de Kooning was around the corner.

AH: Right. De Kooning was right upstairs.

PC: Right. De Kooning was upstairs later. Well, that again was another milieu of people, wasn't it?

AH: You mean the whole Tenth Street thing?

PC: Yes.

AH: By that time, you see, I had already gotten a kind of station wagon. I was in the trucking business and I was sort of running around moving apartments and furniture and paintings for people.

PC: How did that start? Was that just an idea of a making money?

AH: Oh, sure. It was strictly a money-making proposition.

PC: The Door Store had no more advantages?

AH: I made more money, five dollars an hour for myself and the truck. Sal Romano was my helper. He go paid three dollars an hour. That was a lot of money in those days.

PC: Yes. That lasted for a long time, didn't it? That moving business.

AH: No. About three years or so. Well --

PC: It's a quarter to two. WHy don't we --

[SESSION 3 - DECEMBER 19, 1975]

PC: Let me say it's Side 5 -- it's December 19, 1975 -- Paul Cummings talking to Al Held. In our previous conversation you said something rather interesting and I wonder what you meant where you talked about Pollock and Still and Kline as having a "gimmick" and their paintings were not the same kind of thing that de Kooning's were where you could take off on a de Kooning and if you did a Pollock it looked like a Pollock. You differentiated somehow between the to and I wonder what you meant by their having a gimmick?

AH: Oh. If I can remember the conversation, it's difficult --

PC: It was last week.

AH: Right. I think it was in the context of the question about why de Kooning was so popular --

PC: Right. You were talking about his influence and his seductiveness.

AH: I used the word gimmick deliberately because it was a word that was used. It wasn't so much my opinion, but I was really using the word as it was used then in my memory o it in the sense that it was around when I was hanging around. Milton Resnick was the one who used it. He was a great de Kooningite at the time. It was personified by him. He was constantly talking about the gimmick rather than painting in the grand manner; de Kooning was painting in the grand manner and Pollock and Rothko and Still and these people had gimmicks.

PC: Right. You mean that they found a kind of recognizable style that they could -- ?

AH: It wasn't so much a recognizable style as it was a political it was also sort of like a way of doing things which produced a certain look but it wasn't open ended.

PC: It was a dead-end kind of --

AH: Not so much dead end -- well, they saw it as dead end in terms of painting, but also they saw it as dead end in terms of that there was nothing that they could pick up from. You couldn't like the style; where de Kooning's style, things from de Kooning could be lifted because it came from a lineage. But the dripping of paint, the minute you drip paint if you wiggled it around one way or another way --

PC: It still referred right back to Pollock.

AH: It wasn't so much that de Kooning's style didn't refer back to de Kooning so much as that it was a broader language. Now if I said, if i implied that I agreed with this, it wasn't my meaning. My meaning was --

PC: Well, it was just kind of undefined and I was curious.

AH: My meaning was that that was the going attitude at the time. Like I used to be referred to by Resnick as "that Pollock lover". And it was not said with jest or humor or love; it was a putdown, downtown that was a big putdown. The putdown with Rothko was when is going to do another kind of painting.

PC: Yes. Right.

AH: You know, he had been doing the same painting for twenty years, when is he going to do another painting? And it wasn't so much that I was agreeing with that kind of sentiment. It was more of just reporting the attitude at the time downtown. I'm not talking about other worlds, just that world that I existed in. And there was great hostility to these people down here because of that attitude; using Picasso as a prototype which I think de Kooning did or what other people did like not sticking to the same gimmick. And I use the word in that sense just simply using it the way it was used then. I didn't agree with it so much as just simply reporting about it.

PC: Do you think there was a validity in that for the people who were making the paintings, or was it a kind of gesture of people who were looking at them and weren't getting it going as well? I mean was it the younger generation who were calling it a gimmick rather than the people who -- ?

AH: I think the younger generation called it a gimmick because the older generation was calling it a gimmick. I guess what it was _____ that nobody that I knew saw a way of painting out of these people even though they were admired and respected and that it took longer, perhaps more years somehow to use Pollock's attitude. But, for instance, a lot of people who say the same thing about Pollock now use the attitude, the philosophy rather than the style.

PC: Yes. Well, it's like the Duchamp business where it was his ideas rather than the work or anything else.

AH: Right.

PC: You know, it's interesting as I think about this I remember, say, in the mid- or late 1950's that artists who were, oh, I don't know, say, half a dozen years younger than you felt stymied by de Kooning. I mean de Kooning seemed to have drawn a line they couldn't get across. Did you feel that, or your friends, or your kind of group of people?

AH: I didn't feel that but I remember remarking to myself and to some of my close friends in the early years that at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, Johnny Myers, that the young hot shots were sort of like returning to the figure: Grace Hartigan, Larry Rivers.

PC: But using it along de Kooning's line.

AH: Yes. And we thought at the time also that that was something that Rauschenberg and [Jasper] Johns did; they had returned to the figure. Thinking back along those lines, I remember remarking to myself and I said to my close friends that it was the Tibor de Nagy Gallery personified that they had found this brick wall. And it wasn't just de Kooning, it was abstraction. I mean they found this brick wall that they couldn't but through. I sort of saw it as an end run around the brick wall. Which I didn't approve of. Now remember I was outside of -- I mean I wasn't showing or wasn't part of that kind of --

PC: You weren't in the gallery scene then.

AH: Right. But I saw it as an end run that avoided the basic problems of abstraction. And ironically I guess as I'm talking now the thing that occurs to me immediately is that I find the same problem now.

PC: Oh, really? In what way?

AH: That there are a lot of painters have the same dilemma now.

PC: Of what age group?

AH: Oh, twenties and thirties. I'm talking now about painters. And also about the non-painters. The art world is trying to find a way around all abstract images that has been done and the successful abstract imagery. You know there's a lot of talk right now in 1975 that abstraction is dead. Well, there was a lot of talk then about abstraction being dead.

PC: Yes. Used up. Worn out.

AH: Used up, worn out. And I guess I have the same feeling now that I had then in the sense that I'm still terribly involved with abstraction. I think it's a very rich language and just needs some good artists to somehow find imagery that is meaningful but there is somewhat the same attitude. Different people are being -- I mean the attitudes are very different now than they were then but thinking back then I remember -- again going back to the Tibor de nagy Gallery, I remember myself remarking to George Sugarman who I was very close to at the time and we used to have a lot of conversations about the abandonment of the problem, so to speak, to that kind of figuration. At the time -- I guess this was about 1958 -- we even saw Rauschenberg in those terms; as abandoning problems of abstraction to sort of find a way around that problem.

PC: He started using more figurative images in those collages.

AH: Right. The ichnography was figurative; not the kind of figurative that's being done now but I can't help but make a parallel.

PC: You know, it's very interesting when you said "problems related to abstraction" because it used to be that there various discussions about "the problem". "The problem" was never stated in words.

AH: Breakthrough, Crisis --

PC: Right. All those great terms.

AH: All those existential terms.

PC: That's a little bit later and sounds like Art News. "The crisis of abstraction".

AH: I was about to say I think it came from that kind of existential writing of [Harold] Rosenberg. He was great for "the crisis. . .

PC: CHronologically we now have you back from California and you have started to show in group shows at the Tanager and on Tenth Street. You've mentioned that your whole attitude toward your work and your career began shifting at this point. What did Tenth Street mean in terms of the galleries, the relationship to The Club, the Cedar and all the people that used to be around there. There was a whole civilization on Tenth Street almost.

AH: Well, again I go back to the remarks I made about paris. The same thing happened on Tenth Street; that became a center of the universe. Artists like Ben Shahn, artists like Andrew Wyeth simply didn't exist. It wasn't a question of -- it just wasn't part of the consciousness. So all the critiques were in that area, whatever people would do in that area and all the reputations int hat area. Outside of that it was like --

PC: It was uptown.

AH: It was not only uptown; it was like history. It was sort of outside of my concerns, not just mine but everybody else's. It wasn't uptown because there were many artists who were greatly admired who were showing uptown. But it was sort of like a remark Irving Sandler made the other night. He's writing a book on the Fifties. Well, he had it easy in the first book because he was sort of able to ignore thousands of artists as though they didn't exist, as though there were only seven artists who were painting at the time and the book was easy. You were able to structure your book easily because you had only like eight or ten artists that you thought really existed. But then in the fifties you had all these other artists who sort of like got into that particular milieu and that became the center of the universe. So Irvings book of the fifties is going to be of an entirely different structure; far more difficult to structure.

PC: Oh, absolutely.

AH: And far more difficult to structure. At any rate, it was exciting and very interesting even though I did feel like an outsider in the sense that even though I showed on Tenth Street and functioned on Tenth Street I felt [someone in the studio is banging on metal] I don't know whether I should talk over this symphony -- I should do something about that -- I felt it was exciting and yet, you know, I never had that much respect for all the people who were sort of painting on the Street. I admired de Kooning but all those other younger painters who were painting I didn't much care for; I didn't care for their work. To me it was still a problem of abstraction where all the other people who were not painting out of de Kooning were turning towards a kind of figurative milieu.

PC: Why do you think you maintained an interest in abstraction and not let the figurative line coming in?

AH: Well, to paraphrase de Kooning in those days: I couldn't do anything else. I don't know exactly how he said it but ___ said like, "I don't know anything else, I can't do anything else and that's my strength." It seemed that one painting led to another, one painting led to another idea, and that led to another idea, and just kept going that way. I got preoccupied with it. And, of course, also in those days maybe it was my lack of sophistication or awareness and lack of careerism in the sense that I wasn't as touched by other styles as I was in the Sixties. The Sixties with the publicity and everything else. I remember reacting far more violently to different styles than I did, let's say, in the Fifties.

PC: For example? What --

AH: Well, I remember reacting very hostile to Pop Art. I was very hostile to Pop Art. I've grown to live with it. I'm not sure whether I've come to accept it but I've grown to live with it.

PC: What stimulated the reaction? I mean what was it that developed or provoked the hostility?

AH: Well, I'm trying to think now of the initial reaction, but in hindsight: one, it was competitiveness, they were part of this world, they were like competing for the same world that I was competing for. It wasn't Ben Shahn and it wasn't Andrew Wyeth. That never concerned me. I was never concerned with how much, let's say if Andrew Wyeth sold a painting for a million dollars I would think: that's nice. Its something I would read in the *New York Times*, but I de Kooning sold a painting for twenty thousand dollars this would be of great interest to me because that was part of my world; whereas Andrew Wyeth was just somehow like some place else. It wasn't interesting at all, it was like: that's nice, or it's not nice, it doesn't make any difference. But I guess the thing on Tenth Street was that even though you had all those different styles -- you had maybe people doing figurative art or doing abstraction -- there was a great deal of hate and love involved with different styles whether it be de Kooning or Rothko or Pollock or Larry Rivers or anybody else, but there was a kind of general agreement about what art was. I can't really define what that was but everybody somehow used the same words and those words seemed to be acceptable to very different, various different, kinds of abstraction, not necessarily abstraction, but art. And even when I stared doing those big black geometric paintings I knew they were different but my rhetoric was still the same rhetoric as the rhetoric of the 1950's. The paintings kept moving but the rhetoric was actually two or three years behind. So when the Pop artists came in was their rhetoric. It wasn't Rauschenberg and Johns so much but the other Pop artists.

PC: Andy Warhol and Lichtenstein.

AH: Warhol, Lichtenstein and all those people, also their images. It was really a challenge to the basic attitudes about what art was. Not so much, as I've said, Rauschenberg and Johns.

PC: They're very transitional or not, what I'm saying is that at first appearance they were seen as part of a whole art milieu that was legitimate.

PC: Oh, I see. Right.

AH: Like Larry Rivers was legitimate. I may not have liked it a lot, or may not have thought a great deal about it, and one thing or another, but it was still part of the whole milieu. So on Tenth Street an awful lot of things were shown and a lot of people had very, very different styles. I think that Clement Greenberg was wrong when he said that Tenth Street personified, or just painted, de Kooningesque paintings.

PC: Absolutely untrue. Then Alex Katz came and knocked the whole --

AH: Alex Katz and even Rosati. What the hell was Rosati doing in the middle of the new milieu of abstract expressionism. I could go on and on and on.

PC: Yes. And Bill King.

AH: Bill King, but even. . . Well, what I'm trying to say is that I could go on with tons and tons of people. So there were lots of attitudes about painting that were very different. But it wasn't problematic in the sense that they were doing the things they were doing, it was one big art milieu. And you either liked or didn't like what they were doing but it wasn't the kind of axiomatic, programmatic thing. That started with Greenberg's stain painting thing started with Frank Stella and started with Frank Stella and started with Pop Art, all of that around that time. And there was an attack on certain basic attitudes. I think the crucial attitude was the word "transformation", that we all held that to be crucial the metaphor of transformation.

PC: In what way now?

AH: That when the artist did something it was assumed that it was a metaphor or it had a, "transformations", that it transformed; in other words, when Lichtenstein appeared and he claimed no transformation of the subject, no interpretation, no transformation, that it was straight faced, straight forward, with frank. . ., now rhetoric; rather than art rather than even their own work. I'm only now talking about the rhetoric around it. The claim was for no transformation for like -- _____ hand, no hand.

PC: Like Andy's flat, straight on, whatever --

AH: Right. And that was the thing that really shook a lot of people up including myself, even though at the same time --

PC: Now what did that challenge for you, though?

AH: Basic attitudes about art, about how to think of art, about the role of the artist. Even though at the time, years before, I remember getting into a lot of arguments about the action painting theories, I remember saying to somebody, "Well, I just don't want to express myself, I want to say something, I just don't want to express myself, I want to say something, I just don't want to peel away the onion and simply express something. Even though I had these feelings and acted on them in my own work. I still believe very deeply intransformation and the rhetoric around a lot of the other stuff, personified by Cage actually. And I see Cage as the germinal figure, not Duchamp. I think Duchamp is really kind of like a figurative thing. It's Duchamp interpreted by Cage; it's not Duchamp whole --

PC: Not directly.

AH: Not even after seeing his show at the Museum of Modern Art in the last year or two. It became apparent again that it was Cage, and not Duchamp --

PC: But it's also, I think, Duchamp's words and his ideas rather than the work that people were interested in, you know, his intellectual gestures, you might say.

AH: Yes, but the show didn't demonstrate that.

PC: No, it couldn't.

AH: But that his body of work. You see, what I'm saying is that what I think a lot of people -- when I say "a lot of

people" I'm really talking about myself -- reacted to is the rhetoric, and the decade of the 1960's really reacted to rhetoric and not ready looking at work. And the work had some of the rhetoric in it but it had some other things, too. But then that was my criticism of abstract expressionism: that the action painting rhetoric never held up in terms of what these people did. But the point is that there was this sense of community there on Tenth Street. Sort of like in it together. There was a lot of competition and a lot of running around but everybody was after the same thing. And that was like, art.

PC: You know, it's fascinating, this just reminds me that I remember of that, that there was a quality of respect that doesn't seem to exist today.

AH: Right.

PC: I mean if you did this or did that and somebody did something else, he's say: okay, that's your thing, go and do it; do it as well as you can because somebody else may catch you up on it.

AH: Right. But that's because the rhetoric wasn't confrontational. In the 1960's the rhetoric was extremely confrontational. I don't know what the older men were saying to each other. I know that there was a great deal of competition between, let's say, Rothko and de Kooning, and de Kooning and Still and I know that those guys never even showed up on Tenth Street because of the kind of hostility that existed. But in my milieu one could admire greatly these people and admire all kinds of other things because the rhetoric was not in contradiction to that. But that changed very much in the late 1950's. But, anyway, we're talking now about the middle 1950's and it was just the young naive artists without all the background of all this. It just seemed like a wonderland and like everybody was making art.

PC: You mean all your friends and the people you knew?

AH: Right. People I knew peripherally, or slightly, and it was all involved with making art and making the best you can. But there was a general -- it wasn't spoken of in detail -- there was a general agreement like, for instance, Al Capp or even Philip [Guston] there was never any real heavy discussions about abstraction versus figurative art. You were simply trying to make art the best way you could. There wasn't any heavy program of like: if I'm painting figuratively, nothing else is valid. That changed in 1960 or thereabouts. Before that it was much more open. But I think the crucial thing there was that word "transformation", that it wasn't found or reported or stated that it was transformation. And that included Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns and Kaprow and all those other people. The heavy confrontational rhetoric came later; or my impression of it came a little later.

PC: So what did you do -- to go back a little bit -- you came back from California in 1955 and set up on Twenty First Street.

AH: I set up on Twenty First Street and domesticated with Yvonne and got this studio and went back to work at the Door Store and started to paint. I was still painting those very heavy thick impasto paintings. I remember soon after that I had some friends working at The Museum of Modern Art and they had switched over to making their own paints from pigments to painting for walls. They were buying the paints in cans and they had a lot of pigments they were throwing out. I remember taking my truck up there and getting it all. It was very cheap, terrible pigment, it was all chrom___ and what have you. Then I started mixing paints heavily myself. And went into buying pigments and mixing paints.

PC: You mean buying dry pigments and mixing paints?

AH: Buying dry pigments and mixing paints. But as I said last week, I had already begun to have this feeling of wanting to structure and so I was painting these paintings, all wet into wet paintings and had this tremendous desire to take those gestures and make them into forms. They was still overall pattern. Sort of wanting to make groups of these strokes.

PC: You mean groupings to do what? I mean they were grouped in an overall pattern in a way.

AH: No, but then I wanted to make inside of that, that the strokes would then group themselves into forms.

PC: Oh, I see.

AH: And usually they were circles and triangles but very, very -- I mean they weren't obvious, they were very broken up but just simply, as I said, a desire to structure it, to make some kind of imagery there that had to do with structure, it wasn't simply a series of marks on a canvas but that they would congeal into images and the images were always abstract, never figurative or literal. Then the geometry started to emerge. Then very, very slowly what happened was that these groupings began to take on geometric. And, as I said last week, the desire to want to give action painting some structure.

PC: But this also -- you started getting away from using a palette knife -- right?

AH: No, that was later, that was about 1959.

PC: So you were still painting with the knife?

AH: I was still painting with the knife but wet into wet and, shaping it, not shaping it like with contours --

PC: Patterns?

AH: The pattern congealed into like galaxies. And even in those days I remember having phase that I canted to create a space in front of the painting, the painting would then push out from the surface into the actual space of the spectator. This would then engage the person looking at it in terms of the real space between the spectator and the painting surface. I was very, very, concerned with that. And then what happened was that in either 1958 or 1959 Sam Francis was in town. He had a studio and was painting here. He introduced me to acrylics. I started making --

PC: That was pretty early for acrylic, wasn't it?

AH: Yes, it was very early.

PC: Bocour -- was it Bocour that brought those around?

AH: No, I never liked Bocour paints. I liked Lenny very much and Lenny used to --

PC: You never made a deal with him.

AH: I couldn't because the paint was. . . It was Liquitex that I began to use and I kept using it. I liked the quality of it better than Lenny's paint. Lenny's paint was always a mess. Lenny came in late on the acrylic and he made a mistake of thing to somehow make it quickly and cheaply. They were not very good in beginning. I understand, somebody's mentioned to me that his paint has gotten a lot better since then. Sugarmans brother in law -- , the chemist.

PC: But now was Sam Francis using -- ?

AH: He was using a mixture of acrylic and oil at the time. And I was still painting with a palette knife. I started to do gouaches with the acrylic. And the geometry was far more apparent because the acrylic was flat. I started making these -- I called them gouaches but what they were was simply acrylic paint on paper. I did a lot of those and the imagery of geometry emerged very quickly.

PC: Was this conscious or an unconscious thing? Or did it appeal to you and you could keep pushing it that way? Or --

AH: That's what happened. What happened was it appealed to me and then. . . I was still painting very thickly at the time. So these were my paintings and these were like watercolors or gouaches and what have you and just very directly. But the acrylic couldn't be built up and you couldn't work wet into wet, with acrylic and so the imagery remained clean and clear. Then my interest in them grew greater and greater. At the same time I had this place on Twenty First Street. Sam went looking for a studio and he found a fantastic building on Broadway and Twenty Third Street right around the corner from me. It was the kind of place that a fire had took place not all these fireman got killed. He found this top floor which was an incredible, network of studios, there were actually three studios. It was an old Parke Bernet auction house of the turn of the century just when Gramercy Park was fashionable. It had wall to wall skylights.

PC: Oh, fantastic.

AH: I remember he asked me to come in with him because the rent. . First of all, Sam as a stranger to New York _____ went to buildings that nobody would dream of looking at because it was too good. It wasn't a typical twenty-five by a hundred loft space. It was grand. It took up almost a whole block.

PC: Yes, that ran from 23rd to _4th Streets almost, didn't it?

AH: Almost. It was grand and clean. Nobody that I knew would even think of looking or even think of making inquiries -- if you saw a sign 'loft for rent" in a building like that in those days nobody would even think of asking the landlord about it because it wasn't part of one's consciousness, one always who lived in these 25 x 100 feet lofts.

PC: And it looked too expensive.

AH: Right. And it was quite expensive. What happened was that Sam asked me to come in with him. It broke my heart that I couldn't afford it. I just simply could not afford it. He got Al Leslie involved in it. And the other part of the space, the third part of the space martha Jackson took over for storage space. Sam got the major and best studio space. And then soon after that, Sam decided he wanted to go away. Sam is a great traveler and never spent that much time in New York anyway. He was going away for maybe six months and he asked me if I would like to use his studio -- this must have been 1958 or 1959 -- for six months. I said sure. When I moved in there it was one of those spaces that I wasn't accustomed to, beautiful big space, it must have been about 40 or 50 feet by 100.

PC: And high?

AH: Oh, yes, about sixteen feet high. And all the skylights, you bet. It had a regular skylight, and it was faced with frosted glass so it had, even light all over. It was an incredible studio. I had never painted in that light before. What happened was that when I moved in there I didn't know what to do. It goes parallel to like that. . . I don't know if I told you about the story about my first painting -- did I ever tell you that story? _____ stealing that first painting I did? Did I ever tell you that story?

PC: Oh, yes, stealing something and painting over it?

AH: Right.

PC: Yes, right, you did.

AH: Well, it was much the same thing. What I did -- I was sort of freaked out by this space I was so unaccustomed to it -- I thought the best way to start would be to -- and I had moved all my paraphernalia over there, all my pigments and the oils and the canvas and everything else. I even did one or two paintings in the same style using a palette knife. But parallel to that I bought these big rolls of no_____ paper --

PC: Oh, that photographers use?

AH: Right. Very cheap terrible paper about ten feet high. I covered all the walls with it because I didn't want to get the place terribly dirty because of Sam, he had given me the place and I didn't want to mess it up too badly. I took this acrylic which previously I had only worked with very small on paper and just covered the walls with it. I mean like in the space of a month just simply took like 30 to 40 feet of it and covered it with these images. They were all bright, colorful, geometric things that had this kind of overall pattern.

PC: With what -- large brushes?

AH: Yes.

PC: It was like painting a mural?

AH: Right. I got quite excited by it. But I still was very much involved in my paintings and, as I said, did two paintings in that studio with the thick palette knife and paint and everything else. But I got much more interested in these other things. And then I thought I had made a tremendous breakthrough because it looked very fresh, very alive, very bouncy, and very jazzy. I remember talking about wanting to use "taxicab" colors, of getting involved in that kind of high key colors, which came from the paint, very involved in getting away from all that kind of mixed paint that I was using before and all that, modulated color, and just that whole kind of "taxicab" colors -- "taxicab" being that kind of flashy image of neon lights imagery, a whole kind of cityscape.

PC: And straight color -- I mean no mixing?

AH: Straight color, no mixing; just straight out of the tube, out of the bottle. By the time I had completed this whole room, I was very high, I was very excited and very, very high. I was very excited by these things. Then I stepped back. I thought I had changed my whole nature, that I had really like revolutionized myself. Then I looked at it. A lot of my old friends came in and in absolute astonishment sort of said: what in hell has he done! has he given up the ghost? _____ left art; what are you doing with these horrible things. But I was very excited by them. They were very already loosely, painted but they were already squares and squares and squares and circles and circles and squares and triangles, a potpourri of things, lots of stuff. I remember that one day I stepped back and said to myself: I've changed everything, I've changed the color, I've changed the painting technique, I've changed the color, I've changed everything. I've changed the scale. But then I realized that I had kept one thing and it shocked me because I hadn't realized that I had kept that one thing: which was that I had tied the painting up compositionally by still keeping that overall patterns of rhythmic kind of thing, you know, red, blue, green. So I decided if I really wanted to change I've got to break myself of that habit of tying things up that way. I began to set myself a set of axioms, 'thou shalt nots'; One of the 'thou shalt nots' was never to repeat a form or a color in the same painting. And that got me --

PC: Was this a list you wrote down or something?

AH: I had it in my head. That if I wanted to break that habit was to not do certain things. One of the primary things of what not to do was not to tie up the canvas that way. And the only way not to do it was simply -- I simply said: I will not repeat a shape or a color in the same canvas. And through that exercise the paintings got simpler, the geometry got simpler and more evolved. And that's how the evolution started. And from that came a lot of other ideas. But it started there. One other thing: I remember also being very dissatisfied -- this is again in the late 1950s -- with what was happening in New York.

PC: You mean around you?

AH: Around me, right. I was very, very dissatisfied as though like all the energy was gone.

PC: Well, was that reflected in your own work? Or reflecting the social milieu?

AH: Mostly my social milieu. The Museum of Modern Art put up a big show, the first show of abstract expressionist paintings that traveled around Europe.

PC: Oh, right.

AH: I remember spending a whole summer going back time and time again to see that show because I remember saying to myself: this is the first opportunity I've had of comparing everybody.

PC: Yes, and in the same space.

AH: In the same space comparing what's going on. I came away confused and disgruntled about the show. It wasn't enough.

PC: In what way?

AH: I'm trying to remember now. I remember the sensation, I'm trying to remember the very concrete things I felt about it.

PC: That was -- what -- about 1959 I think?

AH: Was that 1959?

PC: 1958 - 1959.

AH: Something in there. All the action painting rhetoric didn't mean what it looked like. And it was all sort of like, it was all surreal, the underlying trend of all the paintings had a kind of surreal content, that "otherthingness". It wasn't surreal in style as much as it was surreal in content.

PC: It was dark.

AH: And misty. And I felt very disgruntled about that. I wanted to sort of like get rid of it, get rid of that kind of surreal content, that kind of "otherthingness".

PC: They all did have and do have, very dark palette really.

AH: Right.

PC: I mean when you think of Still and --

AH: And Rothko and Kline and Guston.

PC: And Brooks. And Tomlin was in that; he had a little lighter one.

AH: Right. And I wanted somehow to get more concrete, more "realistic".

PC: What do you mean by that?

AH: Well, --

PC: I mean that's one of those difficult words.

AH: Well, Dore Ashton -- when I used that word "realistic" to Dore Ashton she pointed out to me that the Cubists also used that word; you know, that a lot of abstract painters used the word "realistic". I guess I meant it in the

same way. I wanted to get away from that surreal, naturalistic feeling, and again it's the "taxicab" colors, the staccato. I was getting very involved with noise, with sound, the noise level of the city.

PC: Of New York City?

AH: Right. "Realistic" in that sense of not talking about this other world.

PC: So in other words it was sort of a drive toward a transformation of reality?

AH: Right. And that's the "taxicab" colors, the noise level, the sound, the staccato, the energy, the busyness.

PC: Were you interested in jazz or anything at that time?

AH: I was, yes. I heard a lot of jazz. I went to a lot of jazz concerts. The Five Spot was going then; I spend a lot of time at the Five Spot. That's when Monk was playing there for like eight months. And Ornette Coleman first appeared there. It was very exciting. The same kind of sound. But it was that kind of impetus. But I remember it was that show at The Museum of Modern Art that gave me a clue to what I was becoming disgruntled with: that kind of dark, misty, surreal feeling. It had nothing to do with style, it had nothing to do with paint application. It had to do with a kind of --

PC: Spiritual essence?

AH: Right. And looking back at it in hindsight I realize that the Pop artists and the color field people had the same impetus of wanting to purge a lot of surreal content out of their work.

PC: Yes, but the Pop Art people picked it up in another way.

AH: They picked it up in a radically different way but the impetus was. . . I mean this is mine analysis. It was similar in the sense of wanting the purging of that kind of surreal "otherthingness".

PC: Do you think it was also a reaction against what was becoming accepted, what was becoming, you know, kind of "the" way to do things? You know, you were younger generation who were obviously beginning to feel your own sensibilities, your own sense of direction.

AH: I guess I would agree with you *now*.

PC: But not then?

AH: Then I didn't feel that way at all. My admiration for the "Muslets" (in parentheses) was unabated. And that was one of my problems in the early 1950's was that I wouldn't deny my fathers, so to speak. So my rhetoric was far more conservative than Stella's rhetoric, was, than Noland's rhetoric was, than Greenberg's rhetoric was, or the Pop artists' rhetoric. But I was painting --looking back on it, I was painting very, very different paintings than the abstract expressionists were. But I wouldn't give up the rhetoric, I wouldn't give up the loyalty to those people. I always had that kind of admiration for them as artists. And I still do. But I didn't have that feeling about the younger generation. They all seemed to have no energy at all. I didn't like what was happening. I didn't like the school thing that was appearing. Well, it wasn't just that the school thing was appearing it just didn't seem alive.

PC: In what way?

AH: The painting seemed to get duller, not only redundant but dull and lifeless and unexciting. So this whole geometric thing with the loud colors, the vulgarity. . . Another slogan I had was: if it's to be shit I was going to dot the i's and cross the t's; there was going to be no ambiguity about it being shit. The abstract expressionists covered everything up with this sensibility and feeling and self and I remember saying to myself: if this be shit it's going to be out front, if it's going to be bull shit it's going to be out front, the i's are going to be dotted, it's going to be clear bull shit. No spiritual overlay.

PC: Well, to go back to Sam Francis's studio and the work on the paper mural you put up, what happened to those? Did you keep them around? Did you tear them up? Did you do other ones?

AH: Most of them have been destroyed. I have some but the paper is so bad. I have them rolled up in the country. I've got about five or six rolled up in the country and they're totally fragile.

PC: Oh, yes; the paper is -- what -- fifteen years old now or something?

AH: Yes. And you know it's the worst paper in the world. And I knew it then. I mean they were done, not to be kept, they were done only somehow --

PC: To work through --

AH: To purge myself. Actually initially they were done only to get me into the studio.

PC: You mean the space, the light?

AH: Right; because remember I came from a dark, dingy place to this well lit, clean space. That was a radical transformation. I still feel that that was a tremendous -- that it was that environmental change that had a lot to do with my mind and my mind changing.

PC: It's fascinating. It's like Francis found a California studio in New York.

AH: Right. It's an incredible studio. And now lots of people have studios like that. This studio is full of light now. A lot of people I know now have studios that are well lit, large and clean and well-furnished, and what have you. But that wasn't the style then.

PC: Also the economics were a little different.

AH: Right. At any rate, what happened was that Sam went to Japan and got ill, and then spent three years in a hospital in Switzerland, or two and a half years.

PC: Yes, a long time.

AH: A long time. He contracted tuberculosis which he had had early on before he started painting. I had this rent free studio for three years.

PC: For three years!

AH: Three years.

PC: But you were living in the other loft?

AH: No, no, by that time I had given up the other loft. I had given it to Ronnie Bladen with the proviso that when Sam got back we would play musical chairs. Sam, as I said, got ill but wanted to keep the place. And I was -- again I was very poor, I couldn't afford to pay for it. It was an incredibly generous act on his part. And it did change my life because it changed the painting radically.

PC: Well, how long did you work on paper? How long did you do those?

AH: Very shortly; about six months or maybe three months. I've forgotten now. And then I immediately switched to canvas and, of course, enlarged the scale to fit the environment. The studio was so large that I immediately started painting paintings that sort of looked natural in that studio. And they got to be big paintings. And I abandoned oil with the promise, always with the promise of going back to oil because that was the real medium.

PC: That was real.

AH: That was real and I was just getting -- this is like a little tangent and one day I'll go back to oil when I can get it all together, but this acrylic business was like something that I'll just get it together with acrylic and then I'll go back to oil. I got very excited about the paintings and painted furiously day in and day out. I was very, very high and very excited.

PC: Now were you still working for the Door Store to make a living? OR were you beginning to -- ?

AH: No, by that time. . . I think I've skipped a couple of years there. I quit the Door Store and started my own trucking business.

PC: Oh, right.

AH: This was on Tenth Street. I've forgotten the years now but soon after I came back from San Francisco I quit and Door Store and got a Ford station wagon and had this trucking business that operated out of the Brata Gallery. Again the dates -- I'm very bad on dates. The trucking business went for a least two or three years. What happened, as I said, I moved into Sam's studio and then had a show of these paintings at Ellie Poindexter Gallery.

PC: Well, before we get to that because that was 1959 -- right?

AH: Right.

PC: The trucking business must have started soon after coming back from California?

AH: Right.

PC: And what was that -- just general moving? or --

AH: Well, it was art moving and general moving. I remember I put an ad in *The Village Voice* -- no, it wasn't *The VillageVoice*, I guess it was *The Villager. The Village Voice* didn't exist then.

PC: Well, but it was pretty soon.

AH: It was around that time. I remember putting ads in the paper: five dollars an hour for, you know, hauling anything. I used to get calls from these young girls, "It's an hour's work. All I have is --

PC: Two suitcases.

AH: "A bed, a dresser, a mirror, two suitcases." And you'd get there and it would be a five-story walk-up and you'd be moving to a six-story walk-up. And it was true, there was a bed and a dresser and a mirror and two suitcases and five thousand books and thirty thousand records. And it was hard work. I used to move whole apartments. I used to pile things on top of the station wagon, even -- the stuff on top -- I became an expert at how to pile. I used to pack stuff on top of that station wagon, it looked like it was higher on top than it was below. But we didn't do a lot of moving of that sort; we did a lot of picture moving and stuff like that.

PC: Did you have somebody working with you?

AH: When I needed a helper, which was occasionally because most of the jobs I wanted to do alone to make more money. . . Sal Romano was my helper. He was an old friend from Paris. He used to get three dollars and hour for being my helper. We'd move these apartments or sculpture and whatever there was. That went on for, as I said, two years or three years -- I've forgotten now. That was good. It was a lot of fun. And it kept me around Tenth Street even more than. . . Because I used to operate out of Tenth Street. We used the Brata Gallery as a sort of telephone base. Whenever I wasn't moving I'd go home and paint. When I had a job I'd do it and then come home and paint, do something like that. So I had that. Then --

PC: Okay.

[BREAK IN TAPING]

PC: This is Side 6. Well, how did you work, you know, with the moving business and the painting? Would you paint until the phone rang? Or would you --

AH: right. I'd make an appointment for the next morning with So and So. I'd spend the morning moving them. Five dollars and hour in those days was good money and so if I got twenty-five dollars a day that was good and I could live well on it. I was quite satisfied with it. And I had no competition. Now moving companies are all over the place.

PC: There are pages of them, yes.

AH: Then I had no competition at all.

PC: Well, Krushenick had a truck, didn't he?

AH: Later. He took over my business.

PC: Oh. But he had a hearse or something.

AH: Yes, he had a hearse. He bought a hearse. I was about to buy a hearse but I got a teaching job.

PC: Instead of a hearse a teaching job.

AH: Nick took over my business. That's how it all happened. He was working behind the Brata Gallery in the frame shop and he was working in the frame shop with his brother making frames, because he had learned that at The Museum of Modern Art. When I quit trucking he took it over, got his own hearse and did that. He went up one stage from a Ford station wagon to the hearse.

PC: So now that went on for a couple of years and that was for the money?

AH: Right.

PC: But now what happened once you decided to give up working on paper and move to canvas and really work on it? Would you work directly? Would you make sketches on paper?

AH: I've never made sketches on paper; never. And to this day I don't. I work very directly and with a great deal of changes.

PC: That's how come it got so thick?

AH: Right. Like today I just started this huge mural 180 feet and I deliberately said to myself; no, I'm not going to make any sketches. At first I was tempted to. It scared the living shit out of me.

PC: That's a long --

AH: I said to myself: what the hell are you going to do? And I had some general ideas but even to this day I've made up my mind that I'm going to take a running dive. So that's what I'm doing now. It's a sink or swim kind of thing. One of my programs was: no a priori images that's it's all done spontaneously. Now what I mean by spontaneously is that the acrylic, the terrific advantage of it was that it would change the paintings constantly and that's what I se out to do. And so all of these things were done with no a priori ideas in it except for the general style: it's going to be geometric, it's going to be color, it's going to be black, it's going to be this, it's going to be that. And, as I said, I made up these laws for myself like: I won't repeat any shapes or colors in one canvas, or I won't do this but then the canvases would evolve. But in the early years I left all ghosts, all the changes were there, and were seen. All the drips where there and got builtup. There were lumps and _____ and other. . .

PC: There were lines they had all builtup.

AH: . . .things left from build up of color. Or I would shift the form ten feet or change the form completely or go from a rectangle to a circle with the ghost of the rectangle, it would stay in the painting et cetera, et cetera. And all of that, the whole history of the painting would remain. But the last coat would have this very definitive image.

PC: Well now, in putting all these different layers or stratifications, were they as cool in the sense that -- I mean one wonders sometimes what's underneath all those. Were the images as defined? I mean after a certain point they seem to verry -- ?

AH: Well, you know, I don't know what the year would have been, but it must have been about 1962 or 1963, Art News did one of those series of "Joe _____ paints a painting" and Rudy Burckhardt did the photography for them and it was published that way in the sense that there were about twenty-five or thirty little contact photographs of all the changes the paintings went through.

PC: Which you can hardly see.

AH: You can hardly see them but you can see what the evolution was. And interspersed in every one of those photographs there must have been about ten or fifteen other changes. That's the way I've always worked. And then what happened was that the image. . . You see what happens is that an idea becomes manifest through the painting of it. And then once I get a glimmer of that idea then I'll chase that.

PC: Now what do you mean by that? I mean "glimmer of an idea and then chase that?"

AH: Well, you sort of see something happening sort of like a vague notion and you say: what would happen if you did this? and then you sort of like get rid of everything else and see what that looks like. It's all done very loosely, it's not done tightly, it's done very loosely, just broadly. And then you sort of say well, that's interesting; well, that's an interesting idea, that kind of juxtaposition of this kind of thing is really interesting.

PC: You mean once it's down -- ?

AH: Oh, yes. I can never -- I can't even make adjustments from photographs. I can't relate to photographs in terms of those images. It has to be there on the canvas for me to really see it and have it read back, so to speak. At one time I tried to take photographs, sort of keeping a record of the ideas of the ideas I had and what was happening but every time I looked at those little bloody photographs nothing happened. I mean I couldn't see it, it had no relationship to --

PC: It's got to be real and full scale.

AH: It's got to be real and full scale and then I can see the vaguest things that nobody else could possible see in the thing. And then I think: oh, that's interesting and then I can radically change the whole painting in one hour to somehow bring that notion out, to test it, to visually test it and say: out; or that's it; or that's not very

interesting. And then, as I say, fuck it up and louse it up and maybe throw some garbage in just to shake it up.

PC: Now what do you mean by that -- "shake it up and throwing something in there"?

AH: Well, you get into a rut. You're sort of painting something and it's like it sort of doesn't want to move.

PC: You mean like there's another rectangle on the left side or something?

AH: Yes. You get to move it around sort of like you know it's not right, the whole thing is dissatisfactory and all of a sudden you find yourself adjusting; you say: but I'm not ready to adjust it, it's not right, I mean there's no sense of an idea here. And that's the point at which you want to take a garbage pail full of paint and heave it on the canvas, do anything, to just sort of mess it up so like something else begins to happen.

PC: Break the sequence.

AH: Right. Right. And then hope that through that evolution that maybe you can get a glimmer of something else. And you go for that. And then you clarify that and you sort of think: well, that's not very interesting, and you mess it up again until something emerges that you sort of feel you want to commit yourself to. And once I arrive at the point where I feel as though I want to commit myself I would then paint it and tighten it up and clarify it. Then I would go in search of clarity: "clarity" meaning is that the right color? is that the right color link? does that really feel right? is that line convex or concave? it is pushing out or pushing in? That's already another stage in the development of the painting.

PC: So then it gets down to the edges and the space, is that going to be black or dark blue or orange or whatever?

AH: Right. I remember also I had a terrible time in those years. I literally had to teach myself how to re-draw.

PC: What do you mean by that?

AH: Well, I never draw an edge before. You see all my paintings were very loose.

PC: Right. Painterly.

AH: And so the notion of drawing an edge I had no consciousness of. I didn't know what that meant. Or the tension between two edges. I had to literally educate myself. I'm a firm believer that an artist will teach himself anything that he needs o know. For instance, I can't paint a likeness of anybody. But I am convinced that if I really wanted to do it because I had a need to do it, it may take me two years to learn to do it; but if I really wanted to do it i could do it if I wanted to spend two years doing it. Right now I couldn't possibly do it. So learning how to paint that edge took me a couple of years to simply teach myself to do it. Then there came along a lot of ideas about a straight line really isn't a straight line. A straight line really is concave line or a convex line if you can subtly modulate a line so that it moves slowly in one area and fast in another area you can give it a swelling of concavity or convexity of form, I refer to shapes as forms rather than shapes. Because one of the arguments I've had over the years with other flat painters is that I was never interested in shapes, I was always interested in form. A lot of my drawing, a lot of time is spent in just trying to pull that shape into a form and still maintain it as a flat shape but pulling the tensions out of it using subtle drawing modulations.

PC: Well, but that edge in the earlier things was not a line so much as it was an edge of a plane, wasn't it?

AH: Yes, but it was painted, for instance like the edge of that painting, that you see. None of those lines are straight. I once was very tempted to call all my paintings "No Straight Edges," because they're all modulated and they're worked and reworked so that modulation makes some sense, that is, they were modulated for a reason so the edge of that form takes on an embodiment and it has a presence, it has a feeling of something. And it isn't a design. One of the first things I had in my mind in those days was, I think it was a legitimate question. "When is abstract painting not decorative and when is it not design?" What is the difference between design and an abstract painting? There's no real problem.

PC: It still is a problem. People are --

AH: Absolutely. And I think it's a legitimate question. I think it's an unanswerable question.

PC: Why?

AH: Well, because that's my meat and potatoes and not somebody else's. It's one of those questions that you can use to paint with. But you can't answer the question except as a matter of taste or opinion. I mean there's no objective rule that says: my way is a work of art and _____ another designer's way is decoration or design. There's the old saw about: what is the difference between commercial art and fine art: they both use the same

materials, they both use the same questions as Lichtenstein. Like what is the difference between a comic strip and a Lichtenstein? It's the unanswerable question, it's a matter of credibility and conviction and what have you. But what I'm saying is --

PC: Well, purpose, too, I think.

AH: Uhh, I think the notion of "Purpose". I don't care whether Pollock fucked that day when he painted Number One or didn't fuck that day, or if he was drunk the night before or wasn't drunk the night before. I think that's nice gossip.

PC: Oh, right, yes.

AH: But even the purpose of -- I don't care whether he dripped paint because he was frustrated with the other painting or because he was lousy painter before with a _____ or because he was intellectually. . . It doesn't make any difference. The reason I'm reacting to that phrase "purpose" is because I think a lot of stuff, a lot of thought and energy in painting has gone into this business of purpose or strategy. I think Louis Finkelstein used a phrase which I think is very, very pertinent -- "studio strategies". We all have studio strategies. And they are very useful for a painter in his studio. One of the problems, in the polemics of the art community, is that too many sympathetic critics listen to the artist and their studio strategies, which are legitimate notions and thoughts, and blow them up into profound, heavy metaphysical statements. And they're necessary working tools for the artist. I've got tons of studio strategies. Look, I can make as good a case about my sanding, metaphysically, and erasing, the whole metaphysical trick of sanding, as one can make about Pollock's dripping. But its beside the point.

PC; That's where the critics fall down.

AH: Well, that's where they get trapped into listening to an artist they respect and love. [Someone in the studio is hammering on metal again.] Now the artist, like myself, is passionately involved with these things. It's necessary to them to the make work. And its interesting, as shop talk. The reason I'm reacting to "purpose" is that I don't care -- I think it's an easy out to say that a work of art exists because the artist intended it to exist. That's a nice sophistic. . .

PC; You could say that about a brickmaker or a baker or whatever.

AH: Yes. Was Winston Churchill building a brick wall because he was using it for escape and not for any valid purpose, was he making a work of art? And then, of course, the answer is: what if he is, is it a good work of art, an interesting work of art; not whether it's a work of art. But purpose is the lone common denominator. I put purpose in the same class as expression. It's a low common denominator. Everybody has it.

PC: right. But it doesn't answer the question.

AH: It doesn't answer the question. But I had all these strategies. I've forgotten what your question was about "purpose", I've for gotten what the conversation was really about.

PC: We were talking about the evolution of those images, you know, the line and the circles.

AH: Oh, I remember now. It had to do with the relationship of abstraction to decoration and design.

[The banging on metal is very, very loud now.]

PC: Right.

AH: One of the reasons for the metaphor was the great desire on my part to want to make the imagery more concrete, having a presence, having a form.

PC: That people could recognize or that you could work with? Or --

AH: More to do with how long I could work on it. All of these things had to do with how you work, it became a theme of mine. And this became sort of like the subject of the painting. If I could take two forms and begin to establish a dialogue between those two forms, I had to establish them as some evocations of presence have them relate to one another not just formally but in terms of feeling, and it was formal in the sense that I would make those things from them. It was just a matter of putting squares and circles. Well, that was straightforward enough just put a square and a circle clown. But in order to get it very specific. . . And in those days I was very, very interested in "specificity". Now it's all coming back to me; all of the old bull shit rap is coming back to me. There was a great argument I was having with the rest of the art world vis-a-vis Lichtenstein or Stella about specificity. I wanted a painting to be specific, very, very specific. Not a series; I never painted a series of paintings, I never painted, you know, a series of ideas. I was very much against that.

PC: No variations on a subject.

AH: No variations at all. I was dead set against that in terms of wanting each painting to have specificity. I wanted each form and each color to be extremely specific. And that's where all the drawing came from. The drawing came from wanting to make each shape unique. But the idea was to keep it in its geometric form that is, I wanted the circle to appear as a circle but to, to have the presence of a portrait of, that circle rather than the personification of all circles. So I had this drive then in the early 1960's to make paintings that went from the general, that is, the geometry, to the specific.

PC: But now when you did those, you didn't draw a thin line, an edge?

AH: No. I painted out from the center. In other words, I would start in the middle of the canvas and say: oh, I want a circle there; I would take the middle of the canvas and just freely paint from the middle of the canvas and extend the circle until it felt right.

PC: Like that's enough circle.

AH: That's enough circle. Then I would do something else, I'd make something over it or under it around it or and _____, on and on. But it would be painting from the inside out, you see. I wasn't making circumferences and filling it in. Then late in the work when the work had already appeared as this was what I wanted, I would spend a great deal of time on the edge of the circle getting the relationship between two things exact.

PC: But that was done with the brush stroke, wasn't it? I mean you didn't do it with line?

AH: No, no, it was always painting. I would expand or contract, I could spend weeks where two edges met contracting it and expanding it, you know, maybe just one-sixteenth of an inch. But I would go down, let's say, ten feet of where an edge met over and over and over again, moving it back and forth, never quite deciding exactly where it goes. I kept moving it back and forth. That's where all that scar tissue came from. I'd keep moving it back and forth until I'd get that thing so it really sat there, so it really felt. . . Also I was very interested in weights. I wanted all those forms to have specificness in terms of weight. If you put your hand under it it felt specifically like it was supposed to feel.

PC: Now what do you mean by that because you can't go over and put your hand under the canvas?

AH: Well, I mean it's like looking at a person and saying he weighs a certain amount. It had a specificity. He's skinny, he's fat. He's light on his feet, he's airy, or he's grounded. It's that kind of weight. It's like feeling something in the palm of your hand and saying that feels right. So I was very, very concerned with weight, gravity. And in those days all those paintings were hung -- and still are hung -- very close to the floor; they related to the floor. They were meant to stand and they were meant to be very aggressive paintings, physically aggressive moving out of that space. I was very much against that whole "flatness", the whole Greenberg thing of flatness and wanted to break the picture surface. Even in the early days I did it physically first with thick, heavy paint. But I was always concerned with wanting to advance out and I'm still involved with that. With this linear geometric thing. When some people talk to me about their receding space I see them always as coming out forward from the surface. But I was always, as I said, I did it physically with thick, heavy paint first, then with geometric, color things now with the linear, and spacial things. There has been a constant theme there of wanting to advance that space, wanting that space I always rejected that whole notion of the picture surface as being crucial. But I would spend lots and lots of time on one edge, for instance. But the only way one could do that would be to invent a subject that wasn't simply an abstract theme. A specific subject that this thing --

PC: How do you differentiate between subject and theme?

AH: Well, now I'm using the words loosely. I just simply meant by that, thematically, stylewise the circle and the square, that the subject be specific, that it really have a very, very specific relationship. It wasn't an example of a notion or an idea; that is, it took on its own meaning, it had its own concreteness.

PC: Was that what the letters of the alphabet meant, you know, the "A" or the "I" or whatever it was?

AH: Right. They were geometric; they had the advantage of being geometric and clear. I wanted that clarity. But they also had the advantage of having -- it wasn't the literally presence, it wasn't the literal meaning that it took on a configuration that was acceptable. That's not the proper way to say it. . . You could relate to it as a form. The "A" --

PC: You mean the history one has of looking at the letter "A" in printed and various ways?

AH: No, it wasn't literal int he sense that I wasn't interested in the history of the letter "A" and how it moved from one thing to another. I was more interested in simply using it as a generalized abstract image that then I

could make very, very specific. But it wasn't an eccentric form. What I mean by "acceptable" is that you didn't have to wonder what that was.

PC: So you didn't use the Cyrillic alphabet, for example.

AH: Right.

PC: You could see it was a "D" or an "I" or an "A".

AH: Right. But then beyond that you can grasp the configuration. But then I had no desire to have any kind of real literal subject. Somebody once asked me whether I used all those letters because they are the letters in my name in a kind of egocentric. . . And thinking back on it, I have used an "A", I've used an "L", I've used an "H" and an "E". I've used all the letters in my name.

PC: A "*D*".

AH: But it was not a conscious thing at all. I have used "*X*"'s too. But the point I'm making is that they were used for formal devices to make something very concrete, they weren't used for literal purposes.

PC: Now one of the other things about those large paintings is that the colors changed enormously from the early ones.

AH: Right.

PC: Was that because of the colors available in the Liquitex?

AH: That. And also the reaction to that show and also wanting the "taxicab" colors, loud, crass. And also in those days there was a great deal of talk between myself and George Sugarman about contrast of forms, of lots of contradictory forms, a multiplicity of forms. It's like this painting here, it's got a geometric shape there in red and it's got the *I-Beam* and it's got the yellow stripe and it's got a wave. It's got a juxtaposition of different elements in the same painting and the semantics of that kind of using disparaging forms. But that evolved out of that very quickly in the sense that I remember saying to myself: well, if I can paint a crowd _____ can't I paint one person. You know, that kind of thing.

PC: Thinking of the painting in that vein, did you have a hard time keeping it together when it was evolving? By that I mean would, say, the wavy section jump out or pull back?

AH: That's what all the struggle was with all the colors and the drawing, to keep that thing together, under tension in the relationship. They weren't simply signs or symbols placed there like --

PC: The surrealists --

AH: Right. There had to be some kind of structure to pull them all together. That's why all the time was spent on finding the right color weight. That's what all those color wights are really all about, keeping things together, keeping the relationships together, keep it under tension so it wouldn't jump out and become a whole bunch of potpourri. But there were lots and lots of notions like that. It's hard to remember all the ideas you were so excited by because they're sort of like left behind. But they're not really left behind, they're sort of like part of an iceberg but only the things you're concerned with now. Those things I've already absorbed and they're part of me. And I've left them. I sometimes theorize that what an artist really talks about are the thing he's can't do.

PC: Well, or the next thing he's trying to do.

AH: Right. And all the things he's absorbed he's already absorbed. He's sort of left that behind, its hard to evoke all those memories, all that dialogue.

PC: One of the things that happened in -- what -- 1959 was you had a show at Poindexter Gallery.

AH: Right.

PC: How did you get involved with her? When did that come about? Was that just before the show, or a long time before?

AH: Well, actually I had a show before that, a two-man show with her of the heavy, thick paintings. I started looking for a gallery uptown. I went around to galleries only once in my life and it was such a humiliating experience that I could never do it again. I tell my young students that they must do this but also I know that it's one of the most humiliating things one can possibly do. My memories of it are still humiliating. Some of the reactions of people, and photographs slides, _____ very humiliating. I've done that only once in my life. Sylvia

says I was very lucky. Poindexter was somewhat interested and she asked for a few paintings. I remember there were a couple of people who were helpful. Resnick was helpful and so was Mike Goldberg who was showing with her. They put in a good word for me. She still wasn't convinced. And what convinced her -- I'm convinced of this -- was that about the same time that she was sort of playing with me, this man Vollenweider came to town.

PC: Oh, yes, right.

AH: He came to town to buy a whole series of paintings, I've forgotten just what -- a Pollock, a Still and a Rothko and Barnett Newman which was radical in those days. He bought a collection. And he bought a painting from me. And word got out that he had bought this painting from me. And Ellie -- I don't know that Ellie would ever admit this -- but I think Ellie heard about it and soon after offered me a show. It was a two-man show. I had a two-man show with a guy called Berry? Barrie? something like that. And I guess she must have gotten some decent reactions from the show because she offered me another show after that. Nothing sold. But in those days that was all right.

PC: Nothing did.

AH: Right. Nothing sold or anything like that. And the reviews weren't particularly spectacular; there wasn't any hoopla. But I guess there was enough good reaction to it that she offered me another show. So I had a few shows with her.

PC: Now what was that like for you because that was really your first, -- ? I mean totally you on the line.

AH: I keep telling you -- maybe it's just me, I don't know if it's just me or other people, you get so busy doing that you don't have time to really analyze how you feel about it. I guess maybe I'm very neurotic. I don't know. It was sort of like: whats next that's great; now what's next: it felt great but then onward and upward very soon afterward. None of those feelings last very long.

PC: Did she do much for you as a dealer? You were only there -- what -- three years or so?

AH: She did one thing. At the time I had Sam Francis's studio she started giving me some money, very minimal, in exchange for my work, a guaranteed sale, very, very small. In those days it was a very good, it was terrific.

PC: So you made a commitment.

AH: Yes. In hindsight she got a lot of work for that very, very cheaply. But still it was very generous of her and I still feel very warm and tender toward her. She did nothing outside of that. She was very committed, very loving. The analogy I used in those days was: Martha Jackson was a first-class bitch on wheels but she went out and she hustled, she wanted to sell paintings, she sold paintings and in turn freed the artists she dealt with by selling their paintings and they had freedom because of that even though it was a by-product of her drive. Ellie, in turn, was like my mother who would be more than content to keep me tied to her apron strings, she's feed me, love me, she was loving, she was caring.

PC: Se wouldn't let you grow up.

AH: Exactly. She really wanted a nice quiet little thing there. That was all right, too. It was marvelous. But in no way of selling anything or pushing anything for you or getting you anything front. And at that time, the time I left her, I had great resentment toward Hal Fonton.

PC: Why was that?

AH: Well, because he's a lazy fuck.

PC: He'd it there.

AH; He'd sit there. I realized later which I couldn't accept then was that Ellie made him. If Hal had been any other way Ellie couldn't stand it and would have fired him.

PC: That's true, yes.

AH: Hal was almost a creature of Ellie's making. He was doing only what she wanted him to do. But at the time I felt so guilt ridden about the desire to leave Ellie that I did something very destructive. I was so guilty about even the thought of leaving Ellie that when I decided to leave I made it very clear -- and I did do this -- I said, "There's no other gallery, I'm not leaving for another gallery. I'm just leaving because I don't want to show any more. I told her this. Also every time I sent a painting up there it would get wrecked because she and Hal were like --

PC: They had that terrible storage rack system or something.

AH: They'd treat painting like dogs. They had this pure gallery, it is pure; it is beautiful. And Ellie is a marvelous, marvelous person. They kick the shit out of paintings; not deliberately. But I felt so guilty after taking all this money from her and giving her. . . I gave her a lot of work which she subsequently sold and made a good deal of money off of. But in those days I felt so guilty that I left the gallery scene and didn't sell for like two or three years and didn't look for a gallery. I felt so guilty I didn't want to abandon Ellie like so many other people had done. And so what I did was I wanted to get out so I got out and then laid low for like two or three years because I felt so guilty about it because she made me. . . feel so guilty. So that's how she was. In other words, she was a giving, marvelous within her own terms. But -- she could not do anything for anyone.

PC: She couldn't make the business go.

AH: She make the business go. She was bad. But not like my knowledge of Martha Jackson, Martha Jackson -- was a bitch on wheels. She'd eat you up alive.

PC: You never had any business with Martha, though, did you?

AH: I had some experiences. One of the problems was when Sam let the studio, he left it to me and there were some stories there. I can't go into it now. I'll tell you about it next time. There's a marvelous story about Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller and Martha Jackson all them, this marvelous fantasy story that's absolutely true. It's just incredible. You must ask me a bout it.

PC: Okay.

AH: Don't let me forget to tell you. It's a marvelous story.

[BREAK IN TAPING]

PC: Let me say this is Side 7 -- it's December 30, 1975 -- Paul Cummings talking to Al Held. One of the things you said you wanted to tell a story about Dorothy Miller and Alfred Barr and Martha Jackson turning up at the Broadway studio.

AH: Oh. It was every young artist's dream. I was painting away, as I told you before, in Sam's studio. Martha Jackson had taken one-third of the space on one side of Sam's studio for storage. Al Leslie was working in the other side of Sam's studio. This was 1961 somewhere in there, I forget exactly. It was eight or nine o'clock in the evening I was working. Martha Jackson had brought up Dorothy Miller and [Alfred] Barr to see Chamberlain's work, the crushed. . .

PC: Oh, right.

AH: The way the studios were set up the doors were interconnected. Barr and Dorothy Miller came up there to se Chamberlain's work. He was just making a name for himself then and they had been interested in his work and Martha Jackson had handled some of the staff and had some of the staff in the storeroom there, and brought them up to see this work. For some reason they opened the wrong door. It was nothing more than that, they opened the wrong door as Martha sort of backing said, "No, no, that's the wrong door, that's the wrong door." They came into my studio. I had all of these things all over the studio and all over the floor.

PC: Were they the things on paper?

AH: They were the paper and also the paintings had just begun and lots of smaller paper on the floor, just, oh, two by three foot paper sort of like gouaches just scattered all over the floor. I don't remember now whether there was a lock on the door and I left it unlocked or if there was never a lock; I don't remember. It was sort of a network of doors. I had no idea that they were even expected. If I had known that, my instinct would have been to get out and leave them alone. At any rate, I was working and totally unexpectedly these people walked in. I was surprised and shocked. As I said, Martha was waving around saying, "No, no, not here." But by that time they were already three or four feet into the studio and were saying, "What's this?" Well, to make a long story short, Barr and Dorothy Miller were taken with the work and looked at it quite seriously. As I said, I had about, oh, thirty or forty of these pieces of paper scattered all over the floor. Barr, who was a very, gentle man, after looking at the work and one thing and another asked me in a very genteel way if I would agree to let him have some of these gouaches, he'd like to take them back to the Museum and look at them. I was pleased as Punch and I said sure. This took place over a period of about an hour. He did, he got down on his hands and knees -- I loved the image -- and sort of gathered up about ten or twelve of them and took them away with him. I was thrilled and excited and one thing and another because I was very much of an unknown artist and what have you, and felt quite excited by i. To make a long story short, my show at Ellie Poindexter's was coming up in the next few months -- I've forgotten what the time span was. He took the gouaches, he expressed interest in the

paintings. So did Dorothy Miller. Then left with gouaches. He came to my show with Dorothy Miller I think two or three times, reserved two or three paintings, and still had those gouaches. Months and months went by and finally after about three or four months went by I told Ellie Poindexter -- she had set up the show, the first show of these large geometric color paintings to call him up and really tell him to shit or get off the pot. She did that after much prodding on my part. He got off the pot and sent it all back saying: thanks but no thanks. So after all that kind of excitement and what have you nothing really happened. That's the whole story. It's sort of like. . . Because he was genuinely excited about them. That's all, that's the whole story.

PC: But some years later you did a mural for Albany though?

AH: Yes. That was --

PC: Ten years later.

AH: Easily.

PC: That was 1971-1972. Ten years.

AH: Right. And Dorothy Miller was on that committee. But at that time I was very excited by it and then let down.

PC: Well, that was a great place to be recognized by in those days.

AH: Right. The Museum of Modern Art then was much more than it is now. I don't know -- maybe this is my impression -- but even though [Alfred] Barr didn't have a great track record with American art, The Museum of Modern Art personified by him was still the citadel of modern art. I think it's not quite that now. But it was then. Well, just that: that's the whole story. Part of that story -- I don't know if I've mentioned this, I don't think I've mentioned this -- is that in the middle 1950's I worked at The Museum of Modern Art in the cellar as a receiving and shipping clerk of paintings.

PC: Oh, that's what you did?

AH: I had many other jobs. Well, I worked at The Museum of Modern Art for about six months, I couldn't take it.

PC: For what reason?

AH: The pay was quite low but I was quite happy to work there. I could see a lot of art that one normally wouldn't see. At that time the circulating exhibitions was quite a strong department and I worked with them. I saw a lot of paintings that weren't _____ in the Museum but that were shipped out. It was quite exciting to see all those. Actually I quit The Museum of Modern Art because it was the only place I ever worked where I really felt the class distinction.

PC: Oh, really?

AH: Oh, incredible!

PC: Between what levels or what layers?

AH: Between the blue shirts and the white collar workers. Incredible.

PC: Oh, I see. They were up there and you were down there.

AH: Right. I remember I didn't like it; I didn't like the situation with that kind of class distinction. I remember that when I first went to work there, some man who I have now forgotten, I think he was the treasurer of the Museum or something, gave all the new employees a tour of the Museum. I'll never forget him standing in front of Picasso's *The Woman with the Mirror* and him saying to these new employees -- most of them were not art students, they were guards or manual workers and what have you -- I remember him saying to them, "We, The MUseum of Modern Art, actually created this masterpiece, we created it through publicity, through interest." Really I got very offended.

PC: Sounds like a dealer.

AH: Well, more than a dealer they really felt this way.

PC: Oh, I'm sure.

AH: I just couldn't take the class distinction even though. . . I met Dorothy Miller years later and some kind of

cocktail party and I told her the story that I feel that I myself and I think painters of my generation owe a great debt to Barr.

PC: In what way?

AH: In the sense that I think Barr's track record on American art was not very good. But I was a very young art student when I left for Paris but when I got back I realized that my eye had already been sophisticated by the collection at The Museum of Modern Art and that French artists of my age couldn't possibly see the stuff that I saw in The Museum of Modern Art. And I didn't even know what I had seen; I mean I wasn't sophisticated enough to know what I had seen. All I knew was that this was modern art, you know, like the great Picassos, the great Matisses, the great Rouaults.

PC: The great Braques, Mondrians.

AH: Everybody. And it was an education by osmosis in the sense that this was what was accepted as not great art, but this was art. The French art students never were exposed to French culture the way the American art students were.

PC: They really couldn't see really good French painting until the 1960's.

AH: Right. Exactly. And so I think there is a great debt owed to Barr in those terms and I think he's a great man in those terms; absolutely. That's was my education. I'm just saying this about myself but I think it's really true for my generation, not just for myself. And so in those terms I think Barr was the great educator for a whole generation of young artists, he sophisticated their eyes by having those paintings accessible there. There were no other paintings. THat was the means.

PC: That was it, yes.

AH: And it was shocking to see sort of third- or fourth-rate examples in Paris and didn't understand that there were these other paintings. Those were paintings that we were sort of like _____ on. So that was exciting. So there was that kind of debt owed to Barr. And I think that its a very deep and . . .

PC: I want to ask you some questions that are not necessarily in chronological sequence but they're based on various essays and statements and one thing and another. One is that somewhere you expressed a great interest in architecture. Is that so, or is that a misquote? Or --

AH: I think I do. I like the cityscape. I enjoy New York, I enjoy walking through New York; I enjoy going through different spaces in New York. They're thrilling to me. I do respond to architecture. What I like about new York is the juxtaposition of all the different kinds of styles and fantasies and buildings that are all sort of grouped together and the spaces and the environments that they can create -- you can go from. . .

PC: International Style to Gothic Revival by walking across the street.

AH: The great example would be going through. . . I just did this yesterday which I do quite often -- I love walking through Grand Central Station up the escalator into Pan Am Building. There's a whole transformation from one age to another that is just marvelous.

PC: That huge room, sort of low. . .

AH: Right. And that's exciting to me. And I love walking down Park Avenue at night and seeing that little skyscraper just in front of Pan Am; it can only be articulated by lights it's swamped by the Pan Am Building. All of these things. I really enjoy that kind of stroll through New York that way. Just like the studio I have now in Brooklyn --

PC: Oh, you described the view.

AH: Right. It's not just that, it's that you walk out of there, a 1920's industrial building and you walk across the street and you're into the nineteenth century in Brooklyn Heights and it goes on and on and on; sort of like looking into Manhattan and it looks like a beautiful, glamorous piece of sculpture. And then when I drive home here to West Broadway it's just like being inside of a piece of sculpture. It's an entirely different experience. I relate to those things very much.

PC: But you've never studied styles or anything? It's what you see?

AH: No, no, it's all just responding to things. It's sort of like looking down one street on Fifth Avenue, say, Lower Fifth Avenue, and seeing all the fantasies on tops of all the buildings and it's all like the whole history of the world is all there.

PC: Right. Pyramids and everything else.

AH: Temples, pyramids.

PC: Thirty stories up in the sky.

AH: Right. Water towers and things like that. I find that very exciting.

PC: Another thing is that again somewhere you have described that the titles you have used have very particular meanings or references for you. Has that always been, or is that recent, or doesn't it any more? I mean _____ very unusual titles.

AH: It started off like I didn't want to title anything. Actually, the titles came from dealer's insistence that i give titles to differentiate one thing from another. I was always too lazy to title things so I never really wanted to but I was forced to. I've learned that when you sent paintings out and numbered them or one thing or another you can never make reference to them. And so I've grown used to it and I've now become addicted to it. But earlier the 1960's paintings a lot of the paintings have "The" in front of all the titles, for example, *The Big A*. I very deliberately wanted to be very specific. The 1960's paintings were very slow and evolved very slowly and I very, very specifically wanted to make reference to their specificity, that they were very specific interests. Like *The House of Cards,* not House of Cards; the "The" was placed there to try somehow to emphasize the specificity of the form. In the paintings I'm doing now it has changed because the concerns are not so much for the specificity of the things but for other concerns. Like the 1960's titles were very unique and specific. Now in the 1970's these new paintings are coming relatively more rapidly and I do them in series but the series have groupings in the sense that I very carefully choose a name but then i'll designate like 1-5 or 1-6.

PC: How do you choose the name though? I mean what -- ?

AH: I dream them up.

PC: Do they come after the painting, or during? Or --

AH: They always come after the painting except occasionally once in a while the painting will suggest something. But usually it comes after the painting; but then I like to make some kind of obscure reference to something that interests me, whether it be cloud formations or specific locations or geography or things like that. Nothing specific in the sense that there is no correlation between the tile and specific images.

PC: You mean outside the painting?

AH: Right. It's more a feeling of something or just indicating some interest that I had at the time that obviously sort of like by osmosis got into the painting; but nothing specific; I mean there isn't anything. . . The Greek titles all have to do with cityscapes, or the classics, things like that, those kinds of references. Or recently cloud formations; or anthropological references; and there are a lot of locations.

PV: Does that come from reading? Do you read a great deal? Or did you at one point?

AH; I read more int he summer when there's no television. Like today all I want to do is flake out in front of the TV set and just escape.

PC: But you spend summers in the country, don't you, most of the time?

AH: I spend about six months of the year int he country. I do a lot more reading in the country because I don't have television there. I've tried reading here but, as I've said, I'm so tired I just want to dive into. . . In the past I've gone to an awful lot of movies. I spent almost my whole adolescence in movie houses. But five or six years ago I stopped going to movies. Now it takes a great deal of effort on Sylvia's part to get me to go to a movie. I've lost interest in movies. When I do go I enjoy myself but I don't go any more. I think I've transferred the escape route from movie houses to TV.

PC: It's more accessible in a way.

AH: Yes. I mean all I want to do is leave it and like collapse.

PC: Let something jump up and down for you.

AH: Yes. And basically I'm not interested in art movies. It's like photography has become a big thing now, very serious and what have you. And I'm sure it is. I like photographs but I don't relate to them. I like them as a spectator and they're nice. I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't like going to movies to think. When a movie forces me to think then I begin to become very critical sitting in the movie house. Most of the time that I

begin to develop my critical facilities sitting in a dark room like that --

PC: It takes all the enjoyment out of it in a way.

AH: It not only takes the enjoyment out of it when I start thinking about it seriously it's superficial and I really don't like it. It's like most of the French films if I begin to think about them seriously they seem like soap operas to me. And I prefer John Wayne and John Ford or good 1950's movies, I loved *The Maltese Falcon*. I love the escape movies and I'm not critical, I just sit there.

PC: And watch what happens.

AH: It's marvelous, I love it, I just absolutely love it. But when movies want me to think is the time I get restless in movie houses and I leave. I don't like it. I can do that in the theatre but I _____ do it in a movie house. Maybe it's a cultural cliche. As a child the movies were an escape hatch for me. I resist thinking in a movie house. I really don't like doing it. So I've stopped going to movies. But when I do go, I enjoy myself. But I really like movies as an escape. And I resist them being thoughtful. Well, obviously, this is irrational; I mean I'm not claiming to make a point; I'm really criticizing myself. It's the same thing with photography. I enjoy photographs, I like looking at them, they're marvelous. But I block at wanting to find the deeper significance in them. I don't know why.

PC: It just happens. Let's go back to our chronology for a bit here. Where are we -- 1960, 1961, 1962. You were still married to Yvonne Rainer -- right?

AH: Again I'm so bad on dates. In that area, yes. Oh, wait a minute. By the time I moved into Sam's studio Yvonne and I had split up.

PC: Oh, really?

AH: Oh, yes.

PC: So that wasn't a very long -- ?

AH: The marriage was very very short. We spent about, I think, six months in San Francisco -- I'm guessing now -- and about six months, it was under a year in New York.

PC: Oh, it was very short.

AH: It was very short.

PC: Do you have any comments on living with somebody who is another artist? She was a dancer then, wasn't she?

AH: When I met here she was an aspiring young actress. She moved from theatre to dance when we were living together. Almost all of my serious relationships have been with creative females. I don't recommend it. My present wife Sylvia is a serious artist. I don't recommend it.

PC: Too much shop talk? Too much noise?

AH: No. The shop talk is very good. Sylvia is very bright and she's my best critic. And I use her that way tremendously; we use each other that way. That's very good. It's all the other needs, demands, and all the other things that make things very, very difficult, very difficult. No, the best part of it is that we are very close aesthetically. We can criticize each other's work. I trust her more than I trust anybody else in terms of criticizing my work. That's on a professional level. But on the domestic level it's very difficult.

PC: You mean because of demands made on each person for their careers and work?

AH: Careers, time, schedules, just anything, or just pure energy. LIke who's going to sew the fucking button on the fucking jacket --

PC: Which has been lying on the floor for two weeks.

AH: Right.

PC: One thing what happened in 1962 was you began teaching at Yale.

AH: Right.

PC: How did that happen because you hadn't taught prior to that, had you?

AH: I had never taught before in my life.

PC: And all of a sudden here you were at Yale.

AH: Well, what happened was that between the rent-free studio of Sam's and the small money that Ellie was giving me was enough for me to live on. That was an opportunity that was working very well. Then one day Ellie called me into her office and said -- and she's beautiful that way, I mean she's really so beautiful -- she said, "Al, I have to stop giving you money." I said, "Why, Ellie?" She said, "Well, you know, one of my daughter's husbands just died and she's living int he Lower East Side with two kinds and she's destitute and broke and I have to give her money." And it was such a beautiful thing that she was apologizing to me about having to give her daughter money instead of me. And, of course, I find that very beautiful that she had resisted even giving her daughter money all this time and giving me money. [The loud banging on metal has started again.] I think we'd better wait until the symphony is over. At any rate -- are you getting this.

PC: Yes, I can hear.

AH: So that source of money was cut off. It was lucky in the sense that what happened was that at that time there was a small discussion group that was formed that had been running for about six months. Some of the members were Louis Finkelstein and Zukowski and Selz and Sylvia and Philip Pearlstein and Dorothy and a number of people I've forgotten. They were just talking about the issues of art.

PC: How did that come together?

AH: Just social.

PC: You mean they all just knew each other?

AH: We just got together in a modified formal way, it wasn't strictly formal, but we just sat around and talked about art. Paul Brach and me were part of that. And a few other people. And I put out a call saying I wanted a teaching job.

PC: Why teaching now?

AH: Well, I had a small reputation. And whatever anybody else says about teaching. . . I was raised in a school where all the old-timer in, say, the Cedar Bar used to grumble: "Hey, Kid, dig a ditch, don't but don't teach; teaching is for the birds. You're better off being a plumber or something but don't teach." Well, I don't tell my more money teaching than doing anything else. And the amount of energy put out teaching is a lot less than doing plumbing or any of this awful romantic bull shit. It is. Actually it's really terribly romantic bull shit kinds are filled with. Now there are some people who really don't like to teach; really don't. Philip Pearlstein said recently -- and I think it's an astute comment -- that university teaching jobs throughout the country are probably the best patronage system this country has developed for artists. Now I'm not saying that the majority of people teaching are not mediocre schleps --

PC: Well, if they get involved with it as a full time activity.

AH: No, but also there are lousy artists and what have you, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and all the rest of the bull shit. But the universities through their art departments, besides from educating children, whatever that's worth -- I'm not quite sure how much that's worth -- has functioned as a very good patronage system. There's more money put into the art world through teaching than the National Endowment for the Arts or collectors or museums could ever dream of putting into the art world.

PC: That's true I think.

AH: So on one level the art departments across the country are an ideal patronage system for artists; and I'm sure for poets and musicians and what have you. But all I know about is the art world. I don't really know anything about these other areas but I would suspect the same thing is true. And its aside from the educational value -- which, as I said, is debatable. . . For instance, people tell me I'm a good teacher; I'm not sure I am. People tell me I am but sometimes I feel as though I'm not. But at any rate --

PC: Why do you say that?

AH: Because I don't teach anything concretely. It's all by circular dialogue, it's platonic dialogue rather than -- and I'm not sure what the value of that platonic dialogue is as compared with. . . In other words, I don't teach a structured course.

PC; How to mix colors and all that.

AH: Or perspective. I don't each concrete information. In other words, I don't communicate concrete information in that sense.

PC: What do you do? -- activate their imaginations then?

AH: Well, I'm not even sure I activate. . . I'm not even sure. . . That would be making a profound claim. . . Well, I don't think I activate their imagination. We'll get into that later. I want to stick to the point of how I started teaching.

PC: Okay.

AH: How I started teaching was simply that I needed the money and I had a small reputation at the time. In this group there were a number of teachers who had been teaching for a while. I had never taught before and i thought. . ., or somebody suggested to me or what have you -- I don't remember the sequence -- that this would be a feasible route to replace Ellie's stipend. I had not considered teaching before that. I had been a high school dropout. Louis Finkelstein at that time was up at yale teaching. He invited me up for a visiting critic stint. It might have been three or four or five or six visits -- I've forgotten now.

PC: What those once-a-week things that they -- ?

AH: Yes. I'm not sure exactly how many times he invited me up to those things. And I was very uptight. This was _____ invited up to Yale and Yale men, God! Yale is the citadel of Ivy League Establishment. I was still very much a kid out of the Bronx. I remember being nervous about it. By that time Had gotten friendly with Alex Katz. and I remember Alex had been up at Yale as visiting critic. So I went to Alex and I said, "Alex, what am I going to do up there, for God sakes! I mean these are Yale graduate students; what am I going to do up there?" And Alex in his inimitable way, in his style, sort of looked at _____ and sort of sid, "Hey, Al, you know those kinds up at Yale, you know what they are? They're a bunch of punks. You know what you are? You're a real gangster." That was his advice to me. Well, I have given out that advice to other people who were sort of having anxiety about teaching in the sense that it was very good advice, in the sense that it was true; in the sense that they were aspiring young artists and I was an artist and therefore whatever I said would go. And even though I didn't know how to do this or that. . . My anxiety was that somebody would ask me a question that I wouldn't know the answer to. So at any rate I went up there and sort of haven't left.

PC: Now Albers was there? Or had he gone?

AH: Albers had already left. Albers had already retired and they were in the process at the time of looking for a new chairman. The following year Jack Tworkov accepted the chairmanship of the department. Actually I came in the year before with Louis. That's how that whole thing transpired. I went up there and started to bull shit, in essence that how it was. It was no different from the Cedar Bar. Maybe it was a little easier because the kids again being graduates and what have you were bright and intelligent and were looking for information. Where I guess the guys at the Cedar Bar weren't looking for information, but to shove something down your throat!

PC: Well, what were your students like int he first years? Have they changed a great deal?

AH: No, I don't think the students have changed a great deal. I think what has changed are the times. And the bright students change with the times.

PC: Which means what?

AH: Oh, they pick up on different styles as time passes and different styles are pushed, they'll be interested, they're very, very fast and very ambitious. So they're more or less political and what I mean by "political" is not art world politics but "political" in the world if the times are political. For instance, in the 1960's they were terribly political, they would burn down buildings, they would have protests, they were very involved in the whole sociological thing. Right now in a two-year period, even in a one-year period, a new class comes in a _____ sort of say, "oh, that was yesterday." They're as bright as any other kids. The interesting change is that they're not affected by the teachers. I think their teachers play a very peripheral role in that sense.

PC: How do you mean? In terms of what?

AH: In terms of influencing kids. I think that the kids are much more influenced by the scene, by the environment, by the times, by what's going down: it it's the Vietnam war, if it's the recession, if it's a conservative time, if it's a radical time, they're much more influenced by that. Their teachers have an extremely peripheral relationship. Their peers in terms of the rest of the student body play a far more active role in influencing them. I think the environment does, and the magazines do. I think they just begin to learn about art after they leave. Maybe that's really the reason I'm saying that I'm not quite sure how good a teacher I am in the sense that I don't feel that I communicate very much to them. Then on the other hand, teachers that have a

programmatic view are distasteful to them. So what the answers are in terms of teaching I haven't the faintest idea.

PC: Well, what do you do when you come in _____ those fall seasons to a new crop of students? You've got to start with something.

AH: Well, remember these are graduate students; they're not undergraduates. I've never taught undergraduate students and I don't think I'd be capable of teaching them. Sylvia teaches undergraduate students and a lot of my friends do and it's a whole different ball game. By the time I begin to have a dialogue with them they already have a kind of young artist's intelligence.

PC: They've been working three or four years, some more than that.

AH: Right. And they're into their own painting. Essentially it's a tutorial kind of teaching where I would criticize the work they do on a technical level and suggest how to make it better; and then introduce other ideas and notions into the situation what I'm concerned with or other people maybe concerned with. Or if they're painting in a particular manner and maybe they should look at or investigate this notion or that notion which runs in sympathy with their sensibilities, or suggest that those sensibilities are not to my liking and perhaps they could change it. So the dialogue goes all over the place. But it's not structured.

PC: Do you think many of them are interested in the way you paint? Or is it half and half or something?

AH: Again let me say very cynically --

PC: I'm trying to contrast with the Art Students League where people go because So and So teaches there and they really want to paint like, say, Will Barnet or somebody.

AH: A lot of students have said to me, "I've come to yale because I want to study with you." But I'm very skeptical of that. I think they come to Yale because it's a good place to be and has good credentials. I'm very cynical about those things. Art students are guilty until proven innocent. And maybe that's wrong on my part. They tell me this and sometimes people say. . . I have a neurotic tendency of not liking people who paint like me. So I sometimes discourage students from doing that. There have been a number of incidents where I have discouraged people by saying, "Look, you're painting out of me and it's no good, it's very bad for you, et cetera, et cetera." I did that very strenuously in the 1960's. I don't think I do it as much now.

PC: What caused the change?

AH: Maybe my ego. I don't know. What I'm trying to say is that I like to think that I haven't produced little Al Helds; and i don't think I have. But it's even pretentious of me to say that I produced or did not produce anything because, just let me backtrack on that in the sense that these kids have monumental egos.

PC: Well, art students should have, don't you think?

AH: Yes. So because one of the criteria of modern art is to develop your own expression, your own sensibilities, your own style, any time anybody finds himself doing something that's too close to somebody else they veer away anyway. So it's pretentious of me to say that I haven't produced and Al Helds. If I tried to I don't think I could. I guess that's more accurate.

PC: Because they would see it and they would notice it or their friends would notice it and say, "What are you doing?"

AH: Right. But on the other hand, I'm also cynical enough to know that they will pick up any hip style. If it were --

PC: If Castelli or somebody did a big display on something.

AH: Exactly. It really depends upon what is going down at the moment: if it's de Kooning, or if it's Pollock, or if it's Frank Stella or this or that.

PC: Well, there's all that figurative painting up at Yale, isn't there? Or there was.

AH: Well, that's the legend. I mean you've just thrown the. . . What figurative painting???

PC: I remember being up there -- what -- a couple of years ago when Motherwell gave a lecture --

AH: Right.

PC: And they were, you know, in that room all over --

AH: I'd say on the average -- and this is my theory --and I'm not putting down figurative art, I'm really not putting down figurative art because some of my best friends are et cetera, et cetera. At Yale think it runs, say, about sixty-forty, seventy-thirty abstract to figurative.

PC: Really?

AH: Oh, yes.

PC: Because I remember in that room counting or noticing --

AH: What room was that?

PC: The big stone room.

AH: Remember there are studios off that.

PC: Oh, right. But this is what just happened to be up on the wall then.

AH: What I'm saying is that there may be proportionately a little more figurative art now at Yale than there was, let's say, ten years ago, but I think that has nothing to do with Yale or the faculty. It has to do with the scene; the fact that the scene now is relatively more figurative than it was ten years ago. And the kids always reflect. . . I mean people say that Yale is a terrific art school. I'm saying it has really nothing to do with the faculty except that the faculty has a kind of permissiveness that allows the kids to do what they choose to do; they don't force them to do things. In so far as they're young and ambitious and hip they respond to hip styles. Figurative art in the last couple of years has been hip and so Yale again has been responding to that. If the hip style goes to -- name it -- if it goes to masturbation then most of the kids up there will be masturbating. I'm accepting this in the sense that I think bright young kids have to start where it is, in a sense. After that things happen. A lot of my ex-students have -- guys who were abstract artists have become figurative; a lot of kids who were figurative in school have become abstract. They learn about art as they live. And so have I. It's a long process. It's not very fast. The bright, ambitious, hip ones respond to the current style.

PC: But going back to my question before: what do you do at the beginning of a season? Do you look at their work? Do you select your students? Do they select you? Or how does it go?

AH: I don't know what it's like any place else, I haven't taught any place else, but every spring the faculty sits down and goes through a whole application thing. We're very fortunate in the sense that a lot of people apply to Yale so you can go through a lot of stuff and pick out what you consider the best. It doesn't mean that you're right, it doesn't mean that you're wrong; it just means that that's what you consider the best. And it also depends upon a consensus of the faculty. No individual teacher picks out any individual student. They could make a big claim for them, they could make a big case for them, they could try to persuade other faculty members to vote with them because they really believe this kid shows something. But all the students that go to Yale are voted in by this committee. When they get there they are assigned different teachers but that's only bookkeeping work. They quickly learn they can sort of float through the whole thing by picking and choosing who they want to have dialogue with. It's fairly flexible. On the books kids have different teachers but it's not held to that kind of rigid discipline. The kids have a fair amount of flexibility; they can avoid teachers; they can search out other teachers. They can do all kinds of things. So it's that kind of system.

PC: Do you put problems up for them at the beginning?

AH: No.

PC: Or look at their work and they set their own problems?

AH: Well, the only time that problems are set up for the kids is when the faculty at the end of the year or the end of the semester will look at their work and through a consensus of the faculty _____ that a kid is "in trouble" in parentheses -- whatever that means. Then perhaps there will be some faulty discussion and they will decide that the kid needs this or needs that and what have you. By and large, they're left on their own. The dialogue is essentially young artists to older artists and what's interesting to them and what's interesting to you, what they're doing, contradictions in their theories, contradictions in their work technically or theoretically, philosophically, the aesthetic or philosophical consideration of other styles. Just a broad rambling dialogue. And, as I say, it's tutorial, it's not done by class. that's it.

PC: So it's just a kind of flowing thing that goes on and on and on.

AH: That's right.

PC: How many years do you -- might you -- have a student?

AH: Well, they spend two years there. By and large, when I'm there consistently I have contact with most of them for two years. Now there are whole groups of students --

PC: Who you never see, I suppose.

AH: Who I don't like and they don't like me, and by mutual agreement we leave each other alone. Except when the juries come in. The juries are the end of semester evaluations and then the whole faculty sits down and talks to all the students and then you voice your opinion publicly in this public arena and that's how it goes. But there are lots of students who I have no rapport with and in turn have no rapport with me, have no interest in each other. So it reaches. . . In other words, the students and the faculty somehow reach a certain level like a free flow of exchange of ideas. Or a student may sort of have an intense exchange with me for four or five or six weeks and then we've run our course and we separate and he hooks into somebody else and I hook into somebody else and we go our ways. I've said as much as I could say to him at that particular time. He's absorbed or rejected or accepted as much as he chooses to and then goes to another sensibility, another head

PC: How many days do you teach there?

AH: In the past it's been two consecutive days a week.

PC: So you go up one day and stay over and come back the next day?

AH: Right.

PC: Do you find teaching exhausting the way so many people say it just drains everything out of them?

AH: Yes. But as I said before, it's the best way to make money outside of selling paintings. I think anybody who says that you're better off digging ditches or driving a truck or doing something else is full of shit. There are rewarding moments. They are not often; they are few and far between. But there are rewarding moments. And it has nothing to do with a young artist sort of finally seeing the light. I has to do with every year there are two or three or four kids who you begin to believe in, you develop a relationship with and because of that kind of credibility and believability from you to them they force you to see things that wouldn't have looked at very seriously by yourself.

PC: That's getting pretty far away -- what do you mean?

AH: Well, I'm not serious about this, but let's say, Andy Warhol, that I develop a relationship with a student who is nuts about Andy Warhol. And I believe in that student, I trust his sensibilities, I sort of like the way he relates to things. And he keeps coming at me saying, "You're wrong about Andy Warhol. Look at that." Look at this. What I'm saying is that by making contact with, as I say, three or four people who you begin to trust, you trust their sensibility and believe that they have a sensibility, so when they tell you that there's something there that you've written off, that you haven't seen, you haven't looked at, you go back to it and say: well, you believe it, you believe this guy because you believe in the kind of visual intelligence that this kid has. You say: what's he seeing that I'm not seeing? So there is that kind of feedback of where kids can introduce you to things. They don't have to introduce you to things that you don't know about. That's not particularly interesting. It's their interpretation of things that you haven't considered seriously, but because you have developed a relationship with them and trust them you go back to those things and try to see them through their eyes and see what are they seeing. And so those are the rewarding moments to me in teaching in terms of educating myself. They keep me going in that sense. You have that kind of thing. Some teachers say that the rewarding moments in teaching are when a kid gets it. That's not particularly true. So what? I mean like he gets it or he doesn't get it. But it's what I get --

PC: That comes back to home.

AH: That's the rewarding moment for me in teaching: I've made contact, as I said, with a few human beings who I can get to trust and trust their sensibilities and then I begin to wonder, how can they relate to this when I've written it off; and through their eyes sometimes I get into things that normally I would have ignored. So it's a rewarding experience in that sense.

PC: Do you have much to do with the administration? Committee meetings and all that other stuff. Or does that vary?

AH: Well yes and no, not the nuts and bolts of the thing but I've learned over the years that if you want something__ for the students you have to involve yourself in some of those committee__. YOu have to involve yourself in the selection committee, you have to involve yourself in the grants and money things for the students. There are some things that are very important because if you don't do them the students you believe in --

PC: Won't get anything.

AH: Ultimately will get fucked. So I involve myself with those things that I consider important for those students, et cetera.

PC: Okay.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

[BREAK IN TAPING]

PC: This is Side 8. We talked in the last session something about the development of the forms in that period of the horizontal paintings and the letter forms and how they developed. They worked out of putting one thing down and then adding and shifting and changing and growing and moving. And I know there are drawings that relate to the more recent paintings but they're not studies for the paintings -- or are they?

AH: No, they're not.

PC: But I don't remember seeing any for the earlier ones.

AH: Well, I've never drawn for paintings. The drawings have always been a kind of independent activity. Most of the drawings that I've done in the period of the 1960's are these big ink drawings.

PC: Oh, with the wide kind of line.

AH: Yes, the wide brush ink drawings. I've never made studies; never.

PC: How do they work? I was looking at some of those at Emmerich's the other day. Are there lots of those? Are they always black and white?

AH: The ink drawings?

PC: The ink drawings, yes.

AH: They were done by the thousands. I've just get like tons of paper and quarts and quarts of ink and just do them gestural actually. They're all gestural drawings. I used to do hundreds at a time and then throw most of them away and keep some.

PC: When do you make the decision to keep or dispense with?

AH: Well, I say: I like that; I don't like that; that's interesting; that's not interesting; I'll throw that out. But not to take them too seriously in the sense that tons were torn up and throw it away. I'd say I throw most of them away.

PC: But you do that tight away? You don't look at them two weeks later and decide -- ?

AH: No, I do it right away.

PC: Oh, I see. You do them and then choose and --

AH: I do them, I fill up the whole floor of the studio literally, just do them very, very quickly one right after the other and then just throw them on the floor and just do them and then after a few hours or even a whole day of work then go around and just very quickly decide what I like and what I don't like, throw those out and put the rest away.

PC: Do they relate in a specific way, do you think, to the paintings in terms of whether you have wavy patterns, or hard patterns?

AH: No --

PC: It's hard to tell --

AH: They're a very, very different kind of drawing than the drawing I did in the paintings. The drawings I did in the paintings were drawings of clarification, of articulation. The ink drawings were gestural drawings, big, almost a relief -- in hindsight I would think that the ink drawings were sort of like energetic release from all the uptight nitpicking decisions --

PC: Oh, of the paintings?

AH: Right.

PC: Oh, that's interesting.

AH: I've come to see it that way, than building a correlation is almost axiomatic. They were free and bold and thrown. The drawing that took place in the latter stages of the 1960's paintings were tight and --

PC: Control the edges --

AH: Over and over and over -- I'd make like a twelve-foot vertical line that would take me all day and then the next day I'd decide it was no good and I'd move it over like, say, one-sixteenth of an inch and do it all over again and again and again. It was like bitchy nitpicking work, it was compulsive work, it was anal and compulsive work rather than this kind of freewheeling spirited thing. And the inks were freewheeling until I found some things that interested me. Once I focused in on it, it was really nitpicking, it was like carving paint, kind of drawing like carving in and carving out convex, concave constantly I began this anal nitpicking, a begrudging kind of activity.

PC: What about in the later paintings? Where are the drawings that relate to those?

AH; Which drawings?

PC: Well, you know, the ones that are closer to the recent things.

AH: You mean the graphite, the pencil -- ?

PC: The pencil drawings. Right.

AH: A separate activity. I've never taken a drawing and transferred it _____ a painting; never. I think sometimes I've used drawings as a warmup exercise like if I have a big project that I didn't want to make direct drawings for, I would set out general, not specific, but general schemes, horizontal, simply to warm myself up to dealing with stretched long horizontal forms and just work and just make drawings just spontaneously just make drawings and drawings and drawings sort of getting myself into the groove of that kind of long stretched horizontal format. And then just sort of painting with hopefully -- I use the word "Hopefully" -- it wasn't structured in any way -- that I had absorbed some of the things for that kind of horizontality, but never directly taking things from the drawings and putting them in the painting.

PC: Well, would the drawings -- you know, somewhere you said you'd made in 1967 an arbitrary style change.

AH: Right.

PC: I mean that's very interesting. What precipitated that? Was that because the painting had reached a certain point and it wasn't doing what you wanted it? OR you wanted something else?

AH: I felt played out. I had pushed the paintings -- this is the 1960's paintings -- I had pushed them to a certain point in the sense that a few years earlier, 1965, 1964, the paintings got very, very. . . I guess to put it baldly, because I really don't like to admit this, the paintings very early on arrived at a kind of Minimalism. _____ that I was philosophically against.

PC: You mean they became sparser and sparser?

AH: Sparser and sparser by the logic of their own evolution. And in many ways a lot of my paintings predate a lot of the Minimalist paintings. But that's beside the point. I was emotionally and philosophically not sympathetic to a kind of reductivist thinking.

PC: Now do you think what you were doing was reductivist in that -- ?

AH: I never thought of it. I mean I never thought it was. I was always argued against that kind of thinking; I argued against systemic thinking. I was very, very much against systemic thinking. I didn't think it ever had any place in art. Now that's an absurd statement.

PC: Well, that's all right, some wouldn't complain.

AH: I don't like making absurd statements like that because I know it's not true. I mean, Seurat was a systemi___ painter and he was a terrific and great painter.

PC: And Monet.

AH: Okay. So now I bite my tongue.

PC: And Albers -- was Albers one?

AH: Oh, fuck Albers. Albers was a terrible artist. Albers is not to be discussed.

PC: But I think it's fascinating that as the shapes got simpler the canvases got to be enormous at one point, didn't they?

AH: But they arrived at that point through a logical evolution. And somehow, for instance, that white painting at The Museum of Modern Art which is a very reduced painting -- the challenge there to somehow, I wanted to make a form, that big white area, and it got reduced and reduced to the point where I got to this feeling of if I could hold the form without a frame, if the form could hold and not turn into a field. . . You see, the whole struggle with that painting was to maintain it as a concrete form so it would not turn into a field. If you looked up, you saw one thing; if you looked down you saw another thing. But that was a minor point. The major point was that all of that white was held by those two little idiotic dots, the little triangles tha ____ould hold it and maintain the massiveness of that form and not let it go into field.

PC: Now why do you reject the field idea?

AH: I never liked the field idea. And I think it was because of its non-specificity and its non-legibility and its phenomenological aspect that it was --

PC: It's ambiguous.

AH: It's ambiguous; and it's not just ambiguous; it was inarticulate. It spoke only of sensibility of feeling and not of knowledge or information or structure or will. I'm sure I could be proved wrong logically very, very easily. You asked me a question and I'm answering it truthfully.

PC: Well, but it's your turn. That's what I want.

AH: But that's basically what it is. And I'm sure a lot of people see my paintings as fields because they haven't been properly indoctrinated. And, of course, it would be absolutely silly to think of properly indoctrinating; that one has to properly indoctrinate people to look at their painting except that I've come to the point where I guess I believe that indoctrination is necessary in the sense that I've have people tons of people come to me in 1975 and talk about my paintings in terms of flat patterns.

PC: Oh, sure.

AH: Well, that is shocking to me. Well, you see, they see all those flat little white shapes that are made by lines --

PC: Oh, I see. Those are the recent paintings?

AH: Recent paintings. I'm talking about 1975, the recent paintings. And the only conclusion I can come to from that , it is true that one sees the sunset through the eyes of the painter, and that one learns how to see culturally, [Someone in the studio is banging on metal -- very, very loud] and because people have been so used to seeing abstract paintings flatly, in terms of pattern, -- that if they come to my painting sympathetically all they want to see is flat pattern because if they say anything else, of course, they wouldn't like the painting and they want to like my paintings so they have to see it flatly. I'm not saying this facetiously. I'm saying that to me that makes a point of the power of conceptual thinking, or conceptual seeing, that seeing is conceptual. A self-evident truism. And especially in our so-called avant garde art world we're as susceptible to cultural seeing as the truck driver or the farmer or what have you maybe a little different biases but we are culturally conditioned as well as anybody else is. I've lost my point now of how this started.

PC: How people see differently.

AH: Yes, but we were talking about -- oh, Minimalism. We were talking about the change int he work. I felt I had come to an end, that I had pushed the painting. . . Oh, I remember now -- my whole desire in terms of field. I wanted things to be very concrete no matter how far I pushed them I wanted to be able to -- I wanted to walk that razor's edge, to be able to maintain. . . Now I accept the fact that if I live in a field culture, that even though I've done and I've broken my hump to do it that most people will not see it that way because they have been conditioned and trained to see it the another way. And I have to accept that and live with it. But all of my paintings of the 1960's were painted like that no matter how simple or how uncomplex they had gotten. BUt at one point I felt I had gone as far as I wanted to go and I had a great desire for more complexity.

PC: Was that just in terms of contrast? Or a feeling that the way you were going would lead to simpler and simpler things and not -- ?

AH: Yes. The later paintings of 1965 got simpler and simpler and simpler and I sort of like -- I painted them very hard -- I didn't knock those paintings off, they were painted very hard over a long evolution. But at a certain point I sort of said: I've had it, it's not for me. Even though the paintings logically followed an evolution out of my work it got to a point where I said: this is as far as I want to go with that kind of reductive thinking. This came around 1965 or 1966. And I got restless and I started adding things, I started putting more things in like mounds, like overlapping, I'd put a circle on top of a square, a square on top of a circle, very vague and unobtrusive because it would still be very large. But to me these were giant steps. It may not appear that way now but then it was really like --

PC: But that was an intellectual decision rather than a felt one, wasn't it? Or was it just looking for a way to increase the complexity?

AH: That's an interesting question. You know, the chicken and egg business, intellectual -- emotional. It was an intellectual decision but what motivates intellectual decisions vis-a-vis emotional decisions, et cetera, I don't know.

PC: Who starts the race.

AH: Yes, the chicken and the egg business. There was a lot of dialectics involved in it. But also I had emotionally felt at the end of something. It was like restless --

PC: the experience of --

AH: Yes. But also I really believed in free will especially when it comes to painting and one can choose to remake one's nature in painting. That's one of the great things about painting is that it is a language form that is not just expressive but that you can change your nature in that sense. So it started off with a desire for more things, a very simple desire of not wanting to reduce it any more than it had been reduced to. Like a large triangle just had a small triangle in the middle of it and the whole thing is articulated or the white ends at the top or the bottom. I could go through the whole litany.

PC: Right.

AH: And I think those things are quite important to me. I think they're very good paintings. Some of the best paintings perhaps I have painted. They are very good paintings and I don't deny them, and they were deep experiences for me. But I began to feel as though I wanted to put more things in. And I simply put more things but I put them in very frontally interns of this very frontal flat spatial thing. Even though I was trying to push the space out, through the drawing, it was still very frontal and very flat. That went on for a couple of years of just a desire to put more things in and to have more things happen. They were culturally bound by that kind of frontality and layering.

PC: But you also cut out the color, didn't you?

AH: No, no, before that.

PC: Oh, this was before.

AH: This was between 1965-1967. I'm talking about what led up to the desire for all these things. And then one summer I had this commission to do a set of murals for a Gropious building in Cleveland. Actually the commission was for one mural, I looked at the space and decided to do two murals for the same price as the one mural needed that kind of juxtaposition. One was an extremely simple painting of two colors, very deep red and a partial circle sort __ articulating the whole white space. The other was a very. . . And I sort of read a lot of Gropius' Eye of _____ because one was very simple and kind of ego centered thing, this big, big shape, kind of articulated with this sort of modulated arc, and the other was a very complex painting -- what I feel was a complex painting at the time -- of different shapes blending together like this. That was the summer of 1967 -- was it 1967? -- I think so. -- Or was it 1966? -- I think it was 1967. And when I came back that summer I said: I can't do this any more. And what I did was something very willful. After two years of scratching and nervousness and restlessness -- and this is where I believe in a kind of willfulness, 'thou shalt not'. I set up another series of 'thou shalt nots' and I said, "Al, stop bull shitting. Do you want to change? "Change __. Don't bull shit." And so I came back that fall and I said: whatever else I will do, I will not do X, Y and Z. I arbitrarily said: no color, no large shapes. Because conversely from what I had started out with ten years before -- which was "never repeat a shape" -- I went through the process in reverse. Another set of ' thou shalt nots': no color and no large shapes. So I started drawing with charcoal on canvas. And it just implied a kind of black linear line and that one step led to another, to another, to another, and to those crazy, nutty, cube paintings. When I first starting doing this, in the first three months I was high as a kite, I was intoxicated. If anybody told me they were lousy, I never heard it. I remember hearing comments like, "What's he doing?" or "Isn't that strange?" or "Isn't that interesting?". But looking back on it now it wasn't that I was so intoxicated as it was that I got so drunk on the thrill of it all.

PC: The new --

AH: Yes. THey were crude and somewhat dumb and naive and what have you. But I was high as a kite. What I'm saying is that I was so high that if anybody had said -- and I'm sure people did say odd things to me about it -- I didn't hear it because I was too drunk on the stuff to hear it. I was really in love. Its the kind of sensation. I think I'm painting better paintings now than I painted then. BUt you don't get that kind of sensation very often in your life of being drunk and high and in love. And I miss it. As I say, I think I'm producing better paintings today than I produced then, but I felt on the top of the world, I felt released.

PC: It came through in a way.

AH: And in hindsight all my friends say, "Whew! Wow! I'm glad those three or four or five years have passed and now your doing work. . ." And some friends, and I don't want to mention their names now, came to me three or four years later, five years later, and said, "You're doing paintings now that are almost as good as the paintings you did then five years ago." And what I'm saying is I'm sure they had mumbled something then but I wasn't about to hear it. I was drunk and high, and excited. And I miss that feeling. As I've said, I'm doing better paintings now, far better paintings, but without that sense of elation.

PC: Well, in a way you found what you were looking for without knowing exactly where you were going.

AH: Whatever it was, I miss it. I'd like to feel that again once more in my life. It was euphoric in the grand sense, really euphoric. It started negatively with the 'thou shalt nots'. The space, or the illusions or the allusions or the delusions or what have you came not from a program of wanting somehow to make spatial paintings; it came from a need to put more into the paintings. I found that if I kept stacking them flatly when I would put one shape over another I would paint the other shape out. And I had this terrific desire to put more stuff in. And I found pragmatically that the only way I could get more stuff in was to open up the space to and get it in there because the whole drive was to get more stuff in. All I was concerned with was getting stuff in there. I didn't give a shit how I'd get it as long as I got stuff in there. It turned out very quickly that I found that the only way I could get stuff in was to open up and make enough space in there to get the stuff in.

PC: Get space in that way in every direction.

AH: That's how, I think, the making of illusionistic or volumetric or breaking the picture plane and all the rest of those baboos in terms of abstract are were not programmatic, but simply came from a drive, an obsessive drive of wanting to put stuff in. Like I had to make a bigger box; the box couldn't be flatter. I didn't give a damn how I did it so long as I got the stuff into that space, and when I was painting flatly I kept covering it up. Every time I put something down it would get covered up by this other thing I wanted to put down. The only way I could do it was to open up that space. As I say, that's how it came -- it didn't come from a desire to sort of play Peck's bad boy or be a revolutionary sense of breaking the picture plane and all those other 1960's taboos which are now long behind us. It was simply more an obsessive drive of wanting to put a lot of shit into the picture.

PC: How do those work? because one of the things that I remember when I first saw them was that the line varied in width or thickness or whatever you want to say, which means some of them read in and some out and some ambiguous.

AH: What happened was. . . Well, they were all drawn in the same way I drew int he 1960's, in the sense that they were all painted by hand, so to speak. Subsequently I started going to using tapelines.

PC: Because they have very nice clean edges.

AH: Yes. Now for most of the lines in these paintings I use tape. But in the beginning they were all drawn, hand drawn, so they were all wiggles, so to speak, and so they have a kind of very organic look: a sort of hand-painted look. And the lines are all modulated to make those kinds of moves. And then I found myself in the middle of this new language, and it was sort of like one step after the other. And then it exploded and I just started painting, you know, just crazily. I was full of myself, I mean ideas just poured out of me, it was a euphoric year, the first year was euphoric. It was sort of like opening a closet and, you know, things weren't picked out; they were popping out. And it was just very euphoric, very, very euphoric. And I was just oblivious to all the negative feelings around me because I was euphoric. I can't emphasize that more strongly in the sense that I am very susceptible to negative criticism. But I didn't hear any of it. Now I know there was a lot of it. I didn't hear it. It wasn't a question of strength, of writing it off.

PC: You weren't listening.

AH: I couldn't hear it. I was too drunk to hear it.

PC: You know, one of the things -- speaking of criticism -- you have not had a lot of great in-depth reviews by --

AH: [laughing loudly] That's saying it nicely.

PC: . . . by particular people, we all love. And I was just wondering have you had any friends over the years who are critics who have -- ?

AH: Yes. One -- Irving Sandler.

PC: Yes. Right.

AH: He's a close and dear friend. What's your question?

PC: Well, I was just wondering, you know, you haven't had. . . Irving responds in the way Mr. Greenberg has, or some of the other people who sometimes seem to get so involved with --

AH: Well, Irving wrote a number of articles about me.

PC: Right.

AH: He wrote the "Al Held paints a painting" article and he wrote some other reviews. I think Irving felt that at a certain point it would be detrimental to me if he kept doing this, because I should just simply be out in the world and have other people get interested in my work, and that if he preempted all those things it wouldn't be very helpful. It think -- and maybe I'm being egocentric -- though I honestly feel that Irving is very interested in my work, still is, and has always been. But just that. I guess what I'm saying is that Irving did what he felt he could do. In a way I think that the reason that I haven't had a great deal of eulogistic critical appraisal is for two things. For better or worse, I've been parallels or peripheral to major art movements. I've always insisted that my work was complex, multi-level. Most art writers, especially most critical art writers like to think in simplistic terms. Especially I've always felt that the way to make a great critical career is to invent a slogan. No matter how absurd the slogan is, it must be a slogan. And in a sense I've always thought of myself as being too embarrassed. I'm serious, very serious, in the sense that what I've witnessed is that people have arrived on the stage, center stage made the absurd claim: "The king is dead! long live the king!" There'd be a whole series of jigs on a bed of hot coals proving how right or wrong he (or she) is. Then after like three or four years "Aha! he's wrong but good." So these people have had it like sort of like coming and going in the sense that this is a way of gaining a focus of attention, and after the focus of attention has sort of calmed down there's been a reevaluation of their work in terms of more complex and serious notions. And then some people have fallen and some have stood. And that's the way it goes.

PC: You know, one thing that's interested me because you are, by coincidence, of the same generation as many of Greenberg's people in some ways, yet you've never been involved with him in any way? Or have you? I mean do you know him?

AH: I've known most of them. I hate and love Clem Greenberg with a passion -- no, "love" is not the proper word to use for Clem.

PC: I was wondering --

AH: I used it facetiously. We have argued for close on to fifteen or twenty years. Clem loves an argument; I love an argument. We've been in fierce arguments and we've been in gentle arguments. I respect him for his clarity of passion. I disagree with almost everything he's passionate about. I think he's been an evil influence in the art world; and I think he's been a great influence in the art world. How do I justify the to things? Sociologically, he's been a great influence on the art world and I have to recognize him as such. He's also been a passionate advocate of particular sensibility and he will stand on that sensibility, and I think that sensibility has deep flaws, deep and profound flaws. But it is an authentic sensibility in our culture. It may even be the predominant sensibility.

The sensibility I see in Clem is the sensibility of an American romanticist. Now he hasn't been right about a lot of things. He hasn't been right about Pollock, he hasn't been right about Rothko or Still. But he was an early defendant of them and it is with his passion and his advocacy that he will stand because the paintings are very good. I like to think that there's more to Rothko, more to Pollock, more to these people than that. But even if that's all there is, that's a lot. I also would like to think that there is that deep romantic sensibility in American culture. I'd like to think that it's possible to change that.

PC: In terms of what changes?

AH: Well, with all the bull shit -- now I'm going to get a little grandiose -- with all the bull shit of the 1960's, with the Duchampian intellectualism or Minimalist intellectualism -- and maybe my competitiveness found essentially shallow -- I don't believe that American culture has produced a kind of Mondrian or Poussin, in other words,

intellectual painting. Not necessarily European intellectual painting but intellectual painting. I don't think that with all the rhetoric around Ad Reinhardt or Carl Andre, the literary people or whoever. I see the rhetoric as possibly intellectual but i don't see the work as making intellectual demands upon the spectator in terms of his thinking when he's viewing the work. Intellectual demands are made on the spectator of: is it art? or isn't it art? shall I make it art, or shall I not make it art? shall I accept it as art, or shall I not accept it as art? But there is no intellectual dialogue in viewing the work. And the great American painting as I see it, the mainstream of American painting has been the at area of romantic illusionism, that is Pollock, Rothko, et cetera. And I don't use the word "romantic" in a derogatory sense but in the sense of the great romantic tradition. Which runs parallel to American culture, 19th century paintings, et cetera. One of the aspirations for those black and white paintings, is for an intellectual dialogue in the viewing of the painting.

PC: Now what do you mean by that? I mean that's just a -- it can be so comprehensive or not.

AH: Well, I just said -- I started by saying I'm going to make my grandiose --

PC: Okay.

AH: In looking at the paintings the aspiration is to engage in a dialogue between the painting and the spectator in terms of what is actually happening int he painting, its not a cohesive, comprehensive scene, not a field, not a crack in a field. It is deliberately filled full of paradoxes, contradictions, logic, illogic, what have you, that is not done in a surreal context; but done in a quiet, comprehensive context in the sense of wanting the person looking at the painting asking himself where he is when he goes from Point A to Point B and how can he get from Point Three to Point Four, what happens when he arrives at that brick wall and he walks around it, what happens when he goes up and when he feels he is going down, what happens when he goes into a paradox and how does he deal with the paradox in the light of logic that's next to it. And on and on. What is the nature of multiple truth?

PC: You have a great deal of -- I mean I see parts of two here. They are not often what they look like.

AH: Exactly.

PC: I mean they look like triangles and maybe a circle, maybe or rectangles or boxes. But they don't necessarily follow the patterns of geometry.

AH: They don't follow the pattern of geometry; they also don't follow the pattern of ideal order. They're not systematized. But yet I hope -- and here I'm being a little modes -- after all this! I hope that they have a kind of contemporary structure. What I mean by "contemporary structure" is not the idealization of the perfection of man, i.e. Mondrian, of perfect order, but an order or a structure that is idealized but ordered and structured in the sense of our contemporary world in the sense of using paradox and contradiction and irony and logic and positivism all together to make a structure that is cohesive, coherent and useful.

PC: How do you mean "useful"?

AH: Useful in the sense that it's not endangering, it's not destructive; that it's positive, that it's an ideal to aspire to. To give a small example: paradox is not something to be afraid of, or ashamed of, or fearful of, but is something that may be a liberating thing.

PC: You don't mean didactic, though?

AH: No. I mean a paradox. I mean contradiction is not necessarily a negative thing. Or multiple truths are not an endangering or frightening experience. If one thing is true, it doesn't have to kill something else. But that kind of, not just experience, but belief. Experience is a positive thing.

PC: That's very interesting because what you're doing is rejecting the great tendencies of the 1950's and early 1960's that say, you know; painting must be flat, it must have shallow space, and so on.

AH: Well, more than that, it goes beyond the painting world. If one thing be true, all other things be false. If you're a capitalist, kill all the Communists, I'm being very superficial here, but that these things can exist in tandem and in tension, I go further, can exist in a healthy structure. And that's what the idealistic -- I use the word "idealism" in the paintings. With all those contradictions and paradoxes and multiple truths and multiple spaces and/or and that hopefully it isn't a symbolic painting, it isn't a painting that is set up with these different categories, that they come together in a healthy structure, a structure that is desirable, a structure that is inspiring, in other words, something to aspire to. And I use the word "structure" and I can't really define exactly what I mean, but I don't mean the description of an object. The only way I can describe it is using Mondrian as: if one takes Mondrian as the example of the nineteenth century idealist of the perfectibility of man, the way Marx did in terms of his , and if these paintings are recognizing the absurdity of the perfectibility of man and yet

aspiring to some kind of healthy structure that takes that kind of absurdity into consideration.

PC: Well, it's a kind of utopian point of view.

AH: It's utopian but it has all the paradoxes that we as twentieth-century people have come to accept as inevitable truths. But what I'm trying to do is go one step further in the sense of saying: but that's okay, now we can live with that, it is a liberating experience; and that the thought of the perfectibility of man is a damaging experience, a damaging thought.

PC: Well, who knows?

AH: Well, as I say, this is my opinion. But within those concepts one has freedom. Freedom of choice, freedom of movement and that its not totally egocentric the one truth or the one position.

PC: You know one thing that has interested me is in the painting on the left over there with the circles and the small squares and some of them have sort of small rectangular shapes. How exactly do they come into the painting? What are they supposed to do necessarily? I mean I have looked at those and they seem so ambiguous.

AH: Well, that's part of it, they are rather ambiguous, but also hopefully they set up a dissident structure to that over-structuralized thing -- that I've come to.

PC: They pull your eye around in terms of --

AH: Right. But also there's another --

PC: They don't explain the space they're in?

AH: Oh, no, no.

PC: I mean they do something --

AH: They're counterpoint; they're a kind of counterpoint. But also another image I like to use is. . . You know they're not done systemically this way. . . But one of the other images I like to use is. . . YOu know the black holes, the high density, et cetera, et cetera?

PC: Right. Yes.

AH: Well, if you visualize that those opaque circles and squares have the same mass as the open linear circles and rectangles in the painting but as the open linearness has -- well, the old analogy of the pound of feathers or the pound of lead --

PC: Oh, I see.

AH: Right?

PC: It's going back to the weights and balances again.

AH: Weights and balances. But again in this other way -- it's not exact, I don't measure these things and say: okay, that circle is a certain diameter and therefore that other circle has to be of another kind of diameter; it's done through sensibility and chance and what have you. But, as I've said, the images I like to use are the same weight, so that that circle in the middle is the same weight as the circle around it, the linear circle. Though one is very dense, one is very open. There's that juxtaposition.

PC: How do you do all that? Do you use straight edges and tape and compasses?

AH: I use a compass for the circles. But they're done very loosely to start with and it just evolves and gets closer and tighter and tighter.

PC: You mean by drawing first.

AH: They're drawn just very loosely until I get a kind of theme going that I find interesting. I like to think. . .

PC: Because they're not overpainted much, are they?

AH: Oh, yes.

PC: Are they? Some of them. . . I don't remember. Maybe they're -- back _____

AH: What happened is that I developed this technique of sanding which started int eh 1950's paintings, in the middle of the 1950's paintings. I've mentioned this before. So what I like to do is erase the sweat. And essentially that's what it is.

PC: So still in a way it's there but it's not as visible.

AH: There's as much work, if not more work, that goes into these paintings as went into the other paintings. What I'm doing now is a painting like that could be sanded three or four or five times. And then it has to be repainted over and over again. And every time I make a mistake I re-sand it. The technique is --

PC: What do you sand it with? I mean what kind of -- ?

AH: A big machine, a big grinder with heavy, heavy, sandpaper. It's actually a Bruback. They use it to grind weld joints with. It's very heavy stuff.

PC: Oh, yes, right.

AH: What the sanding does -- it's essentially a large eraser.

PC: But doesn't that end up giving you a very smooth surface to work on?

AH: A very smooth surface which is all mottled with, all the scar tissue, all the modulations, of all the undercoating and everything else and then what I do is I have a drawing on which I put all he information of the size of the canvas and the exact positions, and then I re-tape it and re-paint it. And that's how its all done. But then if I decide, let's say, six months later that I don't like something in that painting I've got the complete flexibility of going in there and sanding the whole thing out and redoing it. So I can keep changing paintings constantly into infinity if I choose to, if my thinking puts me to it. And so it ends up with a very, very fresh-looking painting that gives you the impression that it's just done quickly. I like that idea that no sweat shows and yet I have the option to constantly change my mind and revise and revise and revise but none of the revisions can be seen.

PC: Do you think you'll bring color into it at some point?

AH: Yes. I think so. Originally what I started off doing was that I won't return to color until I have a good idea for color. But I think now that the space is beginning to ask for color. There are some things that I can't do. For example, if I overlap some of these things I would like to do and it's coming closer and closer and eventually I will incorporate some kind of color when I get an idea for it.

PC: One of those days --

AH: It's getting closer. I've been fooling around with drawing for the last few years. I have some colored drawings that I've been doing for the last few years.

PC: Oh, really? So it's starting already.

AH: Oh, it's already stared, yes. But they're not successful. They're too obvious. I'm trying to develop some other ideas about them. The black and white paintings have more color in them than the colored drawings have, and until I can make some drawings that have more color than the black and white paintings I won't do it.

PC: I want to ask you what may be one of the most obvious questions: since you've painted so many large paintings, do you differentiate greatly between size and scale?

AH: Oh, yes, very much. Most people paint large sizes and no scale. I think there's a tremendous difference between size and scale, a tremendous difference. I like to think that I have scale in my work. But there is a radical difference between the two. I guess the only way to put it is that a painting or a work of art, a sculpture or painting, that has real scale would mean that it would change relatively -- it would change to some degree in the environment you place it in, but it doesn't utterly depend upon the environment for its size. In other words, if you took a painting out of cold water flat and put it in Grand Central Station, obviously the environment would change it to some degree but it won't look minuscule. It has some kind of internal dynamics that would __ retained and maintain it scale. I think that one of the problems with most modern sculpture is they keep putting it outside in the middle of New York City and it gets fucked over because most modern sculptors have no sense of scale; they have internal sense of scale, they have a sense of scale inside of architecture. Most modern sculptures does not function in the New York City environment.

PC: To make it big doesn't necessarily make it work.

AH: Right. Right.

[BREAK IN TAPING]

PC: Let me say it's Side 9 -- January 8, 1976 -- Paul Cummings talking to Al Held in his studio on West Broadway. To go back, as I said, to our chronology for a little bit and touch on some other points not necessarily in any sequence, but after you left Poindexter, which was 1962 or thereabouts, you had some exhibitions, one at Ziegler in Zurich and in Dusseldorf a couple of years later, and then with Emmerich. Had you joined Emmerich before that? Or did you join him in 1967? How did that come about?

AH: As I told you -- I think I told you this -- that when I left Ellie I was so guilt-ridden. . . Did I mention that to you?

PC: Yes.

AH: I was so guilt-ridden that I never approached another dealer. I spent about two years. . . I finally did convince Ellie that I wasn't rejecting her and running off with a more beautiful lover but that I really wanted to be alone.

PC: They have a nice painting of yours up there now at Poindexter.

AH: Don't get me started on that. Which painting do they have up there?

PC: It's vertical, somewhat narrower than that one, it's got a circle -- I don't remember -- a circle on the bottom and a large rectangle on top and another --

AH: They sold that painting.

PC: There are a lot of shapes in it.

AH: Yes. They sold that painting. It's off the one side and a white area on the other side?

PC: No-o, it's pretty well all filled, vertical, quite vivid really.

AH: She keeps digging them up. I can't believe I really sold her actually all those paintings. I lost a lot of paintings. my records are terrible. I trust Ellie completely. I really do except that. But she's coming up with all these paintings.

PC: Well I'm sure she's bought back things, too.

AH: I don't think so.

PC: Really?

AH: No, no.

PC: She doesn't spend that much money?

AH: No. Ellie sells at this point. She got those paintings very cheaply and now I'm sure she's realizing quite a bit of money on them. That's fair. I'm not one of those artists who begrudges a dealer --

PC: Well, its nice to know, too.

AH: Well, I think Ellie has it coming in the sense that. . . Frankly, I think that she's underpricing them; I think she's selling them to cheaply. But that's her business; it's her property. I'm not saying that I believe in private property in terms of art, paintings, what have you. But Ellie deserves it. She helped me out; she really did.

PC: She did what you needed when you needed it.

AH: Right. And I don't begrudge her this at all. I really don't. I wish she would be making more money off those paintings than she is. She's a little innocent about it. But I'm not going to stick my nose into it.

PC: But anyway, getting back to the years between --

AH: What happened was that I spent two years not showing and not being represented by a gallery at the heyday of all the going's on it the 1960's. Looking back on it, it was pretty masochistic or destructive on my part. It wasn't that. It was done out of guilt at leaving Ellie. But looking back on it, it wasn't a wise career thing to do. It wasn't thought out that way. At any rate, a girl call Barbara Cohen --

PC: Barbara Cohen?

[The banging on metal has started up again]

AH: Cohen. Who is now an artist. In fact, I think she is having a show here down the street today. She worked at Andre Emmerich's as a receptionist.

PC: Right.

AH: Tall, slim girl?

PC: Zucker now.

AH: Right. Barbara Zucker. Exactly. Barbara worked for Andre Emmerich as a receptionist at the time. This was in the middle 1960's. And it was she and another man who worked with him at the time -- whose name I've forgotten. Before Bob Miller came.

PC: I can't think offhand.

AH: They suggested to Andre that he should come down and meet me. And Andre actually called me up and came down. We had a long talk and he proposed that I join the gallery. And I accepted. Can you hear over that noise?

PC: Yes, it's all right.

AH: I wasn't quite ready for a show then. He was quite accommodating to anything I wanted. The deal we made then is exactly the same deal we have now in the shape of a handshake. I never asked any money of him; he never offered any money to me. There was never any contract. It was always on consignment. The paintings were to be sent to him, he could either sell them or he could send them back. To Andre's credit, the first two or three shows that were sent to him were all sent back. I bitched about it; I mean I wasn't very happy about it. But he, in turn, was quite supportive.

PC: Did he buy things?

AH: No. Absolutely not. He bought nothing except he bought one small painting, and I mean small, personally. He didn't offer to buy anything and I never asked him to buy anything. I had a teaching job at the time which really helped me out. But Andre was supportive on one hand, and very non-supportive on the other. He gave me my shows, which was very supportive. He communicated great interest and friendliness to me, which was very supportive. He honestly, I think, tried to sell my work. He couldn't. Or rather, as he said, nobody wanted to buy it.

PC: But you joined him when Pop Art was such a big thing, too.

AH: Oh, Pop was a big thing but --

PC: It didn't affect you?

AH: The color stain painters were really Andres meat and potatoes, and he was doing quite well. I mean not as well as the Pop people but he was doing quite well.

PC; Oh, right.

AH: I was odd man out. I sold a painting here and a painting there. There was a lot of money, a lot of paintings sold int eh 1960's and after that. To put it mildly, I was a bit frustrated.

PC: You weren't getting any of the action.

AH: Right. I wasn't getting any of the action; none whatsoever. It was frustrating, it wasn't just frustrating in terms of money, but it was also frustrating in terms of lack of love, what the money represented.

PC: Well, then all your age group, too, some of them were doing very, very well.

AH: Right. As I , it was frustrating, very frustrating. And aside from the money -- and the money is important -- I'm not trying to play the innocent artist -- money is very important, but it's also what the money represents: love and affection, desirability, of people wanting something you've done and are willing to pay for it. So there was the economic thing, needing and wanting money just to live decently. On the other hand the symbolic thing of what the money represented: love and affection, acceptance, or recognition that you're doing something important. As one stockbroker said on television when the commentator asked him, "Well, Mr. Stockbroker, why after you've made your first $10 million are you still trying to make money?" And with a look on his face of

absolute, authentic incredulousness, he answered, "But that's how the score is kept/"

PC: And there's still so much more to be made.

AH; It's not a question of making any more money, it's that's how you keep score. That's how you know if you're up or down or right or wrong. Well, I found that very amusing in the sense that artists ask more and more money for their paintings when they have absolutely no more need for the money. I've seen many, many artists whose lifestyle can't accommodate that kind of money; they just can't. So the money only represents symbolic love; it doesn't represent money any more. It's just like I've gotten as much money for a painting as Picasso or Michelangelo'. Again, it's just scorekeeping.

PC: It's points.

AH: Yes. It had nothing to do with money because most real artists their lifestyles reaches a certain level and then taper off and then they're busy doing their work and they haven't time to spend the kind of money they make and the whole thing becomes idiotic and the rise in prices and is only symbolic of sociological acceptance. Anyway --

PC: But how did these exhibitions abroad, you know, like in Zurich or Dusseldorf come. . . ?

AH: That man I spoke about to you before -- Vollenweider. It was through him and through contacts with him. He was a very influential man in this time in Central Europe. People would look to him for trends or advice or what have you. So it was he who turned these people on to me.

PC: What did you think about that? I mean having exhibitions abroad? Did you go to Europe for those?

AH: Oh, yes, I went to Europe. Remember I had been to Europe.

PC: Right. And this was coming back in a way.

AH: Yes, coming back. I've got this neurotic thing, and it is neurotic, it's really incredibly neurotic. I remember an incident, there was a very large show in _____ where I had a very large painting. And after the frustrations I had had in new York -- and I really felt terribly frustrated in New York -- there I was treated like a great artist. On the one hand, I enjoyed it; on the other hand, it scared the living hell out of me.

PC: For what reason?

AH: I backed away from it and ran home very, very quickly.

PC: You mean the responsibilities? Or --

AH: The responsibilities -- and that if I opened my mouth what would come out would be so stupid that it would destroy the illusion. If they think I'm a great artist, I'd love them to think I'm a great artist, I don't want to endanger that illusion. As I say, it's terribly neurotic; really it is.

PC: I know they can do that grandeur treatment in Europe which can really blow your mind.

AH: They did the whole number. On the one hand, I enjoyed it tremendously; on the other hand, it scared the living hell out of me and I backed away from it. I still get a little bit of Europe but not as much. As I said, that was a great big show. IT makes me slightly nervous because it makes me feel as though somehow I'm on the spot.

PC: For what?

AH; To live up to their expectations. I never would live up to their expectations and therefore I would fail and therefore it would betray my art and therefore I'm a schmuck and therefore and therefore, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So from grand egomania to number one shit all in one fell sentence. But I enjoyed it, I reveled in it in one sense; but really ultimately I couldn't enjoy it because I was fearful that I couldn't live up to image of the profound artist found, if they got to know me personally they would --

PC; Well, that sort of coincides with your anti-perfectibility theory?

AH: Right.

PC: How did that evolve? I mean I find that very singular.

AH: What's that?

PC: Well, you were talking before about perfection as a dangerous concept or a dangerous ideal.

AH: Well, perfection is sort of like something that is at an end. One thinks of perfection as the beginning of decadence. It's always the becoming of something or the evolution of something that's interesting. Once something is perfected then you begin to refine and the aspect of refinement has a plateau effect but ultimately it signals decadence. I like to think that one grows, keeps on growing. Just that.

PC: Where did Sylvia Stone come into all this?

AH: God knows! Sylvia and I met around 1959.

PC: Oh, really? That long -- ?

AH: Yes. Right after Yvonne. After I broke up with Yvonne I met Sylvia. And the relationship almost hit a disastrous rock of consequence or coincidence. She was going to the same shrink that Yvonne was going to. I literally rolled out of bed on that one.

PC: Oh, boy!

AH: It was a shock to have your recent ex-wife and your new lover sharing the same shrink.

PC: Almost a little too close for --

AH: Oh, gosh!

PC: That's fantastic.

AH: That was a beauty. That was something else.

PC: That's incredible. Was she doing sculpture then/

AH: No, she was painting, and she was a painter for many years after. She took a terrific beating because of me. You know, the world has changed tremendously. The art world was really a very great male chauvinist world.

PC: It still is in a lot of ways, I think.

AH: It still is in a lot of ways, but it has changed tremendously from what it was. Sylvia took a terrific beating being Al Held's girlfriend. And because she's not very socially aggressive -- I think she's intellectually and artistically aggressive person, but -- I don't think she's socially aggressive, she couldn't break through -- I mean she's too polite to break through. The association in the art world very quickly puts down people as being So and So's girlfriend, et cetera. She took a real beating for a long, long time. Just that. She's very strong; too strong.

PC: That's one of the attractions maybe.

AH: No, it's one of the repulsions.

PC: One thing we touched on a little bit before -- you did actually -- was teaching. Which you still do at Yale, right? I mean that continues?

AH: It continues. I'm sort of at the crossroads right now whether I should return -- I'm on sabbatical now -- whether I should return to teaching. For twelve or thirteen years I've been bitching about being forced to teach. Now that I'm selling enough work where I don't need to teach I have to have the dilemma of whether I want to return to teaching for the sheer joy of teaching.

PC: Is there any joy in that?

AH: No. But there are other things besides joy. What I have to figure out is what's in it for me in terms of Yale's -- I hate the politics of Yale, I hate the faculty; by and large they're a bunch of "money-ridden schmucks" quote unquote. But I tend to isolate myself in my studio and I have a tendency of working too much. And this is not necessarily a virtue. I'm not saying this in a virtuous way. I have a tendency to really --

PC: Going in and staying there.

AH: Staying there, watching television in there, reading in there, masturbating. I mean it's like the cave. I go less and less frequently to bars, my artist friends and I speak less and less frequently about aesthetics or other issues. Occasionally every year there are two or three kids who will appear who you can possibly talk to and through that kind of dialogue get me out of my studio. I'm not quite sure how romantic or how fulfilling this is at this point but that's what whould interest me. It's a very selfish thing.

PC: And keeps some human contact.

AH: Right. I'm speaking about what's in it for me and not what's in it for the kids or Yale or anybody else. I'm told over and over and over again how good a teacher I am but if I am -- and I have my doubts about that -- it's only by reflex, it's not by intention. I mean that. I don't intend to be a good teacher.

PC: It just happens to be a --

AH: I don't even know if I am. As I say, I have serious doubts about whether I am or not. As I say, people tell me, or society tells me that I am because I engage people. But right now i'm analyzing the thing for myself, what's in it for me now that I don't need the money. The only positive thing that is in it for me is the feeling of engaging two or three minds because the rest of them are bloody bores.

PC: Well, you know, that's a lot if every year you can find two or three that's pretty good.

AH: Well, I'm being optimistic. What I'm saying. . . And I have a fear of isolating myself in the studio. I have a fear of --

PC: Why is that, do you think? I mean what -- ?

AH: Well, I don't think it's healthy, that's all. I just thing it's unhealthy and it become -- I have a tendency to get egocentric as it is. I can build my own mountains very easily. And I've seen many other people do it. I don't think it's a healthy thing. Well, that's about all I have to say about teaching.

PC: What do you think you can teach the students you have up there?

AH: Oh!! I mean can you really want to go into this shit?

PC: Well, you know, a bit.

AH: Okay. Okay. I'll roll out all my cliches. Do you want to hear my boardroom cliches? Well, half believed, half true, not having a program not teaching anything specific because there are only two things that one can teach in an art school outside of undergraduate work, which is how to hold a pencil, how to turn a piece of paper upside down, what have you. But the graduate art school is involvement and commitment and the various ways of going about teaching involvement and commitment, of personal commitment and exercising intellectual honesty and discipline, of pursuing an idea beyond its logical consequences. Just all of those things. No particular style, no particular ideology with the exception of this kind of involvement and commitment or a kind of intellectual pursuit or emotional pursuit, but whichever suits your temperament. On the one hand, taking individuals and questioning their intellectual premises in their work. On the other hand, trying to induce other intellectual premises which are not necessarily the things which are interesting, just as a game an intellectual exercise. Sometimes I suspect that I do all this to avoid teaching anything concrete like what I'm really terribly interested in or terribly involved with. That's why I'm saying I'm not sure how good a teacher I am.

PC: But what concrete thing can you tell a young painter who is trying this and trying that?

AH: Well, I'm not sure that I haven't been a fraud in the sense of not teaching them what I'm passionately involved in. Which is my own paintings. On the other hand, I abhor seeing little reproductions of mine. But on the third hand, what else do I have to communicate? So sometimes I think that I avoid communicating that which is of my essence.

PC: But don't you think that kind of comes through generally? Or doesn't it?

AH: I guess it does. But I'm really thinking about my drives int eh sense that: why don't I sit down and talk about my things; why am I constantly analyzing other people's things; and why do I discourage people from working like me?

PC: Do you think that reflects back in your own work -- analyzing all those other people's work?

AH: No -- maybe in the past somewhat, but now it's like a game. It's sociological small talk at this point.

PC: You've done it so often that --

AH: Yes, it's a way of avoiding real talk. Like what I'm doing with you right now. It's a way of avoiding real talk about the things I really feel deeply interested in. I refer to the sociological bull shit thing as cocktail small talk. It's my way of making small talk of: "Oh, those poor young artists!" Oh, the art scene!" "Oh, art!" "Oh, this, oh that!" "Oh, the market place!" It's all cocktail small talk. It's a way of not having anything touch you.

PC: It's that kind of conversation where four people can talk about something they all understand but nobody is admitting anything.

AH: Yes. And maybe I don't want to talk about anything. Sometimes I think that's true in the sense that I do avoid very, very subjective intense talk. And that's the reason I have my doubts as to how good a teacher I am.

PC: Well, I pursue the things you avoid, what is an example or so of the things you would avoid, and on what level?

AH: My idealism, which I have an abundance of, which I can't talk about. I'm essentially optimistic about man, which when I get going on it sounds absolutely maudlin and sophomoric. I have a deep belief in art, of its "supremacy" -- I guess is the only word to use for it -- and its usefulness which gets very sloppy. I get very tongue-tied when i start talking about it -- its usefulness in terms of man's evolution. And I get very uptight and bugged about talking about it. I get vulnerable in the sense I feel as though I'm going to make a fool of myself being so sentimental or so foolish. In terms of my own paintings a word like "structure" which predominates my vocabulary. Even though I can't define it I keep using the word. I can't define what it really means. I know what it doesn't mean in terms of other uses of "structure", but i can't quite define it for myself in terms of putting a circle around it. Just things like that.

PC: It goes back to the "thou shalt nots."

AH: Yes-s. It's easy for me to talk about the "thou shalt nots" but it's very difficult for me to talk about what I aspire to.

PC: Well, that's the opposite.

AH: Right.

PC: Was that a way for you to say: I really want to do something I can't define, but I can define what I don't want to do?

AH: Mm hmm, that's it. Its always been much easier for me to define what I didn't want to do. And every time I tried to somehow touch on things I want to do. And every time I tried to somehow touch on things I want to do outside of the execution of the painting itself, I get too emotional, it's sort of like an emotional blood clot wells up in my head and i become very inarticulate.

PC: Is it because you haven't articulated those ideas frequently?

AH: That's a good question. I don't quite know. People have let me get away with my sociological banter and think I'm very verbal where I feel as though I'm terribly non-verbal because nobody has really pushed me on these things, and i clam up like; anyway and can't really talk about it. And I'd like to think that you're right, that I haven't had any practice talking about it. There's a kind of level of content that was very unfashionable during the 1960's. The content of conversations that the abstract expressionists had gotten to be boring, that kind of pseudo-existential --

PC: It got to be where they were down to the point where angels were dancing on pin points.

AH: Right. And then you got the reaction to that which was the whole formalist thing which was non-content, or art and life, everything that you did somehow connected with life and if you were alive, et cetera, et cetera, you didn't have to go beyond that. nd that was the whole Duchampian-Cage thing on one side and then you had the formalist thing on the other side. And I've always advocated a kind of I thought there was deep content in a lot of human gestures be they abstract or figurative or what have you, that wasn't being dealt with very seriously.

PC: In terms of what actually? -- in statements, in terms or statements about things?

AH: Well, no, it's just that -- again a question: why did a whole generation of artists,in fact, two or three generations of artists -- why is so much of modern art frontal? Why does the iconistic content of this kind of icon or frontality of something of an "it is", "I am" situation rather than. . . In other words, what is the nature of the kind of language we're using and the content that's built into that language and the refusal to use another kind of language?

PC: You mean the painting language rather than a critical vocabulary?

AH: Right. And then built into that all kinds of like within individual artists what they were after -- well, not necessarily they _____ were after but could anybody even make a fool of themselves by talking about what existed in terms of the work itself. So now you've got the other end of the pendulum swinging back now with the Max Kozloff's Art in Politics business which is happening now.

PC: Back to the 1930's.

AH: It's the other side of the formalist coin and somehow that whole middle ground gets skipped over. Which is the most difficult ground of trying to somehow come to grips with the real. . .

PC: That's why it gets skipped.

AH: Right. It's hard word. It's not hip. It's not -- you can't encompass it with slogans or cliches.

PC: Right.

AH: It doesn't get you very much mileage in society at large. At any rate. These are still things that preoccupy me; essentially, different languages and why people use different languages. But then within that, what is the nature of quality or the nature of the individual artist within that language structure. And why does an artist -- here I'm making sociological speculation -- deal with it subjectively. Why pick one language over another? What are you trying to say with that language? What do you say with that language? Then, of course, you see I am one of the few artists who refuse to permit Clem Greenberg to preempt the word "quality" from my language. Most artists run for the hills when they hear Clem Greenberg use it and say: I won't touch that word because Clem has sort of made it one of those bad words. I think art begins and ends with "quality" and I just don't happen to accept Clem's infallible eye as a criterion of quality.

PC: It's fascinating given your relationship with Emmerich. That you're still. . .

AH: Oh! --

PC: Not susceptible to -- him.

AH: Well, I've always had this theory that there are two kinds of virtue: one is high virtue and one is low virtue. A beautiful blonde; in old sexual terms -- let's put it that way -- in 1940's sexual terms not 1970's sexual terms; a beautiful blonde who remains a virgin is virtuous. An ugly virgin with no temptations -- what's the virtue? I've never been really tempted -- I don't think there's any virtue in it. One does what one has to do. I don't mean that -- it sounds terribly maudlin -- I just mean to say that if you find yourself rowing in a rowboat own a team and somebody comes along and says "that's very virtuous." But it wasn't virtuous at all, it just happened that he was in his rowboat rowing down. There was no conscious effort to be virtuous. It's just simply that that's where I find myself. I find myself doing what I'm doing. Its irritating to hear it's virtuous or its not virtuous; or it's this, or it's not that. It never was conscious. I never set out to be anti-Greenberg. It's just simply that a lot of his ideas are repugnant to me.

PC: Well, there's nothing like a good contrast.

AH: They're just plain stupid -- well, they're not really stupid. But they are, as I said before, I think -- well, to paraphrase Monet, Clem has an "Impressionist eye". Within that Impressionist sensibility he has -- you know, I'm paraphrasing the Monet-Cezanne thing, Cezanne talking about Monet -- "what an eye". . . Within the context of his aesthetic he's undoubtedly very, very good and I don't take anything away from him. But it is an Impressionist eye: it's a color field eye. But also he happens to be, as I said before, kind of in the mainstream of American art, that kind of romanticism, that kind of atmosphere. Anyhow, to get on Clem. . .

PC: Yes. One thing I wanted to ask you about which you just briefly mentioned and that is: you have a place in Boiceville, New York.

AH: Boiceville is very close to Woodstock.

PC: It's up there?

AH: It's up in the country.

PC: And you had said something that your way of living and working there is quite different from the city. Does that affect your work? I mean do you do a different kind of activity there?

AH: Well, when I go up there the world falls away and it is my castle. Down here int he city or at Yale or what have yo, there are all kinds of intrusions. I don't mean intrusions of people visiting but more of intellectual competitive intrusions; those kinds of intrusions; which are really intruding. It isn't somebody coming by and having a drink with you, I'm talking about real intrusions: into your sandcastle in the air.

PC: Somebody you have to be competitive with.

AH: Exactly. There I'm the kind of the mountain because I see very few artists there, and work very, very well. But I suspect that I carry a lot of the tension or the content or the crises of issue-centered things up there with me and I paint it out over the summer and come back to the city and get _____ irritated and nasty and bitchy

and fucked over and fucked up and very competitive, and then go back up there and work it all out of my system again.

PC: How did you come to go there in the first place?

AH: It was sheer economics. Sylvia and I were together and we had gone away to East Hampton to Howie Kanovitz and Mary. Mary was of an old East Hampton family. Howie and Mary were shacking up and they didn't want anybody to know about it, or they didn't want her mother to know about it, I've forgotten now. They found this camp near Sag Harbor, with these two buildings on it, two shacks, and invited us out as a kind of cover for them. We took the place and stayed there. It was really a two-car depression garage where we stayed all summer. We were at Sag Harbor for two summers. We had a marvelous time. I used to paint outside under the trees. I used to nail my paintings to the tree?

PC: That sounds incredible.

AH: Well, like at East Hampton those two years up there we used to get rained out every year. And then one year Sylvia took a place up in Provincetown. I followed her up there, took my canvases and started painting outside under the trees again. Finally I moved across town to a shed that Ivan Karp had. I'm now talking about 1960 - 1961. Ivan was up there trying to write, becoming the great American novelist. Do you remember that?

PC: Oh, right. His great novel.

AH: And he had again this little garage and he let me paint on the outside of a battered garage that overlooked -- I remember I used to b able to walk across the graveyard in Provincetown, I carried my paintings across the graveyard. Before that I had never gone away in the summer. I always spent summers in New York and painted all summer. That got to be very attractive and was very nice; you know, afternoons on the beach. And I do like swimming very much and I do enjoy swimming. But we knew -- I mean there wasn't even any speculation -- we just simply knew that we couldn't possibly afford anything in East Hampton. We tried to buy that camp, by the way. It was owned by the woman who owned the newspaper in Sag Harbor. It was a sentimental place for her because she had spent her honeymoon there years and years before. It was just a depression. It really was nothing; it was in a swamp, marsh. But we loved it and it was beautiful. We tried to buy that but she wouldn't sell it to us. I had very little money. It was 1960 - 61 - 62. I had just started teaching at Yale. But I had gotten this bug into my head that I really would like a place. And then Stan Landsman, an old friend of mine who had a place in Woodstock, called my up one day and said he had seen this place across the mountain that I might be interested in. He told Sylvia secretly: let him look at the place on top of the mountain but don't mention the place down below because if he saw the place down below he would never take the place on top of the mountain and it's no good down below so don't show it to him, Sylvia, it's terrible. Well, we drove up there in the middle of winter and saw this place on top of the mountain. It was two little houses and a barn and eight acres of land. They wanted, well, $8,000 for it. What happened was that one little house which was one hundred yards away from the other house they had just sold for $1,000. I said: you're a schmuck, what did you do that for? For Christ's sake, what are you doing? There was a one hundred and sixty degree view of the whole mountain, for forty or fifty miles around; talk about space. I got furious with him, and one thing and another. He said, "But I have this place down below if you want to take a look at it." It was about this time of year, January or February, and the snow was up to your knees. We hiked through the snow. There were four barns. I walked upstairs to the big barn, to the loft and my head rose above this. . . and I said, holy shit!

PC: All that space.

AH: It was a beautiful space! Even in the middle of a snowstorm. And I held my breath and I said "Wow!" ITs really run down! It was a barnyard that belonged to large farm owned by a gentleman farmer. A beautiful place with four barns. I said: what would you do with a place like this? it's so big. He said; you're right; it's so big; it's terrible. I said, "But if somebody were interested in a place like this what would you ask for a place like this?" He said, "$8,000." It was like God was looking after me in the sense that it was priced at $8,000 and they took a $2,000 down payment and a montage for the rest. It was as though God had figured out exactly what I needed between Sylvia and myself. Cause Sylvia need a studio, I needed a studio, and a house to live in, we all had kids, what have you. I had never been to Woodstock before -- well, I had been once or twice but Woodstock was not a place that interested me. I mean I much prefer the ocean. I have now grown very fond of the mountains; I have grown very fond of the woods. It was like somebody dropping something from heaven. It was like made for us, the scale, everything about it. IT was just like built for us. By coincidence that big show in Europe took place at the same time. So the money, the first little bit of money that I had ever made, and the farm came at the same time. So I was able not only to put $2,000 down, but I was able to take $6,000, and renovate one of the barns for a house and studios for us. Every year I spent there and I have painted there and gradually fixed up the place over ten, twelve years. Every year there would be another project to do. But I always put in a full day's painting every year. There wasn't a summer spent there that wasn't a very productive summer, besides doing work around the place.

PC: Do you find you do more work there than in town?

AH: Oh, yes, lots.

PC: There's less interference?

AH: Well, what happens there is I get bored. I get up at sunrise; the sun wakes me up; and I go to sleep by the sun. I get up at five-thirty with the sun, I have breakfast and get to work. And then by noon I'm ready to take a drive into Woodstock. I look around Woodstock and there's nothing there; nothing. So I say: well, no action here. So I go back to the studio. In New York if you get bored you go out, you find some action, and there goes the rest of the day. Up in the country if you get bored and you go _____ off some place and after you're more bored than the studio was you go back to the studio. And that's how the whole thing came about. So that was really very fortunate.

PC: You said you spend most of the year up there not, about half?

AH: About half. We go up in the early spring and come back in the fall. I would like to try the whole winter up there and build another studio up there. But Sylvia isn't interested at all. I'd like to give it a whirl for a couple of winters. I've pretty well got sour on New York at this point. I don't use New York the way I used to. I don't use New York any more.

PC: Well, you have to use it, otherwise it gets to be a weight.

AH: Yes. But I don't use New York any more.

PC: Why?

AH: It's the same thing as what I said to you before about teaching: I spend the whole day in the studio; I don't do anything else; I come home and watch television and go to sleep. I don't hang around the bars andy more. I don't talk to people. As much theater and concerts that I go to I could easily do it in the country. I'd go to the theater more if I were int he country than I do here. Just that. So I don't feel that I'm using New York and I feel as though I'm putting up with an awful lot of shit in New York and not getting any benefits from what New York has. But Sylvia doesn't feel that way. So here I am in New York.

PC: Does your work schedule differ a great deal when you're up there? I mean in terms of whether you paint, or you draw, or whatever?

AH: No. It's just that in New York I feel that I have to fight for time. I happen to work every day; I like to work every day. But in New York I have a constant feeling as though I have to sort of like be a prick about my time. I don't feel that way in the country. I always have enough time to take the car in and get it serviced. In New York I never have any time. I can't make calls. In the country I can do all those things. It seems as though the time pressure seems to be entirely different.

PC: There are the same number of hours in the day. What makes the difference?

AH: I don't understand. I don't understand. Galleries are close, the market place is close; doctors, shrinks, dentists, all those things get put off until the fall and winter. It's true that there's nothing that I really do. If you want to shop in the country, you know just jumping in the car and driving down to the grocery store is nothing compared to fighting your way at Grand Union here. I really don't understand it. My shrink would probably say it's all neurotic. I have this desperation about time that I don't have in the country. I feel I can do more in the country. I do more work in the country. And I don't understand why I have to fight for the time that I have to fight for here.

PC: Does Sylvia work as much up there as here?

AH: No. She does a lot of work up there but not as much as I do. But here it's a struggle, a constant struggle. And I dread turning on the answering service.

PC: All that Bubub bub bub.

AH: And the things I have to call back on. I just. . . well, as I say, it's a struggle. I get hysterical just talking about it; I really do; I want to kill.

PC: Once in a while I go to the country and after three days I can't stand it, it's so quiet.

AH: Do you work there?

PC: It's pretty hard for me.

AH: Well, you see, that's the difference int he sense that I work there. I draw and I paint there. And I do a lot of my reading there. I do more reading there than I do here.

PC: What do you read?

AH: Anything from aesthetics to philosophy to novels to essays, newspapers, magazines. But I do most of the novel and essay reading there; I don't do very much of that here. By the time I get home from the studio here I just want to flop in front of the TV set or read the newspaper or what have you.

PC: What kind of novels would you read?

AH: Oh, anything from contemporary novels to the Russians.

PC: Whatever you run across.

AH: Anything I run across. Sylvia is the buyer of books. They're lying around and I pick them up and read them. The theoretical books I buy.

PC: For example?

AH: Oh, like the Levi-Strauss books on Structuralism or the philosophical books of Philip -- I keep blocking out on the name -- that Austrian on Aggression --

PC: Do you read about art, art criticism, art history ever?

AH: I read a lot of art history books. The magazines infuriate me; but I expect there is a sense of competitiveness. I've stopped buying magazines; I don't buy art magazines.

PC: Nobody buys them any more. It's fascinating.

AH: I look at them when I come across them in a gallery or at somebody's house or what have you. But I don't buy them any more.

PC: I think you have to be twenty-five or six or something to grab Artform the minute it hits the stands.

AH: Leo Steinberg is somebody I respect. That book of his on the criteria, I think is quite interesting. He makes interesting points. I respect Clem. Rosenberg I've grown to like less and less.

PC: He's less interested in art, I think, int eh last few years. There aren't many people to read any more.

AH: I'm just trying to think. . . I read randomly. I don't read --

PC: No program.

AH: No program. And it's mostly what Sylvia brings around, except, as I said, like if I come across a book that I want to read like the Structuralists books. There's a whole bunch of Structurealist books -- I've now forgotten all --

PC: What was the appeal in that? I mean why were you interested?

AH: Well, years ago I got very interested in Levi-Strauss, but I got interested by coincidence. I got on an airplane in London or some place and I picked up an issue of Encounter in which there was an interview with Levi-Strauss. This must have been in about 1965. It was a dialogue between him and Sartre on the differences between his thinking and Marxs and what have you. I found it very interesting. My interest in Structuralism or Levi-Strauss has nothing to do with the kind of hip thing which. . . I don't think I understand Levi-Strauss. As a matter of fact, in the last book I read by Levi-Strauss he started talking about abstraction as decoration and image, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, that whole kind of song, that kind of side, so I took the book and threw it across the room and said: to hell with Levi-Strauss. I'm not interested int hat whole hip thing of like the Bob Morris syndrome and what have you. I just find that there are a number of ideas there that come close to, and I say "close to" because they're not examples -- they're not mirror images of what I'm trying to do in the sense that I like the effort to look at something rather than simply. And to boil it down to an essence. I like the gesture of the Structuralists to constantly unfold things in its complexity and constantly somehow like opening things up, as you open things up they get more and more complex rather than purer and purer. And I'm very attracted to that gesture of every time you get through with a layer it gets more complex and more multi-faceted rather than simpler and simpler and simpler. And that's what attracts me to a lot of the Structurealists in linguistics or

mathematics, physics of what have you. Those are notions that attract me; I find them sympathetic. And I have no desire to make correlations between that and my work. But I do find those things --

PC: The ambience.

AH: The ambience is very sympathetic. A lot of it I simply don't understand. I don't have the capacity to understand it; I don't have the language to understand it. But I find it exciting and read some of it.

PC: Okay.

[BREAK IN TAPING]

PC: This is Side 10. You have mentioned that you were thinking about using color at some time maybe in the not too distant future. When did that idea sort of appear or begin to appear?

AH: The day I stopped using color! I operate out of guilt. I'm still going to return to oil one day because that's what a real artist does is work in oil. You know, promises, promises. But I do seriously hope _____ to get back to color. I think I've mentioned this before that I've done a lot of drawings. A few years back I started doing a whole series of drawings. But so long as the drawings and the color ideas in them don't have as much light or information or space as the black and white things, it seems to me that the use of color would be only decorative. And one of the things I would like to avoid is the decorative use of color. And so the only reason I would use color -- and I would like to use color -- would be to further the spatial or structural situations. I find that I'm coming across situations now where if I were using color it would free me to do things that I couldn't do in black and white, such as overlapping lines and spatial things that could happen if I were able to overlap two forms rather than having to stop because the color black would then intermingle and destroy the form. But I have to find a way or means of using that color to insure it's not a decorative quality.

PC: What are the colored drawings made with -- I mean are they pencil or ink or -- ?

AH: They're made with just felt-tipped pen.

PC: Pen, yes.

AH: And they're linear. And right now all I've been doing and I don't think -- well, I'll change my mind tomorrow -- but I've been simply working with the, essentially the line, the line in color rather than the line in black, but I haven't colored in the background. When I color in the background try to cover over it to form the background, it just doesn't satisfy me, to put it mildly. It's not a satisfying solution. I don't quite know what that means. I suspect it means a number of things but. . . I want that neutral ground to be able to light on, so to speak, and every time _____ starts getting, it starts getting broken up into another situation the context of it carries over to another kind of situation which is undesirable.

PC: Unresolved maybe?

AH: No. Undesirable. I don't want that environment. I don't want that environment or that context for the dialogue.

PC: It's interesting, when you talked about the rectangles and the circles that appear in the paintings and also in the drawings, and I noticed the other day when I went to Emmerich where you have a large drawing in that exhibition, that next to some of the largest squares are these little tiny dots, two or three not really round dots but different shapes. How -- when did that start and do they have the same purpose, or is that some new -- ?

AH: Well, I've got other marks in things, little -- they're impulsive they're whimsical, they're meant to punctuate, they're meant to disrupt, they're meant to counterpoint. If there's a structure there, it's intuitive structure, it's not a planned manipulated structure. It's still based on some kind of reflex or intuition. In the drawings a lot of those marks and symbols come out of just getting stencils at a store. They're electronic stencils, or mathematics stencils, or computer stencils. You know, there are all these little stencils that are made for --

PC: Plastic.

AH: Right. And I buy all of them and I use things that appeal to me that have a particular graphic image that seems to be abstract enough to hold me or interest me. I'm interested in language. Obviously, I keep using that word.

PC: Yes.

AH: I believe that painting is a language and operates on all the levels of language evolution and development

that you can make for any other kind of language. Maybe that's the reason that I'm very interested in all these marks now on a black surface or a white surface. Yet on the other hand they are painted; they're incised. And they're not simply marks on the surface. I still respond to paint and the sensuous evocation of their own light. I think my paintings have some light in them. Whatever that means; I'm not quite sure myself what that means. But I'm very interested -- I mean I can paint away at a painting and instinctively move things around not so that they get better but that the light situation, the balance between the blacks and the whites, what have you, create a light situation which is something I look for not consciously or deliberately but it's something I know that the painting isn't finished until it gets that evocative lightness. So that light quality is part of the painterliness which I aspire to. Otherwise I could easily just put marks directly on the canvas with pen or pencil, what have you, just as well because I am interested in that other level of that language structure.

PC: Yes. I notice in one area of this particular drawing there's a it looks like a rectangle in dimension and there's a black rectangle in what could be the the back panel or the side panel or triangle as formed by the lines. It sets up very ambiguous --

AH: Right.

PC: -- reading possibilities on how you see that plane or rectangle or space or whatever. They don't seem to answer the question; they seem to pose questions.

AH: Yes. Well, it's my -- it's what I said before about Mondrian being the personification, let's say, of the nineteenth-century idealist of the perfectibility of man, of everything being structured in terms of rational thought. But we both have lived long enough to understand that if, say, Mondrian got into a car and was going to drive to California he would plot it out by three days, three hours and thirty-three minutes to get to California. But we know the indeterminacy: a flat tire here, a slowdown there, a detour there, you get up late one morning, you fell in love one afternoon, who knows what; and it's in some ways like computer programmers in our lives', for those determinacies even though we know we're going to get to Los Angeles but we anticipate a certain percentage of indeterminate events that will approach us tangentially that we will react to. It throws us off our course. But we would take the same course and take pleasure in it. It's not something that we deal with as being notoriously bad or evil or destructive but essentially what we find as in our food or spice. We anticipate it with pleasure, we look forward to it. And if it doesn't happen we find the trip boring and really "well, we got here." And the difference again between nineteenth century thought and our thought is that we're forced into this multiple truth situation that so many truths exist in the same space at the same time. And then in terms of space that, you know, we were born into this egocentric world that wherever we can reach we can touch and feel up and down and sideways and yet all of our intellectual knowledge has destroyed all that, and how do we accommodate ourselves from the egocentric body relationship to space of the mental relationship of space of seeing man walking in space and flying in space. So that all --

PC: It changes everything.

AH: It changes everything and becomes a series of paradoxes. And one of the roles I would think that culture has -- and art is part of that culture -- is to accommodate man to another sense of reality so he could evolve into that sense of reality so it's an accommodating thing of allowing him to speed up his biological evolution, so to speak, so that he can function in the real world joyfully rather than as something that he must do for survival -- but he enjoys; that a contradiction doesn't necessarily have to be endangering.

PC: It can be enjoyable.

AH: Right.

PC: Another experience.

AH: Well, almost with joyful anticipation -- 'Oh! here comes another contradiction! What I'm saying is that with a kind of nineteenth-century egocentricity contradiction would be endangered because it would point to a contradiction of a truth that we believed in, or the believability of this truth, it would endanger that bubble, it would burst that bubble. All of our bubbles have burst and yet they still exist in some peculiar way. So how do you make accommodations for the burst bubbles that still exist? And al the things that you suggested about the drawing simply posing questions and problems. . . Just to pose those questions that I've been discussing seems to be easy enough, and I think a lot of people in our society are very aware of this and can easily pose the question.

PC: Right.

AH: Why is the word "structure" so appealing to me is the question posed is, as I've said, easy enough, and is common to us in our circle of friends and acquaintances, but to resolve those things and make them structurally -- well, for lack of a better word -- "pleasing" to where you can create a world out of this that is not just a

description of the horrors of reality but the celebration of its becoming something beautiful and desirable and in that way the evolution of man is in a romantic, sophomoric way, I think, is a desirable aspiration for an artist. And if I could come close to that I'd be very, very happy. I'm getting embarrassed with my --

PC: No, it's an interesting way of saying that and the striving goes.

AH: Well, what's embarrassing about it is that it's all desire. And the irony with art is that there is no rule, there's no measure, I can't measure it and say: I've accomplished half of it, I've accomplished a quarter of it, I've accomplished ten per cent of it. It's all utter bull shit or --

PC: Well, it's the whole --

AH: The madness of art is that you can aspire to things, but the aspiration. . . I've heard hundreds of artists, aspiring artists, that are absolute shit with lots of lousy work and incredible rhetoric. One hesitates to bare the breast of these kinds of aspirations because you know how silly they sound and you've heard them over and over again.

PC: No, but they're always different, I think, in terms of history and time and the person, their specific interest, the interest of the culture they're in. I mean an artist in California might say the same thing and have a totally different sense of direction.

AH: That's true.

PC: Or Chicago or Paris or some place, wherever.

AH: Well, the point I'm trying to make is that I am interested in these things and find it difficult to talk about them. I'm also very, very well aware that what I say and my aspirations for these things in the paintings may be horses of very different colors, and there's no way that I can measure it. And the anxiety that every artist has is that nobody can even tall him whether he's right or wrong. This makes for great hallucinations about all kinds of artists poor, rich, good and terrible, and this is the dilemma of the life of an artist really: that there's no measuring rod. He can't measure it and say: I've accomplished so much, or I'm on my way.

PC: Or I've moved from A to B to C. But dealing with the unknown, or maybe the unknowable, is one of the most incredible challenges that somebody can take up.

AH: Well, I don't know if I'm dealing with the unknown or the unknowable. I don't know if artists or art deals with that.

PC: Well, I mean in terms of constantly--

AH: No. We're only talking about measures of accomplishment, measuring accomplishments. Not dealing with the unknowable. And I think there are two different things there. I think that what are deals with is knowable insofar as the artist demonstrates his knowledgeability of it. Again I go back to my language business in the sense if it's knowable ____ Vermeer exists, therefore its knowable. Its knowable because he exists.

PC: That's after the fact.

AH: It's knowable in the sense that art is knowable because it exists and you see it and you experience it.

PC: But I mean in the process of making it.

AH: The process of making it only has to do with its measurability; it's measuring whether you are accomplishing anything or not. But if you happen to accomplish something therefore it becomes knowable by the act of its existence.

PC: Right. But when you look at a blank canvas --

AH: I look at a blank canvas. Its a Bobby Ryman.

PC: Well, they match, you know.

AH: See you don't really look at that blank canvas.

PC: Right.

AH: I can actually convince you of it.

PC: Oh, more than that.

AH: I can convince you of it. I can insist on it. Therefore ____ focussing you will be convinced that it is.

PC: Absolutely. Well, they always say good art criticism is half anyway. But, you know, because you have explained how you work and paint out, and sand and reduce, you obviously don't know exactly where you're going when you start in your painting?

AH: Well, that's one of my premises. Now I don't mean to say that that's one of my premises that I have created, it's one of the premises that I have inherited culturally in the sense that I prefer to work that way. I work from unknown to known, a great big arc that goes through it and there are many, many different steps, many different stages. At this moment in my life I like to arrive at a very, very clear, precise painting that is very, very clear and very, very articulated. But it starts from no plan whatsoever except that I well know stylistically that it will be. . . But I think that's true about any artist that stylistically he has committed himself to certain things that he will paint within that style --

PC: Oh, right, but, for example, you don't know -- That's what I mean.

AH: You're absolutely right. You know the configuration or scale or anything else. It changes radically from day to day, from moment to moment. But I do like to have the painting very, very clear. Again it's a search for a context or a content or a structure or a situation and through; the manipulation -- through these relationships we grow, change, evolve, and manipulate these things until something appears that begins to coalesce, begins to make sense in terms of reality. What I mean by reality there is reality on the canvas. It seems to me very uninteresting to render a concept that I already have. There doesn't seem to be any reason for it in my mind. I like to make structures that I can't imagine. If I could imagine them in my mind there'd be no reason to make them.

PC: What do you mean by that actually -- something you can't imagine? You mean that it appears in the process?

AH: Well, I don't know about other artists, but I have no imagination. I mean that. I can't imagine a painting in my mind.

PC: It has to physically happen in front of you?

AH: Yes, through an evolution. But I don't sit and imagine or see a painting. It never has happened. Frankly, I don't know anybody who does. I mean imagination in terms of seeing a vision, seeing something in front of you is meaningless.

PC: I think sometimes people imply imagination in terms that, you know, you will put down a circle and then another one, or another line, or this or that, and it's the impulse that leads you to make the next gesture.

AH: The impulse is that I know that I can always get rid of the mistake.

PC: That's the value of imagination.

AH: No it isn't! It's the value of experience. You know if mistakes are done they are revocable. No. My trip is: what happens if? And nine times out of ten "what happens if" is a bag of shit.

PC: Off it goes.

AH: Off it goes. But, as I've said, my trip is "what happens if" but i can't imagine what would "happen if" until I put it down and see it. And the reality of seeing is quite different from the reality of mentally imagining it.

PC: Oh, true.

AH: That's the reason that I think I'm a painter int he sense that nothing appears real to me, or manifests itself to me, as a concrete idea until it appears, until I see it. So I find theories or ideas of people rendering ideas in terms of images, I get very foreign to it I get kind of uninterested. I can't imagine why one would want to go through the exercise of doing something -- why bother doing something if you've already seen it? It doesn't make any sense.

[Interruption]

Any way, where was I? Oh! --

PC: About the imagination.

AH: The argument is so passe at this point that it's, you know, the argument -- so that's like -- it's one of the old

_____ of the 1960's which are already past and young people find so disinteresting.

PC: They don't care.

AH: Oh! they don't care! It's shocking how they don't care. 'What are you talking about, Mr. Al?'

PC: To bring things up to date here a little bit, in 1974 you had this mammoth show at the Whitney [Museum].

AH: Yes.

PC: How did that come about?

AH: How did that come about? It came about because Marcia Tucker, a curator at the Whitney, got interested in my work and proposed an exhibition for the Whitney. Which the Whitney than accepted. And then she called me and asked me if I would accept. Which I did. And that's how it came about.

PC: In twenty minutes it was all over. I mean there must have been some thought on your part, wasn't there, on whether you wanted to have one? Or --

AH: Well, here's what happened. Marcia never said a word to me. I had known Marcia for a couple of years previous to the show. She said nothing to me until she got it past the board. When she got it past the board she called me up and proposed the show to me. It was proposed for the third floor. And I said, "No, Marcia, I can't do it ont he third floor. It's no good. It won't work." She said, "I'll thin about it and get back to you." She thought about it and went back to the board, I guess. I don't know the gruesome details but she came back to me and said, "What about the fourth floor?" I said, "Outside of the natural light at the Modern and the Metropolitan it's the best space in town." I do like natural light. To be perfectly honest, I grabbed it. I grabbed it because I hadn't been offered a big show like this before. It was very attractive to me because I had something to prove for the 1960's paintings, which I felt were rejected by a lot of people in New York. The black and white paintings were sort of like a current struggle, that was an ongoing thing. But the 1960's paintings I always felt very badly about that they weren't as well received as a lot of other people's paintings were received. So Marcia and I went to work on the show. I liked the idea of the fourth floor because of its big space. I think the fourth floor space for my work is better than the Modern, better than the Guggenheim and the only other space -- which of course was out of the question, I mean I'm not a total egomaniac -- would be the Metropolitan because I love natural light.

PC: Oh, those great galleries.

AH: Yes. It's the natural light. The natural light is spectacular. And every time I have a chance to talk to an architect about building a museum I say: I don't care what you build; you can build anything you want to build but put skylights in. You know, the whole business about: we can get you light as good as skylights is absolute, utter nonsense. Skylights are just incredible.

PC: Maybe mr. Geldzahler will see the light.

AH: Anyway, I took the space. It was a good space. I like Marcia. I trusted marcia. So the combination was good. The timing was good.

PC: How did you pick the work? Did you pick it? Or --

AH: Marcia and I picked it together. We sat down with all the work. Fortunately, the 1960's paintings were done very, very slowly and evolved. And also I owned most of them.

PC: Still?

AH: So there was no problem. But they were clear -- it wasn't a hard show to pick. The 1960's paintings weren't hard at all. They fell into place very, very easily. There was a question of whether we wanted to show the paintings before the 1960's painting, the thick heavy impasto paintings.

PC: There were one or two.

AH: There were three. What happened was I wasn't quite sure I wanted a retrospective. Frankly I didn't want, it got to be ____ little too serious but then it came to the point were I thought it would be nice to show those earlier paintings. The early paintings weren't too difficult either. It was more difficult to pick out the black and white ones because there were more of them and I was closer to them and I didn't have the perspective of time. The truth is that I could have used another floor; I'm serious. The show was a relatively small show for the size of the paintings, the number of works. So the black and white paintings were a little harder to pick. And there were any number of paintings I would like to have shown but there just simply wasn't enough room. And I like to think that I hang well. I personally hang paintings low. I get pretty tough about it because I know that it has to look good.

I'll take paintings and throw them out of a show rather than hang too many paintings. So I'm pretty good about that.

PC: Did you work on the installation then with her?

AH: Marcia had control of the installation. But there were a lot of panels that had to be put together physically so I was up there all the time so I had some input. And it was a little bit of a struggle. marcia is very -- how shall I put it -- "protective about her terrain" and she really wanted to keep control of her terrain. And I don't blame her. And I was very anxious about the show. Being _____ was my one and only show and I wouldn't have another one for quite a while. It worked out very well. It balanced out beautifully in the sense that she designed the space and we agreed upon most things. We had a little bit of a hassle about some small minor things but they got resolved. I think the show hung very well except for one thing, which was the room with the early pigment paintings. It was a little bit of a hodgepodge. But all the other rooms I thought were quite good given the space. I just love that big open space. The back room we did what we could do, you know, being pragmatic about it. It was Marcia's idea to put the big Greek Garden across the whole back wall. I had no idea it would fit. At first I thought we couldn't put it in the show, that it was too big and would take up too much room. It was her idea to put it across that back wall and I thought it worked out beautifully. A lot of people not looking at the dates thought I had just painted it.

PC: What was it like when it was finally installed and you went in and looked at everything?

AH: I was too stoned, too exhausted and too stoned. At that point it was all like getting it right. All the decisions had been made and then it was just a matter of. . . You see, the 1960's paintings, a lot of those paintings were painted in panels and had to put together and retouched and so I had a lot of work, physical work, that only I could do. So at a given point, a week before the show, it was sheer work. Decisions were pragmatic and came fast and furious: hang it low, hang it high, hang it here, spread it out, push it, pull it together. But when you're going like that you can't step back and look.

PC: well, there must have been some sensation at some point when it was all done. You know, you had never seen all those things like this.

AH: Yes, but I an cynical or skeptical enough of my own emotions to know that -- I knew I couldn't judge it. I knew I had done as good a job as I could do and I worked my ass off. And Marcia worked her ass off. But I knew that I was too deeply into it to be able to step back and look at it; I mean I couldn't step back and look at it at that point. A month later I could, but not then, no. I was just too tired and had worked too hard. I had enough experience to know that I couldn't see it.

PC: what was the reaction; that you finally had from it? It's been a year and something now since it's over.

AH: I think the show in a strange way. . . You see, I was very frightened about this show in the sense that. . . You know, when you have a big show like this it's not like having a show at a gallery. People really come to the show saying: okay, what's he coming out with? show me. It isn't just like another show in a gallery. It's okay, what's this guy really all about? I felt very good about it. I felt very good about the reaction int he sense that I'm not saying that everybody in town loves me. I'm sure they don't. I'm sure there are still an awful lot of people who don't like the work at all. It changed in character a whole attitude toward me in the sense that. . . The sense that I get since the show is that my credibility has gone up, that people -- I say "people", I don't know what i mean by "people" -- are more willing to give the paintings the benefit of the doubt. They may be worse paintings, though I don't _____ ____ but people are willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. The show convinced them of something, of my seriousness or what have you. I know that an awful lot of people did not take me very seriously before this show.

PC: Really? You had direct knowledge of that, or implied -- ?

AH: Oh, sure. What I felt good about the show was that there was a body of work there that stood up, or that I felt stood up, and I felt very good about that. I felt very good about being able to look at my show and I felt very proud about what had happened, what the work looked like there. And those 1960's paintings got a look again int he sense that people were able to see them again. The 1960's paintings had a chance to be reintroduced in another context and i was very, very grateful about that because I felt as though they had been passed over unfairly. They got another look, another viewing and, I think, a more fair viewing. As I've said, what a show like this does if it's a good show -- and I think the show was a good show -- is it allows groups of people, or people, what have you, to look at the work with a less credulous eye, maybe perhaps to accept some of the premises a little more readily than they would have. I think that a lot of my work was always looked at as serious but not quite interesting enough, but quite serious. I'm not saying that this show has converted the world to my doorstep but i think it's allowed people to take me a little more seriously than they had in the past.

PC: Do you think they can see it easier after the years have gone by and other things have happened?

AH: Oh, yes, I think so. Also I think that, you know, styles changed in the sense that with a lot of people beginning to paint a heavier, thicker surface the paintings weren't so thinly painted as they were int eh 1960's, that those concerns of color weight and masses on the surface were able to be seen again, where when I was doing them they always seemed as superfluous nonsense that had no meaning, and they could relate to them more easily now. I don't know. I feel very good about the show. It gave me a very good feeling. It gave me a feeling as though I had accomplished something. Well, it was a very good feeling of being able to go in there and look at that and feel as though I had done something; it may not be Matisse and it may not be Picasso but it gave me a feeling as though maybe there was some hope for me and maybe there was some hope for me and maybe I could become a Matisse or a Picasso.

PC: Become yourself?

AH: Oh, I'm not too interested in becoming myself. I really am not. I think that's -- if my aspirations were to become myself I would be very uninteresting really, really very uninteresting. I'm not very interesting. It's my aspirations that are interesting.

PC: Right. Well, that's why -- that's the whole --

AH: I separate the two.

PC: Oh, do you? Why?

AH: Oh, yes. Well, aspiration is becoming, it's never quite there; and yourself is always the past, it's always past.

PC: Oh, I see what you mean.

AH: So, at any rate --

PC: Okay. [Tape recorder turned off.]

[END OF INTERVIEW]