Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Hugh Townley, 1972 June 5 and July 24

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Hugh Townley on 1972 June 5 and July 24. The interview was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

What follows is a DRAFT TRANSCRIPT, which may contain typographical errors or inaccuracies. The content of this page is subject to change upon editorial review.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]

HUGH TOWNLEY: Okay. I think that they should, if they are going to record this stuff, they ought to record it and let it go at that. The business of transcribing it is rather spooky.

MR. BROWN: To begin with, then, I will ask, could you just say why and how, maybe, you felt interested in going into a career in art? Did this start very early in your life?

MR. TOWNLEY: No, it didn't. I never thought of it until I was in the Army, where I had received the minimal amount of half-assed training to be a photographer. Based on what I had done in high school and as a result of that, I wanted to go into commercial photography when I got out. By that I mean, you know, the corner portrait store. And I went to art school. I went to the University of Wisconsin's art department to study about color. I figured this was the new thing, and I would make a million on it. They made me take some sculpture courses in the course of events, and I went astray right there.

I also took some anthropology courses. And for awhile, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was able, because of the confusion at the university at that time, I was able to practically write my own ticket and take the wildest set of courses you could think of. So, it was touch and go between anthropology and art.

I went off to Paris to study with Zadkine and have been in art ever since.

MR. BROWN: Well, in Wisconsin then, were there teachers who influenced you or anything of that sort?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Or you just found yourself and your home?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, a little bit of both. I think the students influenced me more than the teachers did. But there were some very provocative teachers there, most of them belonging to the friendly school and most of them very patient with me because I couldn't draw, didn't understand it. And my views of sculpture were most immediate and not based on study or anybody else's work. I did that later, you know. I looked at other sculpture only as I started to make it; I hadn't paid much attention to it before.

MR. BROWN: But your idea was just to get into it yourself?

MR. TOWNLEY: Right.

MR. BROWN: Carving?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, carving. At first I did a lot of heads of people. And they fascinated me, and I did some wood carving. But I went to France, working with Zadkine. There were only about six or seven of us. Some of the more formal aspects of the thing came through. I had to do that [inaudible] anatomical man, much to Zadkine's distress, and a number of portrait heads.

MR. BROWN: What was he like as a teacher?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, he was pretty tough. I went to Paris, got acquainted with [Inaudible] on the boat, and we lived together for awhile. He was studying with Zadkine, too. He broke away very early. I used to go home every night to a hotel on the River Seine and swear that I would never go back the next day. You know, the hell with this guy, who was too severe, I thought, too demanding, and too strange.

But every morning, I went back. I think we were there at about eight, stayed till four. We came on Saturday mornings to draw. He was a good man. He was just one of these people — well, it was five or six years after I had left him that — before I discovered a lot of things that he had told me, understood them for the first time.

There was a period where almost every sculptor you ran across in this country of my age, at any rate, or thereabouts, had studied with Zadkine. I mean, very strange, with strange results. Ken Nolan [phonetic] studied with him, too. There weren't very many people who were painters who did, but—

MR. BROWN: Why did they study with him?

MR. TOWNLEY: I don't know. He was available, I guess. I think he was less restrictive in some ways. He spoke English, which may have had something to do with it. He had been some time in America. And he was a solid man in his own way. He had done nothing but his own work all the time. And he had a nice studio, you know, small. It wasn't like Roget, where you, you know, some Englishman would translate his remarks, which were more or less the same every Saturday.

MR. BROWN: Was Zadkine with you mostly days of the week when you were there? Did he work closely with you?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, very closely. It seems to me that he would work with us either all morning or all afternoon, but rarely both. When I met the guy, he said — it was before I had gone to class. He said, "I'm going to be a mother and a father to you," and he sure as hell was. I mean, he told me, "Don't eat sausages. We don't have pure food laws in this country." I mean, "Wear a scarf, the fog can kill you, you know, the smog." And, "Haven't you seen enough of that girl?" And, "Isn't it time you changed your café?" and so on and so forth. And he really meant it.

MR. BROWN: You were into drawing, too, by then?

MR. TOWNLEY: No, I wasn't.

MR. BROWN: You were more [inaudible] in what you were going to —

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, no. I hated it, did it poorly. And I didn't draw until moved to Bristol as a matter of fact, although I taught drawing a number of times and in a number of ways. For myself, I couldn't see any point in it.

MR. BROWN: What point did he try to make, or people of Wisconsin? What did they try to make? Because if you were going to do sculpture —

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, everybody said that sculpture and drawing were very closely related. I think that's one of the things that put me off because it isn't at all. The volume is one thing, and the line is another. And just because the volume is seen in silhouette as a line or an edge doesn't make for an easy translation. I just didn't see the need for it. Actually, I did do something that I have never called drawings. They were sketches. Frequently, they were understandable only by me, and had to do with how I would proceed to build a thing, you know, the sequence of events that would take place, which I would — which thing I'd cut first, how I would attach this, the relative size of this to that.

I still have sketches that go back to 1948 of this sort. I sketched in books, and I have them all, and I rarely look at them. And I am not about to rush into it.

MR. BROWN: These are no more than structural diagrams, were they, something like that?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yeah, or nutty ideas or peculiar attempts to document something for myself so that I wouldn't forget it. Memory aids, perhaps, or an observation of some mechanical device, something that would fascinate me. And the usual written notations, phone numbers and that sort.

MR. BROWN: Well, you said when you first got into sculpture, you were doing, wanted to do portrait heads.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I did them. I hadn't done anything else, so it wasn't a matter of real choice.

MR. BROWN: And this kind of getting all around, working around weekly in the form, the volume, and space, is this what has always fascinated you mainly in sculpture?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, no. The sculpture I do now has nothing to do with it. I do very many reliefs now, which can be seen only from, you know, about 180 degrees in the front. And the sculpture that I do that's in the round, which I'm doing more of after sort of being away from it for two or three years, and big and blocky, about 10–11 feet high and concrete, or hung from chains, like that thing over there — one chain of 30 or 40 pieces, or 70 or 80 pieces hanging off of it. It's much different than the head-like thing.

MR. BROWN: Well, this can be moved, can't it?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, yeah. But we don't — I don't think that we would agree that the spaces in that are similar to those — they are not architectural spaces, and they are not, you know, portrait spaces. Strangely enough, when Harold Tovish once saw that in our garden in Boston, and I suppose he was trying to pay me a compliment, he said, you know, "That could be a very credible figure of a man. You know, those are his toes there, his knees, his chest, head, arms, shoulders." I thought that was not only sweet, but it had me looking it in a wholly different way.

MR. BROWN: You look at it as an accretion of parts?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, yes.

MR. BROWN: An accidental grouping?

MR. TOWNLEY: No, it's not an accidental grouping; it's rather a careful grouping. But it's certainly a changing group of situations. If I pick it up and hang it outdoors, the composition of the parts will be much changed. That's one used to hang outside in Boston, and on the dock out here.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: Much to the amusement of the local fishermen, clam diggers. They used to come by on Sunday with their girls in the motorboats, circle around the edge of the dock, show them this thing, and then depart.

MR. BROWN: The lighting would have been far different outdoors.

MR. TOWNLEY: Um-hm. And with ice on it.

MR. BROWN: So, the time with Zadkine, did that give you some momentum? Or how were you after you left there? You were in London briefly.

MR. TOWNLEY: I was. Well, from Holland I went to the Hague, where I was a guard in the Marshall Plan for a year, almost a year. Then I went from there to London, where I stayed for another year. When I was in the Hague, I did a lot of work on my own, making armatures while I was on a job, which was just sort of babysitting a building at night. And then I'd go home and put plaster on the armatures.

I did a lot of reading. I did a — well, I made the acquaintance of a number of architects and potters and writers in the home, mostly in Amsterdam, some in the Hague. And that was the best part about the whole thing. It's also possible to visit Paris fairly frequently.

Then off to England, where I studied at the London County Council School of Arts and Crafts in Holbern [inaudible] with Victor Passmore [phonetic]. I left his class after awhile because it was a class in mural painting, which I wasn't interested in, I guess, which moved so terribly, terribly slowly. Anthony Hill was a close friend then. I knew some of the people that were involved in the Goodief [phonetic] thing then, but didn't partake, and some writers, Mervin Peak [phonetic]. Collotsy [phonetic] was at the school at that time, just starting his teaching and just starting some of his earlier shell bronzes, which I liked then and which I like now.

Then I came back to the States.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: And instantly got myself a job as a janitor at the University of Wisconsin. I ended up wanting to get my wife back from England. And —

MR. BROWN: Had you met in England?

MR. TOWNLEY: No. I had known her at the University of Wisconsin. We married in London.

While I was in England, I had gotten sort of acquainted with the works of Bucky Fuller, and the first thing I did when I got to New York was go visit him in Forest Hills. Then I went out to Wisconsin and got myself a job. I had a chance to work for a commercial sculptor in New York, the kind of guy who made window displays and Paul Bunyons and model airplanes and stuff like this. And I had a chance to teach at the Layton School of Art with — how did that start? It seems to me that I started teaching a night course up there. And then they decided they wanted me to teach summers, and I moved up to Milwaukee and started teaching full-time, which was about 23 or 24 hours a week.

MR. BROWN: Did you like teaching?

MR. TOWNLEY: I did. I didn't like the wages, and there were a lot of things I didn't like about the school and the way it was run. It was a new building. And I think I was probably terribly, terribly severe as a teacher, being young at that time and intellectually indoctrinated from my talks in England and in Holland and in France, I suppose, and my associated with nothing but artists. I must have been a real chore.

Then let's see what happened.

MR. BROWN: When you came back there, were you still living with artists? If you had had your choice, would you have —

MR. TOWNLEY: In Wisconsin?

MR. BROWN: Yes. If you had had a choice, you would have still been with artists?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, yes. We lived in a Coach House off of Prospect Avenue, which has since been removed. And all our friends were artists. Most of them were artists and fellow teachers or painters or something like that. That was my second wife Jean, who was a painter. I stayed at Layton, I think, four or five years.

MR. BROWN: How was Milwaukee as a place to work in?

MR. TOWNLEY: I enjoyed it. There was an art critic at the time there named Frank Guttline [phonetic] who was, if not good, certainly provocative. The newspaper was excellent. It was the height of the McCarthy days, Joe McCarthy, that is, and a terrible period politically for those people who were involved with, you know — had any path in politics at all, which I hadn't. But there were a lot of McCarthy sympathizers. That was the only bad thing about the place. But you could find what you wanted there, by and large. You could go to Chicago and see a damn good show once in awhile. Frumpton [phonetic] Gallery was there. It was very satisfying.

And I liked the country very much. The Wisconsin country has always appealed to me. The western part of the state is just delightful. From Layton, I had a chance to teach at Beloit College, and I did. At the end of that year, my wife and I got a divorce. And I quit teaching there for rather complicated reasons having to do with the Chairman of the Department's wife, who is now my wife. And spent most of the summer in Aspen, Colorado, doing not much of anything, and then came here to Boston — not here, but to Boston — and taught at Boston University for five years, and enjoyed Boston and Cambridge. I lived in Cambridge and enjoyed it just immensely. It was a great town, lots of places to eat, lots of music of all sorts, and at that time great people. You know, you could walk through Harvard Square any time day or night without the slightest qualm of anything at all.

Then, after that, having distressed the people at Boston University to a fare-thee-well by teaching nonfigurative art, nonfigurative painting and so on and so forth, I had the chance to come to Brown University, which I took. And I'm very happy about it. That department has been a good one here, with a close association between artists and art historians. How long that will last, I don't know. Quite awhile, I trust. Certainly as long as their interest keeps up, ours will.

So, I've been here for — let's see — 10 or 11 years. And that brings you up to date, I think.

MR. BROWN: Well, at Brown you feel you can be much more open? Whereas you said at BU there was the figurative?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, I was quite open at BU. I think that's what bothered them. But I was not figuratively oriented.

MR. BROWN: And was there a kind of a group —

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, mercy, yes, a stronghold of sanity in art.

MR. BROWN: Why did this happen?

MR. TOWNLEY: Why did it happen?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, they truly believed that the figure is the only thing worth painting. And most of these people are all products of the old Museum School, Reed Kee, David Aaronson. And they, you know, are constantly driving the last nail into the coffin of the space cadets.

[Laughter]

MR. TOWNLEY: And it is as though it was a bastion of sanity. It is in their minds. That is what art is all about, is about the figure and the interpretation of the figure. [Inaudible]

MR. BROWN: What would you say was the shortcoming of this?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, it simply isn't true, in the first place, which is something of a shortcoming. Then I think there is there a bit of complicated social relationships involved in a guy who thinks he's got the only damned answer.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: So I think teaching becomes — under those circumstances, you've got to be one of the boys or get out. I got out, and Art Poner [phonetic] got out. And eventually, they got rid of Hans Kreeks [phonetic].

I think that greater teaching can be done under a more diverse atmosphere, an atmosphere that has a greater variety of elements to it. And this one is sort of monolithic.

MR. BROWN: So, though you found Boston to be a place of many things to indulge in or get into, on the other hand within your own working conditions it was rather restrictive?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I wasn't restricted.

MR. BROWN: You were sort of an outcast?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, yes, to a certain extent. But I don't think — not very much. They just did not like what I was teaching. They rarely said much to me about it. But the relief when I left must have been, you know — I'm sure that it was celebrated one way or another. But then again, I celebrated, too, moving into a situation where I was still in the company of artists. There were a lot of them at Rhode Island School of Design, several of them that I admired very much, good students, just as good, if not better than those that at Boston University. And an atmosphere of growth and change, an awareness of tradition without an awesome, tedious regard for it.

MR. BROWN: Is this a lot owing to Brown and to who was there and what —

MR. TOWNLEY: No, I don't think that it owes — that much is owing to Brown. I think so. I'll take both positions. Part of it is due to Brown; part of it is due to Rhode Island School of Design; part of it is due to my own creative response, you might say, to the social situation. I was not expecting anything but the best.

Brown at that time didn't have a particularly distinguished studio staff, and in many ways it doesn't today. There are certain aspects of the studio staff which are quite weak; the same is true of the art history staff. But on the other hand, there are some bright contacts made. And it can be a very enjoyable place to teach. I wish that the University at south [phonetic] had more regard and more knowledge of what they had in hand. It doesn't. And consequently, it wastes a lot.

MR. BROWN: You mean it doesn't make such a use as it could?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, the administration of the university has gotten its ideas about the Brown art department from one member, or perhaps two members, of the department. And I think that this information is filtered through sort of poker-playing camaraderie. They really don't know what they've got in the line of talent, like Fleischner, who got a Tiffany [phonetic] this year, just last week, doing a thing for Governor Rockefeller, a large architectural piece. And Clarin [phonetic], who is truly a wit and a brilliant teacher. For instance, those two, I think — to me, will have more coming through. You know, this woman Maggs Harries [phonetic] seems to be a good sculptor. And she will be teaching with us next year.

The art historians — Geordie [phonetic] is a very stimulating guy and has bugged me into doing, you know, more than one thing. I think Champa [phonetic] will prove to be the same. Fred Leicht [phonetic] was one of the most responsive people in contemporary art I have ever met, who is an art historian. George Downing has an eye like an eagle for contemporary art and is a gold mine of information about what's going on. He's a narrative.

MR. BROWN: Which is all too little appreciated by the administration?

MR. TOWNLEY: Right. They are unaware of it.

MR. BROWN: Which is [inaudible] to say that they have some of you on as ornaments?

MR. TOWNLEY: No, I don't think that's the case. But I think that part of the administration is just about getting over the idea that art is sort of fairies, going back to the sort of 1930s business, which is a far cry from a realistic attitude. And I don't know. You can't expect people who have been raised on science all their lives to suddenly

take over the operation of a school that's supposedly up to its eyeballs in the humanities and get somebody to understand everything at one blow. The desire to know is not there, I'm afraid, in many of them.

MR. BROWN: Was this true of the other schools, Wisconsin and BU as well?

MR. TOWNLEY: I think Boston University, probably because of its very good theater and very good music department, treated its — you know, had a pretty decent view, economically and — well, just economically, about the art department. They were connected and sought out as a group. And it was hoped that one was feeding the other, which wasn't always the case. But it was a healthy environment, and I think the university was aware of it.

The University of Wisconsin, when I went there, was in such a hell of a state of transition with the thousands and thousands of tough, you know, "Give me the information so I can get going" GIs, that the art department, you know, wasn't even considered. But there again, they had a good drama program. They had a nice quartet on campus, the Pellarty [phonetic]. And you know, things were highly regarded.

MR. BROWN: As music — you mentioned earlier that music has always been an important thing for you to have around you? You mentioned in Boston and Cambridge.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, no, it hasn't been as important for me as it has been for a lot of other people. The availability of it is important. I turn it on; I turn it off. Or I move into it; I move out of it. The thing was, though, that in Boston or even around here now, with a good FM radio, you can pull in all sorts of stuff. You can turn on a radio and get something you'd like to listen to, or something that you can get in a mood to listen to in a short period of time if you weren't ready for it before. This hasn't always been possible.

Sometimes I find that music stimulates me. Sometimes I find that it does just the opposite as far as getting my work done. Frequently — more and more frequently, I have to turn the music off to get work done.

MR. BROWN: Are colleagues pretty important to you then?

MR. TOWNLEY: Some of them are and some of them aren't. Those that are compatible, probably, I think are always the most important and most interesting. The art historians Leicht, [inaudible], George Dunne were always very provocative, still are. I see them all [inaudible] in Europe. And some of our new ones are, too.

MR. BROWN: What about people who have bought your work, collectors? Have any of those you have developed pretty close relationships with?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, I think some, I have. Lou Pollock [phonetic], for instance, is an attorney in Boston, who has a very good eye for most contemporary stuff, almost outrageous stuff, and a good sense of humor. He has become quite a close friend. There are people in Milwaukee. Yeah, I think by and large. I don't care to trot out the names of all of them. But many of them are quite close.

Some of them are close without ever talking about art, you know. It's not a question of buying the stuff; it's a question of just having had met, having met through the purchase of a work of art. This is constantly happening. You meet people, I meet people, in the arts — I'm sure it happens in all the other fields, too — that you later begin to admire for other facets and other aspects of their personality. Danny Robins, for instance, who [inaudible] apparently. It seems to me we rarely converse, but it's always sort of wonderful to watch him talk and deal with people. And his wife, too, they are both bright. [Inaudible] people, Bates Lowry [phonetic] and his response to people and his situations. Fred Leicht, again, is just a wonderful guy to be around because of this constant stimulation. Corin [phonetic], when he's drawing cartoons, he frequently has his pen out and comes up with these lovely, nutty ideas. If possible, I sit next to him at faculty meetings because I can watch him draw, and occasionally he gives me one of his drawings. That's the only way to go through a faculty meeting.

[Laughter]

MR. BROWN: Maybe you've got a choice. Say you don't. Would you prefer to be without having to teach at all?

MR. TOWNLEY: I don't know. I think I would like to teach less, and I'd like to teach differently. I think I would like to keep my hand in it. It makes me feel better. I don't know quite why that is. I think it's an association with people doing — who are concerned about a common thing. And I think that I myself can get too self-involved if I stay in my studio all the time working on my own work. I need to get out and talk it up a little bit or listen to somebody else or just watch somebody else, and hear something completely apart from myself. So I find students are stimulating, some of them. They sure as hell aren't all stimulating.

MR. BROWN: How do you teach? Is there a method?

MR. TOWNLEY: No. Well, yes and no. I teach — I try to get a sense of where the class is, and then try to keep in

touch with each individual in the class, and move the individuals and the whole class at once. Sometimes it's easier than others.

The mechanics of drawing or sculpture are rather simple. I don't believe in drawing in class. I do believe in sculpting in class. I believe in talking about the stuff in class. Drawing from the model in class is to see that it can be done. But I feel that teachers should talk about the work, question it: Why did you do it? How did you come to this conclusion? And if you had to do it over again, how would you? And so on. And to encourage the students to begin to make critical value judgments of this sort.

And I feel it's necessary for them to make up their minds that they're going to do something. If they don't assign problems to themselves to solve, to draw in their sculpture, I sure as hell will assign them because this is something that must be done. Experience must be gotten. It has to be direct. I do prefer to have them pursue their own thing. If I think it's wrong, I stop them or change them or, you know, demand or command certain other things.

MR. BROWN: A good many of them now must be working with heavy equipment. Do they become kind of overwhelmed with process at times, of what you can do?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I think that students and teachers get overwhelmed by the process. There has been so much yuck about getting a foundry. To get a foundry, or do you have a foundry? Well, we don't and I don't think we ought to have one. And I think that we have in the sculpture department at Brown — the main problem is not that you're going to pour Browns in a hole, but what is the shape of the hole, you know, that you're going to pour it into?

My feeling is that a lot of these things are cookbook problems. When you want to find out how to weld something, pay some guy in a body shop 10 bucks to teach you how to weld on a Saturday morning, and then practice and work. The same thing is true of concrete mixing. There is — obviously more involved things are sometimes hard to deal with, but they can be dealt with.

The main problem is, what is it you're making? Not, how are you making it? You will find a technique which is compatible, and then the how becomes very important. But sculpture is form and ideas a certain sort of pushing, I think, more than it is the ability to make 180-pound bronze casting every three days.

MR. BROWN: A great deal of the process or happening and the like, the doing of something has been a reason for people going into art in the last decade, at least, hasn't it?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yeah, I would agree with that.

MR. BROWN: Has it affected you and your teaching, the pressures you deal under?

MR. TOWNLEY: Somewhat, but not terribly. I don't know what you mean by "happening."

MR. BROWN: Well, I don't mean literally the big "H" "Happening," necessarily. But watching how it's done, the carrying it through.

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, yeah. There's something very romantic about the idea of walking into a foundry and pouring bronze. You know, everybody wants to do it. The Vulcan syndrome comes out and is all, I guess. But it still comes down to, what is it you're pouring bronze into?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: In the end, if that's what they want, let them work in a foundry. But to be an artist is another process. And pouring things is only a part of it.

I begin to question if I'm making any sense. I seem to be getting duller and duller.

MR. BROWN: To be an artist, what has it meant for you?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I don't know. I plead the Fifth on that. I'm one of these — I would have too many reservations about figuring that out. People are constantly asking me, "Why do you sculpt the way you do?" or "How did you get into this?" or "What does that mean?" "Are these literal symbols?" I don't know. I could say I do. And I think that it would be — it would be just as misleading as to say that I don't. I know a fair amount about my sculpture, but there's an awful lot I don't know about it, about why I do it or how I got into it. Or in a way, what it means.

MR. BROWN: Do you feel you have any particular role doing what you're doing?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, I've got dozens of roles. You know, and I like playing most of them, or I wouldn't play them, I guess.

What do you mean?

MR. BROWN: Well, I mean, as an artist, do you think that there's some special function you perform? Do you think in terms of your end results, on yourself or upon others?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yeah, that makes — I think one of my functions is to make these things that I make, these pieces of wood and concrete. And obviously, I'm not sure that another function is talking about it the way I am now. I reserve the right to change my mind. This tape will not coincide in any way with any other tape ever made. You know, you begin to question these things. Perhaps that's why I doubt them.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: I've heard so many explanations for why people are artists. I've heard so many stories about how they get their ideas. I've heard so much yuck about, "We come from a long line of idol-makers or weapon-makers," or something like this, which was a Zadkine theory, that I don't believe any of them. They're not really satisfactory. I don't mind that they're terribly romantic. But they're terribly far-fetched, by and large.

I think more people are involved in art to make a buck than we have any knowledge of. I think a lot of them are involved in art because of some action or they finally found something they could do. I think a lot of people are in art to in some way isolate themselves from some other aspects of society.

MR. BROWN: Are you happy in it?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, yeah. Very much.

MR. BROWN: Do you mind having to part with work when you sell it? Or is that something you've always expected?

MR. TOWNLEY: I think — well, it is. I'm conditioned to having to sell the stuff. If I was wealthy, I think I would keep it all, except I would give away work that I wanted to give away to people I wanted to give it to.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: That would be the ideal situation.

MR. BROWN: Have you had to work for dealers pretty much your whole career?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, I have.

MR. BROWN: Has that been happy or just a working relationship?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, it's been happy and sad and very straight. I've had — probably the dealer I admire the most is Alan Frumpkin [phonetic], who is my dealer in Chicago. There's only one fault with Alan; that is, he didn't like my work.

[Laughter]

MR. TOWNLEY: So our association didn't last long in that regard, although I see him whenever I go to New York — not "whenever," but frequently when I go to New York, and like him very much. I regret that he doesn't like my work. I worked with [inaudible] in Boston and for one show in New York, and enjoyed that relationship fairly much.

MR. BROWN: What makes a good relationship or what [inaudible]?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, I think the support of a dealer, and an honest exchange between artist and dealer. That means that the dealer gives the work he needs, you know. If the guy is going to have a show, he produces enough to have a show. And when he sells the stuff and the dealer gets paid, he pays the artist his cut.

MR. BROWN: Do you see that they always were a marketer?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I think that the better ones are certainly critical, and they certainly are selling stuff. I hate to use the word "marketer" or "merchandiser." Someone once called Glimpsher [phonetic] "a great merchandiser, a genius in the field." He's a critic. He sells the stuff. He gets the stuff, but I don't mean he gets other artists of like type or things — we talk about building up a stable. He chooses a group of artists which

represent to him what he wants to do, what he wants to show in art. I think that's very critical, because it's assembling an attitude.

I think they're also responsible for publications and getting a lot of information about artists out.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: I think artists are probably lousy bookkeepers and don't really — well, you must know the true story of this, and whether I'm right or not. But I don't think they come out with much information without being prompted like this.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: They've got their stuff in a shoebox somewhere and a bunch of old catalogs and this and that, and it's never complete. I think dealers frequently take care of that, to a certain extent, so that eventually some continuity or development can be seen.

MR. BROWN: So if they do that, then they become pretty integral parts?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, they are and they aren't. Depends on how casual they are about it.

MR. BROWN: If they do this take-over responsibility of that nature.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, they're taking it over for their own good. You know, they're doing it in a sense by collecting this data, what an artist's wife frequently does, you know, collects the clippings.

MR. BROWN: Have there been exhibitions outside of dealers that are memorable or places?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes. I think the best-looking show and certainly the most exciting for me that I've had is the one at the deCordova. I had the whole building. The works ranged in size from three or four inches to 10 by 20 feet. The whole thing was installed and hung by Fred Walkie [phonetic] and his crew without any bitchiness or tough behavior or anything. He just kept bringing it up, and it was beautiful. Absolutely beautiful to look at, be part of, you know, to walk around. The opening was great. It was just fantastic.

It was why I had it brought to the museum, where Bob Newman [phonetic] and I split the whole show. When [inaudible] was the director, it was just the opposite. It was a real trial. Bob didn't go through — didn't have as much trouble as I did, I think because he was just dealing with paintings. He wasn't moving any three-dimensional objects. That was a horror story.

Well, it wasn't a horror story. But it was — there certainly was a hell of a lot of unexpected laughs in it.

MR. BROWN: Do you expect — or wish at least, ideally, that you could have a good deal of say over where something will be placed on exhibit?

MR. TOWNLEY: In the case of the Bureau — and I would rather have hung the thing myself. But in the case of Walkie at the deCordova, it was so beautifully handled, and you could see, obviously, his competence from the very beginning. And I let him hang it, and he didn't consult with me, and I didn't try to tell him what to do. But the results were just absolutely immaculate.

MR. BROWN: Do you ever try to exhibit beyond New England a good deal?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, yeah, I do. I still show in Wisconsin. I've shown recently in San Francisco, and will again, and Texas, Ohio — yeah, I'm not restricting myself or trying to be a "New England artist," because I'm not.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: And I like to exhibit single pieces and groups of work. Next fall, I'll be showing again — well, next fall I'll be showing at Tyler. I will have a small show there — well, small show, maybe 30 drawings. Then I'll be showing in January or February in Milwaukee. Next October or November, I may have a show in Providence, which will be my first one that I'd show in Providence. I've never chosen to have one before. It hasn't been announced yet, but I'm going to be given the Governor's Award for Art in Rhode Island, being a very small state, short governor. But at any rate, in October, if Brown will let me use their gallery, we'll have a show there. If not, we may not. I may not have a show at all. And we'll just get the award and then breeze off and something like that with a few friends and a few drinks. I'm assuming there will be a few drinks.

MR. BROWN: What do you look for from an exhibit? Do you like to hear response to your work? Or why do you do it?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I like to see it, for one thing. And I like to show it to people for another. That's in a way why I would like to have a show in Providence, because there are a lot of people around who don't know anything about my work or what the hell I'm doing. And it would be nice to have a show there. I've been here 10 or 11 years.

MR. BROWN: Are you interested in the broad public, what they respond to it?

MR. TOWNLEY: No.

MR. BROWN: Do you have any message you're trying to put across?

MR. TOWNLEY: No. Sorry.

MR. BROWN: Have you always worked, as you do now, often with saws and large equipment?

MR. TOWNLEY: No. I've done a lot of wood carving and a fair amount of sculpture without using them at all. I like them, and I have two saws, band saws. And I use them. But that's about the extent of the equipment that I use — a few clamps, a lot of wood-carving chisels. And that's that, a lot of space.

MR. BROWN: Do you use ones that you've amassed that aren't really powerful and do drastic things? Or do you use things that are kind of like extensions of your hands?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, no.

MR. BROWN: I mean, you and the band saws, I suppose?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I guess everything is an extension of your hand or your mind. But, no. I've got a 32-inch band saw over there, with a 5-horsepower motor on it. It scares the hell out of me. And I use it because it's the biggest I can find. It will cut through 18 inches of ligdon vite [phonetic] which is the hardest wood I can think of, and it will do it fast in intricate ways. And that's why I got it.

I have a smaller one, which doesn't intimidate me quite so much. And I use that where I can. There isn't any point in using all that horsepower on a smaller — to cut smaller wood.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: I've come to the band saws as a way of getting sort of immediate quality, that I've seemed to need. When I worked in clay, I found that to be very satisfying, too, because it was also immediate. Then I didn't like making plaster casts. I liked the terra cottas, you know, those things up there. Straightforward, built directly, and then fired, you know — very hot, vitrified, and then it's all over.

MR. BROWN: You don't like the casting process and making molds?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, I don't mind it, but it just seems like so far removed from the discipline, I suppose. You have to do it like washing your face and hands or something. But I don't think it's got an awful lot to do with art. It's just background.

MR. BROWN: Once you have carved it out or poured it in concrete or sawed it out with power saws, do you leave the pieces as is and you don't go back and fuss over and over them?

MR. TOWNLEY: No, not very much. In the concrete, you're talking about now?

MR. BROWN: Well, in the various media. There's so much varied.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, in the concrete pieces, I have sandblasted them. Not very much, but just to get that sort of surface off of them. And then the wooden pieces, I sometimes work on them more with chisels. Sometimes I paint the edges or the whole thing or, you know, one element. But it's usually done at that stage. I don't know how else, you know, I can do it.

When I went down to Ohio, when I was [inaudible], I took a small relief with me in wood at their request. And the guy that runs the foundry down there was casting it. I didn't put it together; I had it all apart. It could be assembled. He cast them separately, or was going to cast them separately. And then he tells me after that he's going to assemble them, put them together, and make a rubber mold of the whole thing. And then he cast it again as one piece. So I had two interpretations of my wooden thing — one composed of all the individual units, cast separately, and then put together with nuts and bolts, or I don't know how, and the other one cast as one piece.

Now, the temptation on that is to bring the parts up here to Providence, and perhaps gold-plate this, silver-plate this, copper-plate that, see what can be done with color, perhaps paint color, then assemble it. So I look forward to a lot of fooling around with that. But it still is a very direct method. And it is an unusual opportunity for me. I have been wanting to do something like this for quite awhile, but I hadn't done it for several reasons. One is the finding somebody who would cast it and do it right without an awful lot of fuss. And the other is my sort of satisfaction with the surfaces as they are now.

MR. BROWN: What do you expect to see in bronze? [Inaudible]

MR. TOWNLEY: I don't know. Oh, there's one other aspect to this. Ed Maier [phonetic] down there is going to make a vacuum casting of this bronze, too. So I'll get another look at it in a different way. I don't know what to expect of the bronzes. I've told them to send it up bright, and it's just clean, washed with acid without burnishing it or polishing it or making it smooth. And then the problem is, you know, to see how that looks and where you go from there to [inaudible] and plating and so on. I don't know.

MR. BROWN: I wonder where this will lead your aptitude toward the wooden pieces. It sort of becomes a model.

MR. TOWNLEY: I don't know. We'll see. I doubt that it will ever just become a Marquette or a model. One of the things you can do with wood that you can't do with bronze, and every once in awhile I do combine them — metal, wood, stone, whalebone. So I'll tell you later.

MR. BROWN: The color you put on your wooden pieces — do you put it on there as accents?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, no. What I'm trying to do is to get another aspect of the thing. If you stand straight in front of it, you can hardly see the color. But what I wanted was a certain sort of motion as you passed by it. Or if you stand off to one angle, you get a whole new thing working. And I was a little bit concerned about matters of design, which is placement, coming out of these things. Then some of them, I've put the color on in quite an arbitrary fashion. And then others, I have tried to put it on what I thought was a logical fashion.

MR. BROWN: With the logic being what, [inaudible]?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes. Putting — accenting certain areas, or one color of a certain special variety being next to another color of a similar special situation. Or totally dissimilar. I think it worked out fairly well.

It's surprising how many people object to the idea of painting wood, to this day, you know, painting sculpture. I wanted to do some concrete pieces and paint them. Obviously, I can't do the concrete until I can find somebody to pay for them, because they are so big and cumbersome.

MR. BROWN: How much does your work has to do with the romantic attitude toward materials?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yeah, I think so. Today I've found no one who is going to let me paint one of their concrete pieces once it's done. I realize that this would come off and then it has to be done from time to time, but I don't object to that: Why not?

MR. BROWN: You never had that kind of respect for the media.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I don't think there's anything disrespectful about painting the stuff. I think it's just out of our normal course of thinking. There are lots of periods and lots of areas where sculpture had always been painted. American Indian stuff, the Northwest Coast — if not painted, treated or dealt with in some way. We're just not used to it. People get so damn sentimental about wood. Before I have a show, I put linseed oil and turpentine on the wood, if the wood needs it, in order to, you know, give it a certain richness and to settle the surface down. People flip over the smell of it. "Smell that wood!" Well, what they're smelling is wood — it is not wood, rather. It is not even linseed oil, it's turpentine. And I think you could probably make a very provocative perfume out of turpentine, the way these people react to it.

[Laughter]

MR. TOWNLEY: I just don't understand it. Where in heaven's name did all these people get the sentimental attachment to turp? Well, a similar thing is happening. They smell that, they go back to their childhood or something. And they weren't painting sculpture in those days, or whatever it was, so they sort of object to it now.

MR. BROWN: These are wooden reliefs. Some are hanging, others look almost like [inaudible]. Other larger ones almost function as architectural screening.

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Are these three functions separate ones you had in mind?

MR. TOWNLEY: No. The reason they're standing on the floor and on the mantelpiece is because there's no place to hang them. And I have to wrap them and put them in the other studio, and I'm just having too many other things to do.

MR. BROWN: Do you ever think of your work as complementing architecture, functioning as a screen or —

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, I have. Yeah, I have. I think the sooner this happens — you know, the sooner work can begin with an architect, the better. I think the job on the Old Stone Bank here in Bristol is pretty good. Sturgess was the architect for that, and he brought me in very early, and I did it for next to nothing, to say the least, because I wanted to do it and I liked the idea of having it done in the town I lived in.

I think that's fairly successful, that screen that people stand behind. They watch through the holes to see the bus come and all that sort of business. I think that's good. I would like to do much more. I don't think that there are very many architects who can stand it, however.

The Mullet House across the Bay over here has got five pieces of my sculpture standing, well, in front of it, maybe 1,000 yards away from it. That place was built by an architect from Washington, D.C., named Jacobson, Hugh Jacobson, who is a hell of a good architect. That house is beautiful. It was done to perfection. The relationship that he and I saw instantly between the sculpture and the middle of that field and the house was perfect. And it came to us both at the same time. We asked, "Who owns the field in front of it?" "We do. We just bought it." He said, "Put it out in the middle of the field like the king and the queen," referring to a moors, up on the moors. And that's exactly where it ought to be.

But there aren't very many architects like that. One architect who used to teach, and may still teach at Harvard, was just made to learn that a house he was building was going to have some of my sculpture in it. He stopped me at the faculty club once and he said, "I hear you're going to put pimples on one of my walls."

[Laughter]

MR. TOWNLEY: And I found that discouraging.

MR. BROWN: Do you find that they try to hone and perfect their own design?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, this particular guy was afraid somebody was going to do something to his wall. I figured if the wall wouldn't hold up against a good piece of sculpture, it wasn't very good in the first place.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. Um-hm.

MR. TOWNLEY: It's interesting that some architects won't hang a painting or photographs or anything else on their walls because they figured this is so much a part of the competition. I figure that a house is to live in, you know. You just have to work my way; otherwise, it's not my house. I don't blame an architect, I suppose, for thinking otherwise. But on the other hand, I didn't hire one to build it.

MR. BROWN: Well, now your work, do you mind where it hangs or where it's put?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, yeah. I'd like to think that it's put in reasonable surroundings.

MR. BROWN: You mean without too many distracting things immediately around it?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Very well lighted?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yeah. And to be installed. It shouldn't be standing on — leaning against the wall or something like this. [Inaudible] It should be installed where it belongs. And lit, if possible.

MR. BROWN: Then they become objects in themselves, don't they?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, they always were objects in themselves.

MR. BROWN: Yes. You worked on them for this house, didn't you?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: When you work on these wood reliefs, do you work from sketches?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, always, from very tight sketches.

MR. BROWN: Which you follow pretty closely?

MR. TOWNLEY: They resemble my sketches very much. The proportions are usually almost one to one. I've come to this, I guess, because of the expense of the wood, or even —

[OFF THE RECORD]

MR. BROWN: This is July 24, 1972. [Inaudible]

MR. TOWNLEY: Okay. I have a few things to say here that I've written down, and I should be prompted to say other things, too, I think.

I hear a booming. What is it?

[OFF THE RECORD]

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, we thought when we were driving here that it would be pertinent to make a few remarks about some of the things that I had talked about before. So I'm sure they will come out in this tape as well as the last one.

It used to be that a piece of sculpture was thought to be one piece of wood or stone and simply carved. This wasn't all so long ago, either. Jeremy Anderson, Louise Bourgeois [phonetic] — Louise Nelson, Bourgeois, whatever her first name was — and myself were about the only ones who were making sculpture out of more than one piece, and nailing the stuff together and painting it. And it was considered to be one of the minor crimes. And in Milwaukee where I lived, it was considered to be the end of some sort of artistic assininity.

I was asked if the studios that I've worked in had any influence on me. And I have wondered about it ever since. The size of the things have varied so much. The small one I had when I taught at Washington University was about 10 by 12 feet, and it was almost always filled with students, some of whom are still around — Dick Slye, Jake Wilker, Nora Kersh [phonetic], friends David Kibby [phonetic], who have stayed in the art, or haven't. I got a lot of work done there, some of it very big. One piece I remember was about 14 feet tall, which was about the height of the room.

When I moved to Providence, I had a whole building that I rented for about $30 a month. And I discovered myself using only one floor of it, which was the ground floor, amounted to one room. In that place, I did my first reliefs, I think. I really began to do extensive relief work there. I don't know if that had anything to do with it. It was downtown in Providence, Steeple Street. Then I had a much smaller studio where I was on the second floor, and as a consequence seemed to turn out nothing but huge, heavy pieces that had to be lowered from a chain-fall, the number-one pain in the neck.

Then the studio in the house in Bristol, and the studio in the garage in Bristol, which was very successful. It was quite crowded, but it was possible to separate drawing and printing activities upstairs in the sculpture, and the ground floor. The garage doors were a big help.

Then when Mary made that incredible find of a studio I have now, which is about 38 feet wide and 100 feet long, 24 feet tall, a block from the house, that was about the luckiest of them all. That place is so filled with junk now, scraps, perhaps I should heat my house on wood scraps instead of oil.

When I first got that big studio, I found its emptiness very distracting, and I would take a chair and a book from one spot in it to another to read.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible]

MR. TOWNLEY: Right. And this astonishing space all around me — it was just as though I sort of took possession of it this way by moving through it and reading or sketching 20 feet from a wall here, 20 feet from a wall there.

I think that my studios are not as much of an influence on me as the waste materials that I produce. I once described my studio floor as something like a wooden beach, all these strange objects that seem to change from day to day. I go back through these parts and pieces, and save some here. I'm just astonished to find another one there and wonder what it came off or what was I doing at that time. In a way, it's like looking back at my own work. But I do return to periods of work that I've already been involved in, and go back to them, re-explore them, find more that I haven't done, or something that I foolishly ignored about it.

Anyway, looking at my studio is like this, too. To chuck the scrap wood out the window is a fairly long task because I am getting to classifying scrap. This I can throw out and burn. This I'd better keep because I like the

shape. This I'd better keep because I don't understand it, and this I'd better keep because it's big enough to saw something else out of. I'm beginning to feel like a postman after awhile, chucking these things into different bins or different spots on the floor.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible] of the scrap — is it chance? Or when you see it, do you recall —

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, it's scrap. When I make a shape, sometimes I take the top off of it. And that scrap of a shape sits in a pile on the floor with other scraps. And when I pick it up, I either recall where that shape is now, what's happened to it as a piece of sculpture, or that I rejected it or something. But the shapes have all these curious references to the shapes and the work, and the scraps. I think that they influence me in my drawing; my sculpture doesn't. And in fact, I think that my drawing doesn't influence my sculpture either.

I have periods of working when I will sit with a little white pad in front of me for four or five days at a time and draw. Sometimes it's developed quite naturally, and sometimes I have to force myself into it, simply not rejecting anything and simply not doing anything else but drawing. It's sort of a three-dimensional meditation, perhaps, this concentrating and making no judgments until the drawings are set apart and looked at a few days later. I find this very helpful in my work. The drawings may be drawings in themselves, or they may be sketches for sculpture.

As a sculptor, I find that I finish most of the things that I start, and they are very, very close to what I draw as a sketch. Sometimes, the sketches have to sit and sort of soak in my head for awhile before I determine all aspects of the three-dimensional part of it. The drawings seem to be more immediate, even the big ones, the 38 by 50 ones. They seem to be almost done at one blow. But in going back over my sketches, I'm constantly amazed at the ones that I rejected. Consequently, I keep them and use them again later.

I would say that the sketching, the drawing, and the working making the sculpture are sort of three independent rhythms, or maybe they are dependent in a way I don't know. This obviously is mixed up with my reading and whatever my preoccupation of the moment is, which might be American Indians, or some peculiar aspect of poetry or not-so-peculiar aspect of poetry, or a collection of essays by Charles Tart or edited by Charles Tart or something of this nature that would keep me moving. All of these would supply me visions and ideas about sculpture or drawing, which I would turn to use. So perhaps there are four rhythms involved.

My wife and some of my associates claim that there is a very obvious structure to the way I pursue these things. It's not so noticeable to me. Sometimes I think that I'm doing nothing and that the outside world thinks that this is the way an artist behaves.

[Laughter]

MR. TOWNLEY: When in truth, I am truly doing nothing.

MR. BROWN: So you think that these cycles —

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, but — and perhaps I do. But I really do believe that periods of away-ness or emptiness or daydreaming or meditation are human periods, not necessarily artistic periods. They belong to everybody, or should.

MR. BROWN: What about models?

MR. TOWNLEY: What kind of models? Do you mean live models?

MR. BROWN: No. [Inaudible]

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, I make them. It's very interesting. I just finished — I made 11 wooden sketches for a concrete group of three. And I gave them to Mrs. Torf [phonetic], all 11, and told her to pick three that she liked, and that I would have the final say in this choice. But I was interested in seeing what would happen. And she picked very well, and I didn't make any — much of an adjustment.

One of the pieces she wanted simply would not work at the scale she wanted it at, 12 feet tall. She had given me a second choice if that didn't work. It was interesting. This group of 11 is something I would like to do to the scale that she would — she's having three of them made in — I do sketch that way on some very simple things, or things that have rather simple shapes.

In the case of the Bristol, Connecticut, hospital, which is a 10 by 20 foot relief, I made several small reliefs. The final pieces does resemble some, but doesn't look exactly like it by far. It became a total thing in itself.

I think that in the idea that — involved in the idea of making a commission, we have two things going. One is to condition the sculpture to fit the environment, which I think is an impossible and silly proposition to take

seriously. The other is to let the environment adjust to my work, which is what I have always done, and it has worked well. I suppose to admit this to an architect would be suicidal, because they wouldn't understand it on a bet. But by and large, I think it works this way. And I think that most good painters and sculptors would admit to this, after all is said and done about, you know, making something fit the space.

I reserve the right to change my mind about anything I say within five minutes. I'll give you five minutes.

MR. BROWN: Generally, what would happen is [inaudible]?

MR. TOWNLEY: Oh, that's nonsense. I don't think it would work. There's too much talk involved in things like scale and color, and what one needs to do is to make them move and try it. And the more one knows about materials and spaces, the more observant one is as an artist, the better chance he's got of making the right move. It's like a dancer or a swimmer or a skier. It's a matter of judgment, as well as art.

MR. BROWN: You've seen this?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yeah. That's fun. And I come back to it and I think [inaudible]. I've already been a part of that cycle, and there's no reason why my sculpture can't be. So it does adjust.

In moving from the small pieces, sketches, I did about six or seven sketches for a commission for a bank in Boston. And I think only one or two — well, only one was ever seen by the architectural firm, who rejected it and never told me about it. But in the background of this is a group of about nine wooden sketches ranging in size — and truly called sketches — from about one inch to the foot, which would make it about 28 inches long, to a sketch that I think is seven feet long. And from these things, I would have developed yet another, in a way of speaking, un-sketched work that would have resembled them all to a certain extent, but would have been the final piece and could only have been thought of in terms of those particular sizes — that is, the size of the great wall it was to go on.

MR. BROWN: But these architects rejected one of the sketches?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, the whole project was rejected. I found out very easily by — when a friend walked by and said, "Hugh, somebody else's sculpture is already up." Fred Walkie, who arranged this, has never told me this. The architects have never told me this. I must get my sketch back from them, incidentally. But that's a hell of a way to do business.

[Laughter]

MR. TOWNLEY: I've forgotten the name of the bank. It's the one down here in the brown building that has the lump coming out.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: It's a nice piece of architecture. I would like to have had it in there. They own two pieces of mine already. I think it's First City Bank or something like that.

MR. BROWN: First National Bank.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, small.

MR. BROWN: Do these 3D sketches [inaudible] you spoke earlier of drawings. [Inaudible]

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, I always make drawings. No, when I'm referring to the — I suppose I should use the word "Marquette." No, the ones I just referred to were wooden sketches which developed from pencil sketches. And both the pencil sketches and the wooden sketches give me the chance to expand. That's the main thing.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, the first wooden — well, the wooden sketches always look like the pencil drawings that have preceded them. This is a matter of plain and simple organization of economics.

MR. BROWN: But you never lock yourself in?

MR. TOWNLEY: No.

MR. BROWN: They are always in the sketch stage?

MR. TOWNLEY: Right.

MR. BROWN: First when you spoke earlier of drawing, were those drawings for themselves?

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, they were drawings for themselves. I usually refer to a drawing as a drawing. That is a finished work. A sketch is something else.

MR. BROWN: Did some of them translate into sculpture?

MR. TOWNLEY: What, my drawings?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: Rarely. I've done it once or twice from the big drawings that I've been working on. That's all. Out of 70 or 80 drawings, one or two translated into sculpture, and they were reliefs. Actually, just one of them. I fooled around with the idea of doing another one and rejected the whole notion after awhile. The [inaudible] are the one that came from the drawing.

When I was at Yaddo, I guess it was in 1961, they wouldn't let me make any sculpture there because it would make too much noise.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible]

MR. TOWNLEY: Right. Indeed, it was. I was there very early, about a month-and-a-half after Marilyn was born, an fact, I realized later, my wife resented bitterly — at any rate. I spent a month out there making colored drawings. Now, I had done a few of these before and used waxed pastels with some beautiful trade names like Cray-paws [phonetic] and Guitar-paws, and Rembrandts, or Holdbine [phonetic] or something. I think it was Holdbine, actually, all made in Japan. They have very brilliant colors. And I liked the waxiness. I made, I think, in the month I was there about 30 of those things, most of which have been sold or slipped away one way or another. I think we have five or six remaining now.

I thought after I had completed this batch that this would have a big influence on the way I painted my sculpture. It didn't. I didn't paint sculpture again for six or seven years after having done those. So I guess it did — it had a negative effect on the way I painted my sculpture. I didn't feel the necessity to do it anymore.

MR. BROWN: Did you resent that, having to not sculpt?

MR. TOWNLEY: Well, it wasn't so bad. Once I discovered that I could spend all my time making these drawings, I think it was the first introduction to drawing for me in this fashion. I'd never really valued it as an adjunct to sculpture prior to this.

MR. BROWN: You said earlier that you really did not like to draw.

MR. TOWNLEY: Right. I didn't see any point in it. And I think it may have been because I had heard so many people say so much about, you know, drawing and sculpture are so closely allied, which is a lot of baloney. It's true if you think of sculpture as being nothing but silhouette and drawing as being nothing but line. But if you go beyond that in either case, you're running into something that's totally separate.

That was quite an interesting experience, though. The whole Yaddo bit, the notion of an artist living in the lap of luxury, being able to produce anything or not to produce and be supported while it was going on was something that was foreign to me. It was the first time I'd been in such a community. And except for Tamarind Lithographic Foundation in Hollywood, it was the last time. Tamarind was another matter. I was there for two months. And I think I had made three or four lithographs in Kalamazoo prior to that, or I had drawn them and they had been printed by someone else.

The Yaddo thing was quite an extraordinary experience, to be supported and asked to make these lithographs so that the printers could be stimulated to learn to print lithographs of any sort. I did an edition on stainless steel because they wanted us to experiment. The resistance to this was great at first, but then when it was all printed in three colors, it was as though they had had the idea themselves for years and had been knocking out stainless steel lithographs all the time. It was very interesting and a very cheery atmosphere to work in. I liked June Lane very much. I liked the printers, by and large — I thought were a great group of people. And the curators who did the paperwork and who handled all the real drudgery, or what I think of as being drudgery, which they seem to enjoy — it was nice to be associated with this group of people. Everybody seemed to know what was up, what they were into, and were working like hell to accomplish it.

It was easy to fall into this atmosphere. I would find myself staying on Eastern Standard time so that I could get there. They finally gave me a key. I'd show up around 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning when there wasn't anybody there, draw for three hours so that I wouldn't have all these types pouring over my shoulders, embarrassing me, making snotty remarks or funny remarks or something like this. My drawing would be done more or less for the

day. I would have other things to do with the printers and curators. And it was great.

And I got to like the town of Los Angeles very, very much. It's amazing how that town, I think, affected my color. I seem to have concentrated for quite awhile at Tamarind in making lithographs that — you know, with great technical precision on the part of the printers, designed or printed in such a way that you couldn't see anything — you know, black on black or a white on white, something of this nature. But the color, the smog there, which hurt my eyes, and the crazy automobile paint job that I saw around the place, and the clothing, and the rollers in people's hair, you know, it was just bizarre. It had a real effect on my choice of colors.

It was something — I found myself standing across the street from a restaurant I used to go to, watching. I'd see a guy with a certain sort of blue slacks, meet and pass a guy with a certain sort of green slacks on. And I would spot — I had spotted these guys coming from either end of the block. And I found that I did this sort of thing very often out there, to see how this color would work when it arrived, these two colors. When I was there, I didn't go soaring at all. I thought when I had first planned to go out, that I would probably spend my weekends out in the Mojave desert at Terra Blossom trying for an altitude thing in a glider. But I didn't do it at all. I traveled a little bit in the desert and in the mountains. But I stayed away. I didn't go out to even go to the field to see the people that I had known from my last stay in California.

That's kind of interesting because I find that flying a glider or riding in an airplane has given me great ideas for sculpture, for reliefs in particular. And in California, because of the nutty desert flowers, gave me a lot of ideas for colors — you could go up in the late morning, and the flowers you saw would be all pink, and come down in the late afternoon and the flowers on the other side, now in the sun, would be bright blue. And just acres of the stuff, you know. At this particular time of year, it was uninterrupted color.

I was sort of interested. I had to stick to the lithography and the drawing at Tamarind, totally, I felt, or I'd lose the whole damn thing. And I'm glad I did. It was a very interesting experience, much better than the Yaddo thing, but I think the Yaddo thing made it possible. Walter Murch [phonetic], I think, was the guy that got me into Yaddo. I think it was Fred Leicht and Mace Lowry [phonetic] who somehow engineered the Tamarind thing. I remember I had to send around some of the drawings. I sent to June Lane and to somebody at the Museum of Modern Art — I think; at any rate, they ended up there — the drawings I had done at Tamarind — I had done at Yaddo in order to get into Tamarind.

MR. BROWN: Have you been doing lithographs very long?

MR. TOWNLEY: No. That's the only time I did it. And then you could hardly call me — I'm a lithographer in the sense that I have made lithographs, but I didn't print them.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. TOWNLEY: And their whole notion there was that, get in two artists for two months, have them overlap a month, and the printers will do anything they tell them to do. They were trying to train printers and to get artists to believing that lithography was really a living, breathing thing. The whole notion — I guess as Jasper John says — of drawing on a rock is pretty strange.

[Laughter]

MR. BROWN: He's done it for quite awhile.

MR. TOWNLEY: Yes, and it's a beautiful medium. But it has been forgotten because nobody had the technique to do it. June gathered these people together and crammed technique down their throat, and she had a lot of good people. Great experience, and I think lithography has been rescued today. It's a very popular medium. It's a very commercial medium, too. Grossman's — I was telling you, Grossman's commercial enterprise there and several other presses. Good stuff.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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