



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Gardner Cox,
1974 March 19-July 8

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

Contact Information

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Gardner Cox from March 19 - July 8, 1974. The interview took place in Boston, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: —just want to get your voice.

GARDNER COX: —if I talk too fast or I talk too slow—[inaudible].

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, this is March 19, 1974, an interview in Boston with Gardner Cox. And I thought maybe you could begin by telling me something of your—you mentioned how, as quite a young child, you were already interested in art. Your father was an architect. Could you say something about your family as you—and yourself as you can reconstruct it as a small child or your early childhood?

GARDNER COX: Well, my father was an architect, and my mother was a painter. They met in Paris in the late 1800s. She'd been there for four years at the Beaux-Arts—she had been there eight years studying with French masters. And they were married. This could have been 1902, I think, or [19]'04, 1904, so it was around the turn of the century when they met. And he was a very—he went into, at that time—they were both very able. She was—some of her masters had told her—one of the leading French ateliers said that she could be the greatest woman painter who had ever lived. And she got into the—she got into the 1900 World's Fair, the American division of the paintings, when she was a young woman. And she got a medal, a bronze medal, from the French government for her painting, a painting of hers. [00:02:04] She was very talented and, uh, had distinguished tastes. My father was also a very talented man. He came back when they were married. He had come back with—I guess before that he came back from the Beaux-Arts and entered the Boston Athenaeum competition, and a very dramatic story it was. He had gone to MIT first, come down from Holyoke, Mass[achusetts], and gone there to MIT, where he was the great favorite of Dave Purcell [ph], the first great patron of architecture—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yes.

GARDNER COX: —in the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: A teacher of drawing at that point.

GARDNER COX: Yes, and he—well, he was a designer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: He was the architectural patron—[inaudible]—and the first one in this country, I think. And my father, he was—he took greatly to my father, who was a doctor's son in—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Holyoke.

GARDNER COX: —Holyoke, and he called him my father's spiritual son. And my father went from there to the Beaux-Arts, and then this competition later on came up for the Boston Athenaeum. A man who had known him at Tech, William E. Putnam, whose father was a Bostonian and had some money and had great faith in my father. Had known him as a co-student at MIT—wired him that he would pay his way over and back, if he had to return, to pay his expenses so that he would enter this competition.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was still at the Beaux-Arts then.

GARDNER COX: He was just getting through. I guess he was just through. He had to come from Europe, and he didn't have any money. So he came back, and that was a great—that was a great competition in the country in those days comparable to the Town Hall competition here a little while ago, and it was all—McKinley and White went into it. Carrère and Hastings went into it. [00:04:00] All the great firms were into all over the country. It was to take the old Boston Athenaeum and move it and put it where the present Ritz now is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, Arlington Street, Back Bay.

GARDNER COX: Right. And my father came back, and these firms had lots of draftsmen—big, organized firms—Guylo [ph], all the big architects in town here and all the others in the city, as I say. And, uh, he lived in a room down in—downtown someplace in Boston. He got a room, and he—it was just before he married, I guess. This must have been just before he was married, 1902, '03. He slept on the drafting table. He did the whole thing alone, all alone. Mr. Putnam had nothing to do with it at all. He just—he did it all alone, and he won it against the country. And, uh, it put him on the map. I say this because he was a very talented man, and then the powers that be and Amy Lowell; and Rose Nichols [ph] and other people at the Athenaeum got up and said, "Why should we move this building?" And that killed it. It never was built—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

GARDNER COX: —which, if it had been built, would have established him right off the bat as one of the leaders in the country. He had gone on from there—there's nothing like having them built.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: Then, you point right to it, but winning, it put him on the map, and he started in business with Mr. Putnam.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: But it did, uh—and he told me later on it didn't bother him too much. He thought he had won enough, and he did win one more that was for the, uh, monument in Provincetown.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yes.

GARDNER COX: Which he didn't do. The same thing happened. The guy—one of the people—the jury—held it up and held it up and finally did it himself, and the old man didn't have—in those days, Boston was a real closed thing, you know, and he was no countryman, so to speak, and he didn't have any clout that way. [00:06:00] And you—you didn't—he wasn't—he was a very feisty, lively fellow, but he didn't—again, he—[inaudible], so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —he took these two—two quite bad screwings, as a matter of fact, but it put him in the—but he did—he had a successful architecture career all his life. I bring this in because I did have some background that was very favorable to me there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this was, of course, before you were born, right?

GARDNER COX: This was before I was born, but I was brought up in a family where they were very—my mother particularly, because she was the painter—he couldn't paint. He didn't know much about painting. He could draw very well. He could draw—he has some beautiful drawings, and incidentally his collection you ought to see. As an architect, these are marvelous drawings, I mean, pencil drawings of landscapes and stuff.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Very, very, very sensitive, so—but he was a feisty, tough, lively fellow—[inaudible]. He—so I had a favorable background in the way of—well, they wouldn't make the kinds of mistakes that some people do that say, "Well, why haven't you got all the buttons on the person's coat?" or, "Why haven't you got his shoelaces tied?" or, "He's only got one eye." They didn't worry about that sort of stuff. You'd have action, or, particularly, she had some riches [ph], and they could spot them, and she particularly. She, particularly—she was a painter.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: And, uh, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did she paint actively, your mother, when she came back?

GARDNER COX: She painted for—she painted—she began—something very funny happened there. There was a neurosis there. She married rather late. She was a very attractive woman, and she left a very strong impression on people. She painted, but, uh, she didn't paint as much as she did, and she never had another exhibition. I probably—for some reason or other, something happened there so that she didn't go on with her early promise though she had the great distinction all the time. Celia Bow [ph] went on, for example, and Bay Emmet went on, but she was—and she was there with Bay Emmet. Do you remember Bay Emmet Rand?

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

GARDNER COX: She was their contemporary—she [inaudible], but she was considered better than they were, better than—[inaudible]—Rand and better than Bow.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:08:08] Did your—

GARDNER COX: But she didn't have—for some reason, she was shy. She was not an aggressive person along that kind of line, so somehow or other the marriage wasn't too happy, I think, really. It never broke up or anything, but I don't think that it did mother too much good. She—for some reason, I—this is a—you ought to hear about this, but it was—she did not flower as far as recognition is concerned as she might have, but she did things all along. She did—she painted right along. Now and then, she'd do a portrait, and when she painted all these things she liked. And always—they always had a certain amount of—they always had something, but, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did your mother mainly—was this mainly here in Boston? Did she mainly stay at home?

GARDNER COX: She grew up [ph] in Cambridge. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Cambridge.

GARDNER COX: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you travel much when you were very small?

GARDNER COX: No. No. Well, when I was very small this was—well, I don't remember. I was taken to Europe when I was two and traveled like all these business [inaudible]. I don't remember—[inaudible]—except a couple of very silly little things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did your mother keep in touch with her masters in France?

GARDNER COX: Not very long. They were older than she was. No, she didn't keep in touch with them for very long. She didn't—she didn't go abroad for a long time after that. I don't know whether she ever did again after about 1906, '07, '08, '10. Uh, that's the background as far as the artistic part is concerned, and I have—yes, I have quite an artistic family. My mother had a—my mother had an aunt—rather, a sister, an older sister—a very large family, 11 children, so she was 20 years older than my mother—who went to England when she was about 25 and was so sick—this was probably 1880—she never came back again, lived to be 85 years old in England, and died there. She was a young woman in her 20s when she went, and she lived with a woman it—was Queen Victoria doctor's daughter, and they had a very—kind of a brilliant circle. And she lived with Octavia Hill. She was a sculptress, and she did a lot of sculpture there. [00:10:01] And she was one—she was very good. She was pretty damn good, a very talented woman, a queer woman, strong, masculine, [inaudible]. I suppose she was British—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you knew her.

GARDNER COX: I knew her. She was—[inaudible], as I remember, when I went to Europe when I was two and a half years old. She was memorable.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your aunt, I take it.

GARDNER COX: Well, I remember just—I remember—kindness.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: I stayed with her for a while when my parents were traveling, and Ms. Ferguson [ph]. Um, yeah, this has nothing to do with anything, but I do—what I remember is staying with her, and I saw a guinea pig, which must have had a compound fracture. And I thought it was a piece of straw sticking out of it. And I went tearing—I couldn't talk very well. I was only two and a half, just about two and a half, and I remember this. I tried to—I took the gardener—I told him this guinea pig had this straw sticking out of him. He said, in his English way, whatever it was, I was nuts. I went to my aunt, and I went to Mrs. Ferguson, and nobody believed me. I had this very powerful frustration. I was very upset being brushed off like this when I had saw this terrible thing, which I certainly saw, and nobody paid—nobody would pay me any mind. It was very distressing for me. That's what I remember about her, but I remember that quite—that's a strong feeling.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were adults generally—

GARDNER COX: I can almost see that little cage with that little thing sticking out, which must have been a compound fracture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: I thought he was coming—I thought he was coming apart or was stuffed, or something was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes—[inaudible].

GARDNER COX: It was terrible, and then nobody would come and look.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were adults fairly formidable figures to you as a child?

GARDNER COX: Not much. I suppose I don't know. I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because you say your parents were pretty sympathetic to your later career.

GARDNER COX: Oh, they were quite tough. They were tough. I was an only child and was always the—I guess they had hopes for me, you know, and they were—and, particularly, she was critical of any artistic effort—I did things. [00:12:01] She couldn't get me to do things she wanted to do. I'd kind of get stubborn, and she wouldn't be—if I did some cheap stuff or tried to be—I did the Kaiser for a long time during the Second World War. Drove them crazy. I kept doing the Kaiser, and I did him again and again—[inaudible]—his mustache and the whole thing. And I did—I liked sports when I was young, and I used to play football as children, you know, and I did a lot of drawings of that kind of thing. And there, I began to show, apparently, talent, because I had—I got the feeling of action. She saved them. She never dated them, unfortunately, now that they're all gone. My own—this is very egocentric, I take it. The very first known thing I ever did was to—when I was about—I was under four. I was fiddling around with a pencil at the desk, and suddenly, by God, this horse appeared. And I—my mother told me about this. I don't remember this—she said I suddenly came tearing through the house shouting, "Horsey, horsey, horsey, horsey." They went—she went to go look, and, by God, there was this horse, and she saved that, and it was pretty good. I never did as good a one for years again. Something happened. It slipped, you know, but I had sense enough to realize it. That was—that was the thing, and it was pretty damn good. I don't know if I can find it now. It did turn up, and it was a very respectable horse head for anybody. But I—it was obviously a shot in the dark, but I did realize it, and it was a miracle. From then on, I drew—I used to draw all the time, and I'd have an exhibition. I'd have my father come back. I'd draw these things on the blackboard. On the blackboard, I'd draw these things, and he'd see it every night when he'd come back, so I must have been drawing quite a lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your father had long business hours, did he?

GARDNER COX: Well, he was an architect. [00:14:00] Sure, he had an office in town. Yes, he—this put him right on the map. He had quite a lot to do, but he never got into the position where he could tell them—he never got into a position where he could kick them out like—[inaudible]—or earlier or Frank [inaudible] because he didn't quite have that clout, having not produced his great building.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: He did some big stuff later on but not—he could have—that was a great opportunity that he lost.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. What sort of friends do you—did you have when you were very young or your parents had? Do you remember other people who were—

GARDNER COX: Well, I was brought up in Cambridge, Mass[achusetts], and the people there were professors. It was a college community, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: A pretty tightly knit place?

GARDNER COX: —we lived in Boston for a while. Yeah, they—they got on well there—[inaudible]—clubs like the —[inaudible]. The professors would meet once a month in different people's houses, and the fellow—the man of the house would give a little lecture, a little—and they'd all eat, no drinks. God, it was all very pure. They had a—they were cultivated. They were very cultivated people but earthy enough—earthy, too. They weren't too this way at all. They had, uh, this very nice old house, never much money. My father—that was all my father made, and at certain times it was very slim pickings in architecture, particularly during the Depression and so on. But he never—the office never went under. He never completely quit. It never got broken, but it was tight, and we were—not wanting at all, but not at all well off. And we rented one side of the house to Phil Richardson, the other—the architect's—old architect's son, who was an architect.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: And Phil lived with his family in one side of the house, and we kept the other parts, it's an old—an old house. It used to be Asa Gray's house, this historic monument—[inaudible]—got before Harvard was going

to tear it down. It had Gray's vivarium in it, and they—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, the great botanist. Yes.

GARDNER COX: My father bought the house so it wouldn't be destroyed and moved across the street, and we lived there still—the family still lives in it. [00:16:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember any other friends from your childhood in Cambridge?

GARDNER COX: Yes, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Are there any people you could describe?

GARDNER COX: Well, I played—in those days, Cambridge was the—this was over 60 years ago now. I was about six years old—there. Am I talking loud enough?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: The, uh—it was all—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I think—

[Audio Break.]

GARDNER COX: Well, I played with—when I first got out there where I lived, it was opposite the botanic gardens. It was in the botanic gardens of Harvard, and then it was fields and the road was dirt. Garden Street was just a dirt road with buggies going by. There were hardly any automobiles. It went—it veered right from across the fields where Gray Gardens East and Gray Gardens West now are, right in the slums, the real slums. And, uh—well, no, slums, not real slums, slums, because Cambridge didn't—they used to drop off rapidly. There was no great one section or another.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: It was just patchy, and beyond that was the clay pits. Right next to us—right next to us, there was a little white house, another field. Also, it was quite country in that area, and there was a big family of—an Irish family named Mahoney [ph]. Mrs. Mahoney had 21 children.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Wow.

GARDNER COX: And, uh, they were there, and I used to play with them a lot. I played with—because they were—there were some of them quite close to my age. One of them was—one of them was the illegitimate son of the oldest daughter who had been a chorus girl at the old—[inaudible]—named Charlie, and he was a particular friend, and another one named Gunnar [ph]. I remember him very well, Gunnar Mahoney. He was a very gentle, very nice fellow. [00:18:01] He wasn't like he sounds. Charlie was quite tough and very lively, and they had some friends, and we used to play. As we got a little older, we played ball in the spring and football in the fall on those fields, and they were my closest friends of my contemporaries for a while. But then, I also had professorial friends like—professors' sons like—oh—Jimmy Hurlbert [ph], who eventually died, and Bobby Ford [ph]. I got to know him later, and Richard Hawking [ph]. I met him very young, and I played with these fellows for a while and always played with them for quite a long time, a lot when I was, say, six, seven, eight, nine. And then, I went to—then, I met an English friend named—Jared Lake [ph], who was old—[inaudible]—Lake's son who had come over from Oxford to teach, and we were very close for a number of years. And then, we—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there any sense in your child mind of there being two worlds, town and gown?

GARDNER COX: Not at that stage, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No?

GARDNER COX: No. No, it was—they were very nice. Gunnar Mahoney was a very nice fellow, and Charlie was a nice fellow.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Of course, it was a much smaller place, too, wasn't it?

GARDNER COX: We were right close together there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: And it was—I don't want to—I can reminisce about all kinds of little things that happened. I think

there's no need of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it was a fairly—almost a rural setting at that time.

GARDNER COX: Quasi-rural. Then, I had some very good friends—where my house is now, there was just the Mahoney's house, which is still—

[Audio Break.]

GARDNER COX: —another series of neighbors, other neighbors were the—there was the Mahoneys' house that was quite close together, about 150 yards off of Gray Garden Terrace. There was one other house, which was owned by Langford Warren, who was a professor of—the head of the architectural department at Harvard. [00:20:00] And he had sons, two daughters and two sons, and his sons—they were much older, quite a lot older than I was, probably 10 years older at least. They were in their late—they were in their teens, and, uh, they took me on as kind of a younger brother. And they—I liked them. I loved them, and they were very fond of me. I remember when—it was Arthur Warren and Jimmy Warren. They were very nice—they were very nice young men. They must have been certainly about 10 years older. I remember when the war came, when the war—the First World War came, Arthur Warren went over, and he died of pneumonia. When the news came, I was—they let me stay home from school for that day and so on. I was very, very cut up, and I remember the younger one, Jimmy, who even was a little younger than he was when he went away to the war. He must have liked me quite a lot because we—I was then about 12—the war was '08—about 10. I was about 10 or 11, and he was old enough to be joining the navy. He must have been 18, 19. They used to include me in the—they played—they had a hockey rink, and they'd play with their own friends, and they'd let me come play along with them. And they were very—and when he went to war, he saw me just before he went off, and he took a little walk with me. He said if he ever had a son he hoped he'd be like me. It was a great compliment, so I must have been quite nice at that time, reasonably. At certain times when I wondered—[inaudible]—how you change, you know, more or less. And they made a—it meant a great deal to me. And that's—those—then, I began—I went to school, and I had trouble in school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where did you go to school, the Cambridge school?

GARDNER COX: I went to—no, I went to—Dane's School [ph]—first. [00:22:00] And then, I went to Browne & Nichols, and I'll—yes, I'll put this in. As I was—because I was an only child, they shoved me along a little bit, and I was always about two years younger than my class. And I was quite bright, bright enough to do it, but I didn't—I did a lot of goofing, and I was very happy-go-lucky and cheerful, apparently. And I used to goof and fiddle around, and I got into trouble that way. And finally, uh, I say this—and this is sorry, but quite rightly is—when I was 11, I guess, 12—11 or 12, I was in Browne. I had been there for three years, [inaudible] each year, and I was having a very good time, and I liked my friends and everything. There came this great polio epidemic, and I was down in Provincetown. This is when I first went down there. My mother went down to have a kind of refresher with Hawthorne. She liked Hawthorne's work, and she went down, and I went down. And to keep me out of trouble or just to do something, I was enrolled, and he took me. I did some other—I did some still lifes, and I tried quite a number of things. I painted every day like everybody else, for that year. Then, that winter, this polio epidemic struck. Do you want to know all of this?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: This has something to do with [inaudible]. Provincetown was the only place—all those dead whales and fish all over the place and so on—the only place in the place—the only town in Massachusetts that didn't have any polio at all, I think. I think that—I don't know if it was so bad that—I don't know. [00:24:00] But, anyway, it was—it was a fishing town from way back, at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And so they—they decided to keep me down there instead of bringing me back. They didn't want to lose me, and they kept me, so I stayed down there, my mother's idea. My mother's idea, too, was to—she was—was to keep me there because I was two years younger than the class, anyway, and I got on all right with—[inaudible]. I did get on with my—as such, but I was never a leader that day. That's not a good thing. My own children would never—would never—and you can goof, and you can excuse yourself. And she figured—let me stay and drop a year, and I'd still be one year too young.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: But—[inaudible], so we stayed out, and I didn't come back until the spring. I went back to school, and I had a jolly old time and threw footballs around and just generally had a good time for myself and—some of my work, and I was very sloppy, my clothes, apparently. I used to get these notes—my pants—one leg hanging down—[inaudible]—and my fly unbuttoned, my shirttail was out, oh God. I—[inaudible]—clothes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And your parents were very strict about this?

GARDNER COX: Well, no, no, no. The school was strict.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The school was strict.

GARDNER COX: No, but the family, they were kind of irritated because—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: All this correspondence. [Laughs.]

GARDNER COX: Sure. And so at the end of the year, I left for the summer, and I thought it was going to be—for the next year I was going to drop a class down, which I was fairly willing to do, and I had friends I was—I got on well. I didn't—I wasn't alone. I had plenty of friends.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: Uh, I was liked. And, uh, by God, the school said, "He's fired," and they went over, and they had a big stink. And, uh, no, I had never done anything—I had never done anything dishonest. [00:26:03] I never lied. I never cheated. I never stole anything. I had never done anything immoral. I was just—just a little too much of a good-time Charlie, so out I went. That was their reasoning—see what's best—and this made my parents very sore. Today, they never would have done it, you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: So I had to go—I went to a public school, and I—then, I had to change, you see, change there at this public school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —because some of my friends turned to—actually, the best ones had gone off to other schools. They had to go away. My English friend, he was very, very—he turned his back on me—[inaudible]. I mean, we went and had a fight one time in the street, and he came up and—yeah, I remember that. By God, he came up, and my mother—the thing about my mother—I was influenced by my mother too much in many ways.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible].

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible] but I'm not going to go into that. There's no particular point in it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your mother—you had had a fight with this guy?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, because he, uh, was—they had a party, and I said my mother, you see, she was in the house, and she got the ice cream or whatever it was, and I had some friends. We had a bunch of friends, my friends, and this fellow was there, and he—and she heard him sneaking around telling—being very critical of me because I wasn't in school anymore. In other words, he was really stabbing me in the back.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was after you were fired from Browne & Nichols.

GARDNER COX: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I had some of my friends and some other friends who were just—whatever, he was a real—being a real little lingo, a real little snake in the grass.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: And, uh, so she called him on it right there, and I—and out he went. He talked—he left very angry at her, insulting her. She told him to beat it because he was being a snake in the grass, which he was, and he had that quality, unfortunately. And, uh, I didn't know that then. We were great, close friends, and I met him one time, and I did slap him, to my satisfaction. [00:28:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were—you were pretty capable of handling yourself.

GARDNER COX: Well, I could handle myself. I wasn't any great—I was careful of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: I wasn't—I was reasonably well-coordinated. I could have been a great athlete if I was—I could

do everything somewhat—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —and reasonably well. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can I get back to when you said your mother took you to Provincetown that summer, and you had courses? You had them with Hawthorne and with Child?

GARDNER COX: And with Hawthorne, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He took on some children, or were you an exception?

GARDNER COX: Well, no, I was an exception.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like as your first—do you remember?

GARDNER COX: He might have taken—no, I think I was very much an exception. He just happened to be there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: It wasn't any—it wasn't—[inaudible]—great talent but [ph] for anybody that was interested, and I worked.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was—could you describe a bit his classes as you remember that first time?

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Well, that first time I can't, because I went back. The next time, it was '17—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: In 1917. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GARDNER COX: I remember I was—I had seen the still life—[inaudible]—a squash and a—[inaudible]. It wasn't too hard.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Did you enjoy it?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I think I enjoyed it. I don't remember—I don't remember very much about that year. I remember he—I remember the big studio, and they'd have the racks up. Those great triangle racks would be swung around.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: One of us would—I remember—I remember his brother-in-law. I remember Joe Hawthorne a little bit. He was younger than I am. I remember Hawthorne was a very benign, nice man that I—I did see him in '17. I've rather mixed up which time I'm remembering.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. Sure. Did your mother like being down there in Provincetown?

GARDNER COX: She did. Yes, she did like it. Yeah, she liked it, and, uh, Father used to come down on the weekends, and she'd go up, and I'd stay with some people. This is—we stayed with people at the little house, little boarding house. And I stayed right into the winter. I remember an artist's funeral. Max Bohm died.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yes.

GARDNER COX: And I remember it was late in November or early December—I remember the little town, and it was very sad. [00:30:02] I think it was very sad, and I don't remember much, too much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was during a winter.

GARDNER COX: I remember funny little things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you do your—when you were there in the winter, when you were very young, that winter they put you there?

GARDNER COX: I think I tried to go to school. I'm not sure. Maybe she taught me. I don't know which I did then.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Your mother was with you down there.

GARDNER COX: She was with me. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Was it a genteel little town?

GARDNER COX: At least, I think she was—I think—yeah, she must have stayed with me. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it a genteel or sort of a bohemian place, or—

GARDNER COX: No, not very—but that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —at that time?

GARDNER COX: I don't know what she did, if you want to know the truth. I don't even remember if I went to school there or not.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: I think, maybe. I don't remember. Isn't that funny? I guess I didn't. I must have been tutored. She must have taught me. I don't think I went to school. I'm very vague in this. Isn't that funny? That's a part of my life I don't really remember much about. I just know it happened. I remember more about earlier things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But the—mainly, in your—as you went into your teenage years, you were in Cambridge in public school.

GARDNER COX: Yes, I went to Cambridge Latin School.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: I got out of there when I was 15. I went to Andover. I was still a good-time goofer [ph], and I got fired out of there in no time. Then, I learned. I learned that time, and I never got fired again. I went to Country Day School. Then, I went to Harvard. I was still too young, when I got into Harvard after all this bouncing around, to go. I was only 17 when I finally got in after having been fired from Andover and Browne & Nichols, and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you expected to go to Harvard? Had you assumed?

GARDNER COX: I wanted to. I wanted to. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you know about Harvard that you wanted to go?

GARDNER COX: Well, oh God—in the town, you know, in Cambridge, holy smoke. Yeah, every—there was no question about whether you'd go there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: You never thought of anything else. No, no, that was—I did—I liked all the sports since I used to be in all these games, and I was very strong.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was a big time for sports.

GARDNER COX: And I had some friends—because I did have friends—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —went ahead—they proceeded me as kind of this two-year business. [00:32:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: So I had heard a lot about it—[inaudible]. I liked—[inaudible]—many of the wrong reasons. I was—I did not go for the right reasons.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you like it for?

GARDNER COX: I liked—I had a great deal of fun. I saw a—I met a lot of people there that I liked, and, uh, I liked to drink and tear around. I did—[inaudible]—to keep perfectly all right, and once in a while I got interested in something. In the summers, I used to work—[inaudible]—work, paint.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You'd paint.

GARDNER COX: And I used to—[inaudible]—for the *Lampoon*. I used to draw—.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. By the time you went to Harvard, you were painting and drawing quite a lot.

GARDNER COX: By the time I went to Harvard, I had done quite a lot. Yeah, well, I was—by the time I went there, you see—when I went to Andover, I would make the cover for the *Mirror*, which is their magazine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: And I remember in high school I was drawing all the time, but also I was very interested in—oh, yeah, this is something that has to do with me, I guess. I got to—I went to Harvard summer school in chemistry when I was 11, and they let me in. And I went every day to that—and oh, boy I'd work my tail off all day, and I loved it. I had a little chemistry laboratory at home about that time. The dates on this, I didn't look these up exactly because I got interested in the radio after that. These two things, first the chemistry and then the radio—[inaudible]. I guess I was only 10 when I went to Harvard summer school. It may have—it was awfully young. I said 10 for Provincetown. It was right along in there somewhere, maybe 11.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What could you do at that age in a—

GARDNER COX: I could do—I could do the—I could do all the experiments. The thing I couldn't do and didn't like a bit was the equations.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure, the calculations.

GARDNER COX: The calculations. Those I couldn't do and didn't—wasn't interested in. I could—[inaudible]—the experiments. I'd write them all up, and I loved to put the apparatus up, and I even—I had some little inventions—doing—certain ways of doing things. I was a little inventive, so the professor let me into this course. I went to the lectures. [00:34:00] I took all the notes, but the examination was all about equations. And boy, I took that and I was terrible on my examinations, but I loved the other—I guess I—I don't know why. I guess maybe it was partly the apparatus. I don't know what it was. For two or three years, I was fascinated with that stuff. I had a laboratory at home.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The professors were pretty tolerant, then, weren't they?

GARDNER COX: They were, but they were very nice to me, because I was trying. I wasn't—I didn't goof off at all there, not a bit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why do you suppose you goofed off so much in school?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I don't know. I was an only child, and I don't know. I didn't—I was kind of—I was perfectly nice. I was just kind of silly. I was a goofer. I was happy-go-lucky.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you, uh, through—before you went to Harvard—

GARDNER COX: This is—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —did you go down to Provincetown several times with—

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did your mother begin making that a place she went to?

GARDNER COX: No, she didn't go there anymore. She had no one—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You'd go on your own?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I didn't go with her anymore.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you board with friends or—

GARDNER COX: I boarded with other fellows. I boarded with a fellow named John Taylor, who was at Yale and had gone to Groton first, and his father was a writer. And I met him down in the class. He was also down there, and, uh, a fellow who was named Moore who was a botany instructor—at Stanford. He was down to study with a guy named Miller, and Al [ph]—[inaudible]. He was president of the National Academy, as a matter of fact, and he was a young architect [ph]. He was down there painting. We all lived together in rooms in some house, and we did that for a couple of years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And would you study with several people or—

GARDNER COX: I studied with Hawthorne, of course—stayed with Hawthorne, and Moore stayed with Miller, and

we all thought Miller was—[inaudible]—people—there were some funny things that happened there. The first time I went there was when I was 17. I went—that's where I met [Ives] Gammell. [00:36:01] I went to the—I had a room. I was living by myself before I met these students, and it was a boarding house in Provincetown, the Gray Inn. People used to go, at least in that neighborhood, and Gammell—and I was young and brash. So I thought—I started a discussion about painting at the table right off. I remember two spinsters and this fellow—[inaudible], who I'd never seen, Gammell, and a couple other people, one of Hawthorne's instructors named John Frazier [ph]. He was down—[inaudible]—eventually went to teach at the head of the Rhode Island School, and they all shut up like clams, dead silent, dead silence at the table. And, uh, nobody would pick up any suggestions. Nobody wanted to ante up anything. It was a dead silence the entire meal. Afterwards, this is when I first met Gammell, who is an old friend of mine, and Gammell took me out and said, "I want to tell you something. Don't ever, ever, ever again start an artistic discussion at a boarding house table in this town." He said, "We've been sitting at this table now for three or four years, most of us, and we've got on all right." But he said, "If you start this stuff, there will be the biggest fights and schisms and hurt feelings and anger and exacerbation, and it would ruin the whole damn thing, so just never do this again." I said, "All right," and I never did, never—nobody ever discussed painting at that table ever. The two old ladies were doing flower pieces, and there was—I was at Hawthorne, who Gammell totally disapproved of. The other fellow, Moore, was going to a fellow that nobody thought was any good and it was impossible, so nobody said a word.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that pretty frustrating to you?

GARDNER COX: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No?

GARDNER COX: But I remember that occasion, so that's how I lived there for two or three years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Were there quite a few teenagers like you down there?

GARDNER COX: No. No, not too many. No. I wasn't—I didn't feel out of place. I was getting along, you know. [00:38:00] I began—I went there after my freshman—17, 18, so I stayed out a year before I went to college.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you have recollections of Hawthorne himself as—

GARDNER COX: Yeah, very—oh, very strongly then, very strongly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—what—

GARDNER COX: Well, he was a charming—he was an attractive—he seemed to me very old. Of course, to me, now, he was only about 63 when he died, but he seemed old to me. And he would paint once a week. It was done in a rather elegant way. He would wear a tweed coat and then flannel white—spotless white flannel pants on when he'd turn up on Saturdays. Saturday morning at 10 o'clock the [inaudible] began. They had these great racks—[inaudible]—put the pictures on and turn it around. Then, they'd put them on the back when he was criticizing, and you did about—people did about one picture—two, a couple pictures a day—[inaudible]—palette knife.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Wow, that's—

GARDNER COX: The idea was that you get—his theory was, as he propounded it, with no lines. It's all color juxtapositions to make the edges, to make the differentiations, color against color. So to get them to loosen up the color, they worked with palette knives—I mean, rather, excuse me, putty knives, very—mostly, so you would get these pure blocks of color. And sometimes, they were very—quite lovely vibrations. [Inaudible] getting kind of black and white and dirty, it'll liven them up. That's what the purpose of this summer school was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: And once a week, he would make a demonstration out on the pier. I saw a photograph of it in your brochure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: And I had been to many of those. He'd be sitting on the pier, and he'd have a model, usually with a parasol, it sort of reflected the light on this very luminous body [ph]. And then, he would knock it off with a palette knife. It was all with a palette knife.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He'd do—he'd finish the work—

GARDNER COX: He had done—he'd make a sketch, so it would be all—which, apparently—I guess Chase used to

do it, whom he'd studied with, and various people—[inaudible]. [00:40:03] It was a demonstration once a week, and they'd be—there was some kind of a competition for it. We'd draw lots for it at the end of the week, and somebody would get one. They were always giving—I think it was drawing lots for it, and somebody would get one. And, uh, he'd come in, and he had a very—when he—we'd all go up and get in that studio. I think it was 10 o'clock, and we'd all be sitting like hens in the hen house on the rafters, waiting. And then, he had a collie. I never got—the door would open, and the dog would come in barking like hill and barking—it would just go right on barking at everybody, so everybody would sit back, not scared—he wasn't angry. He was just announcing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] Announcing the master.

GARDNER COX: And then, the master would come in with spotless white pants. He was dressed elegantly or very well, not at all sloppy. And then, these screens would be up there, and there would be—well, I'd have to 10 to 15 pictures about this big, you know, one in the morning, one in the afternoon maybe, landscape.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ten by—[inaudible]—or something. Yes.

GARDNER COX: Models. There might be a still-life in the studio, or there might be six or seven, or whatever, but there would always be a number. It wasn't just—there would always be a number, and then he'd criticize them. And he'd point out things and virtues and defects as he saw them, and the thing he had—very sibilant—I remember, is he had a very sibilant—he had a very sibilant way of talking. He always liked to say—he liked to talk about—he'd talk about, "Make the color juicy." He would, "juicy, juicy color," and he always—there was always—like a watermelon in his mouth—very, very juicy. It was very striking. It was always good, too. He made you feel like—that I remember very clearly. And then, I used to see him, and he thought—he was very complimentary to me, and he told people that he thought I was a comer. I've heard since that he told people that he thought I was very much a one. [00:42:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he harsh on others?

GARDNER COX: He and another fellow—no, this other—another fellow named Bunny Brooks [ph] told me—he said that Hawthorne said that I and Bunny Brooks were the best people he'd ever had, I think he said. This, obviously, is just—take it for what it's worth.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: I didn't know this until about two years ago when Brooks told me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he ever very harsh on people?

GARDNER COX: No. No, no, no, he wasn't—no, he never tore people to pieces. He—my friend Taylor, for example, didn't seem to have much sense of color, and Hawthorne, as I say—the whole point is to make—to get somebody to loosen up, and they'd go back and maybe get a little tighter with it later on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: But the idea is—loosen them up, really refreshing. And Taylor would pick out—other people would be doing the model on the beach, on the pier, sitting on the [inaudible] with a parasol and a pink dress and the reflected light or trees or boats or something. And Taylor would look up, and he'd see a white cat asleep on the ledge of a window against the dock, behind it. He'd do a perfectly white cat and a perfectly black background, and that would be it, black and white, black and white. And it used to drive Hawthorne nuts. Hawthorne used to sort of—he got a slight over him, but he never got nasty to him. I think he'd make pretty sharp cracks to him. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Hawthorne was pretty blunt-spoken, was he?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, he wasn't—he wasn't—he didn't butter people up particularly. He just didn't rip them to pieces either.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: He kind of, "Oh," you know, something like that. He'd kind of pass it on if he didn't—you knew whether he liked it or not very definitely. If he—[inaudible], he'd go and talk about it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you do during the week before—except for Saturday with the [inaudible]?

GARDNER COX: We worked Monday—we worked Monday to Saturday. There would be a model in the studio, generally. There would be still-life setups in the studio. The class would be about 40—30 to 40 people. [00:44:00] Then, on good days, they'd have us to the beach, or—rather, not the beach, on the wharves, generally, outdoors

on the wharves. And then, people went out and did landscapes—well, did village scenes—using this method, you know. [Inaudible.] The shadowed side of a house with purple and blue and yellow—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: —uh, yellow ochre or cadmium lemon vibrating out like hell [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you done anything like this before?

GARDNER COX: Not like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No?

GARDNER COX: No. Then, I went to Bridgman. I went to Bridgman my freshman—the summer of my freshman year. I didn't go to Provincetown again to paint after that. I must have gone when I was 16, 17.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is the second session. The date is March 26, 1974.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Maybe to begin, if you could say something about how Charles Hawthorne had you paint, what effect he had on you, as you can remember, how were you to go about your work?

GARDNER COX: Well, he—I did—his theory of teaching or his theory was that there weren't any lines in nature. It was—roughly stated, it was simply colors meeting colors. The edge would be formed by the—say, the tone of the flesh against the tone of the background. Uh, the character that the course had was to enable people to do that, he encouraged—and they almost all did—work with putty knives and palette knives, and—putty knives. [00:46:15] You'd put down vibrating bits of—little blocks of color against one another or—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this kind of—did you have some trepidation about this when you first started?

GARDNER COX: No. No, I don't. I had already, as I think I indicated, started drawing, and I always drew things all the time when I was young. I'd try a lot of stuff I wasn't—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you didn't mind when you were given kind of a—

GARDNER COX: He didn't force—he didn't force anything on anybody. This was just his suggestion. That's what he did when he made demonstrations. It wasn't any—it wasn't limited to that. Some people, my friend that did the cat I had mentioned, he did it with a brush. He didn't paint with—[inaudible]—at all, and some didn't. And some—I'd use a brush sometimes, too, I'm sure. I didn't—[inaudible]—it was done, that kind of teaching with—the theory of the color juxtaposed rather than the linear division was the idea.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: So that you constantly thought in terms of, or tried to see and think in terms of color, and he would do these—when he'd demonstrate, for example, a parasol, and then there would be reflected lights and there would be a lot of play to this—the opportunity of this—[inaudible], and the colors were quite bright. And, uh, it was—the people in the class would indicate a little—what they were all trying to get, but they were—it was a very respectable bunch, very. There were middle-aged women of different ages and some serious men. Sometimes, there would be art teachers that would come in or painters that wanted to loosen up, and they'd drop in just to do these rather rough things with color. And, uh, as I said, he said "juicy color" often. That's what he was interested in. His own work had it. He was very—he had some very subtle color in his own work. Well, that's what I got out of him and, I think, probably what I—as always in those things, it's an advantage when you're young or sometimes even when you're older. [00:48:07] It's easy to imagine when you're young to have other people working around you and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And these were serious, very talented people.

GARDNER COX: Oh, they were—well, some of them weren't so talented, and some of them—they varied. They were all serious. There was no—it was a very serious class. Some of them weren't much good, and some of them were quite good. John [inaudible] was a member for a while at that time. He was—I guess he was just—I think he was in the class at that time for the first year that I was there, maybe, and then he got on and was doing his own things. And certainly, he was a great artist. He was a talented man, all right, and Henry Hensche was in it, was a monitor. He'd been through it, and he was a serious man, you know, serious—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did the monitor do?

GARDNER COX: Oh, he didn't—they [inaudible] sitter. He would be his assistant in the sense that—I don't think he—I don't remember his criticizing much. He may have. He wasn't—I think by the time I was there he wasn't criticizing much. He was—but he'd set up still lifes. He'd set up. He'd do all the—arrange for the models or turning—seeing that somebody was there to turn those racks around and all the [inaudible] stuff. I don't remember him criticizing. He may have criticized during the week a little bit. He may have during the week. I don't really remember him doing that. I guess he did probably just—Hawthorne—his connection with Hawthorne was—am I talking loud enough? Hawthorne we saw, uh, do the demonstration once a week, which was almost always outdoors if the weather was any good. I think it was almost always outdoors, as I remember it, but I guess if it was rainy they would go in. And he did that once a week, and then he saw us Saturday mornings, but otherwise I don't remember—I think maybe Henschel did the—giving people tips—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you see Hawthorne at all outside of the class?

GARDNER COX: Personally? Yes. Yes, I saw him occasionally. He, uh—I guess I told you that he thought I was promising. [00:50:04] And, uh, yes, I did a little, and my family came up. My mother came up, and they knew him a little bit, and we went to see him. I remember his—I remember the great surprise one time that he didn't remember—no, he didn't remember something he'd done [ph], and the other was that he would say—he would speak, and he was not at all a conceited man, but he would say, "I like this very much. This is very good. This is very good." I was too young to say that about anything, you know. I might like it, but I wouldn't be able to say, "This is—" I'd be pleased somebody liked it, and I kind of liked it myself, and I wouldn't—I didn't know enough to say, "This is very good." He'd say, "This is very good here." I remember he struck with this at the time, and then realizing later on [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your parents, of course, were very interested in what you were doing.

GARDNER COX: Uh, yeah. Yeah, they—they didn't support me that way much. My parents—I may have told you the last time we—I had an advantage of parents who were—and particularly my mother with my painting, but he, too, had this—they were both distinguished people in this field in their point-of-view and attitude. So they didn't get any little niggling stuff, and, uh—so they were sympathetic that way, and they considered it—they didn't consider it something that you don't do—an honorable thing to do, the esteem. That was always around, the highest esteem for it. If it was done well, it was good. But it also made, particularly her—he didn't presume, because I was better at this kind of stuff than he was. I had a natural—more natural gift that way, but she would—she was a very, very stern critic. She wasn't a stern woman, but she was very, very critical, in other words, of the—of the main things. [00:52:03] And so if—so I wasn't—I never was congratulated and told how wonderful it was and all that. Unless they were pretty damn good, you know, so that was kind of good in a way. I didn't get any idea that I was a genius or a great hotshot or anything like that. So they thought I was quite good, and she thought I could be very good indeed.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But they could tell you why.

GARDNER COX: My natural ability she thought was very great.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your mother could tell you why.

GARDNER COX: Yeah, but she was cold—but she was objective about it, yeah, which she was as best she could, you know. Nobody is—so they were—she was very objective, and she didn't pull her punches at all. I'd think I had done something very smart, and she'd just say it was very cheap.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you one of the youngest students?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I was the youngest student, yeah. When I was—when I was 10, I told you, that's kind of what's—just a fact. It was just summers—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]. I was willing to work that much at it, but at 17 I was the youngest.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you, uh—you went back to Provincetown in later years?

GARDNER COX: I can't remember. I don't know. I think I went there a couple of years, two or three years in a row, I think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had—you mentioned last time—[inaudible]—

GARDNER COX: I'm not sure how many years. I know I went two or three. I'm pretty sure I must have gone two

or three years because I knew the place pretty well, and they're all kind of running together.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had a number of acquaintances. Did you have some particular friends down there?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, I did, indeed. I had, uh, these four males with who branched out and did different things, an architect—[inaudible]. And then, I had the—and then, I knew that Eugene O'Neill crowd. Are you interested in that, and those things at all?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: Well, there was a woman down there named Mary Heaton Vorse who was very much of a character in that town then and had a very nice old house, very nice. It was pretty—she was pretty bohemian, but it was a nice old house on—it must have been Commercial Street. And she was sort of the—she was the distinguished citizen, so to speak, a very distinguished citizen there. [00:54:06] And she had done all kinds of labor things and Upton Sinclair and, uh, all kinds of people—she was interested in social things. She had been in jail a few times for picketing, and, uh, she was a pretty good writer. Daniel Wilbur Steele was another one who was a better writer than she was, but she was a pretty good writer, and she was a great friend of O'Neill's.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was she appealing to you?

GARDNER COX: Well, she was an old lady. Her daughter was appealing to me, and her son was a friend of mine. Her daughter was very appealing to me for several years. She was a little younger than I was, but about—probably a couple of years younger than I was. So I was around there a great deal, and I saw Frank—the Provincetown Players were going then, just hadn't been going too long. A man named Frank Shay ran that, and a lot of funny things happened. A lot of funny things happened. And Frank Shay was a drunk, and O'Neill would get angry and black his wife's eyes. He was awfully—he was very attractive, and he was around the Vorses a lot. He—O'Neill lived down near Race Point. He had a place out there where he wrote, out on the outside of the Cape across from the town. And he'd go out there, and he would sequester himself for a month. And then, he would come to town, and then he would raise hell when he was in town. He'd stay at the Vorses', and then he'd go back eventually. And I saw him in these other—in the periods when he'd come back, when he'd come in. He wasn't drunk all the time, but he was—he was not writing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]?

GARDNER COX: Well—[inaudible]—his wife. He had a very nice wife named Irene. Wasn't her name Irene? I think it was Irene. And there was a little guy named Griffin Barry [ph]. I remember it now, Griffin Barry, and he was a sweet little fellow, a newspaperman, correspondent. [00:56:01] And Griffin and Irene would go out and pick blueberries and come back, and Griffin couldn't have—wouldn't have hurt a flea. I'm not sure Griffin was even that way—oriented that way, now that I look back on it, but he was a nice fellow, anyway, and very innocuous. And, uh, she and O'Neill would go upstairs, and you would hear kind of a thump. That would be O'Neill slamming Irene. [Inaudible] and, uh, then he'd be—[inaudible]—a lot of fun, and she didn't seem to mind this too much. He wasn't after her all the time like this, but I remember this sort of stuff. And I remember Frank Shay was a great big force in the Provincetown Players, but he was a—and he was a Harvard graduate and so on, and O'Neill had gone to Princeton, of course. I remember this particular thing because O'Neill brought it up, and one night I was sitting around the Vorses' house in the fall, quite—September, in September. And, um, Frank Shay had gotten drunk, and the night—I guess it had been the night before, so he—[inaudible]—play, and Frank Shay would—in the Provincetown Playhouse. And I remember one of them just about this time, and the third act was very marred by the fact that there was this crashing around behind the stage and around behind the scenes. It was Frank Shay walking through the scenery and falling through it and staggering through it. You know, it was terrible [laughs], and they had to bring the curtain down and so—on his own play he produced himself. He was a drunk, and he wasn't a good one, and I was over there. Does this interest you at all? Is this anything—[inaudible]—good—this is a good vignette of a part of Provincetown, because they were—and I was in there talking to O'Neill in the Vorses' living room. [00:58:00] And Fern Shay, Shay's wife, came running up Commercial Street with her baby in her arms and said Frank was raising hell down at the house, and he was tearing everything to pieces. And, uh, apparently, Frank had thrown the baby across the room a couple of times, bounced it off the wall, and she'd grabbed it and run out of the house. And, uh, now there was a little hiatus in there, because Mrs. Vorse got into this—went down first somehow or other, and, uh, I finally—with O'Neill, and I went with—she went in. Mrs. Vorse went in, and the house was in shambles, as I saw very quickly afterwards. And she was a very strong-minded, tough, noble woman, and she had got all kinds of guts. She was frail as she could be, Mrs. Vorse, but she was a tough, strong-minded woman. God. And Shay was standing there with everything topsy-turvy and broken and thrown around. The house was a mess, I mean, in shambles, really in shambles. He had gone and put his foot through all of—his wife was a painter. He'd gone and put his foot through every picture she'd done all summer long or had around, even, just bingo, bingo. And there were these pictures with all these great holes in them, and the stove was upside-down. Everything was a mess, and he apparently—I wasn't here when this happened. I was with O'Neill. We came down shortly after this. [Inaudible] at

any rate, and he was just—Shay, apparently, was just standing like an ape, just like this, looking for trouble. And Mrs. Vorse, Mary Vorse—who was then, I suppose, 50—she rushed up to bring him to his senses and said, "Hit me." And Shay looked at her and just went womp and laid her out like a rug, no gallantry whatsoever. Old friends who she was. He just laid her out like a rug. When we got down there, she was stiff as a board, and then we got her together, and they got a hold of Frank, and one thing or another. When I got down there, I guess there was—by this time, the—I didn't have any personal contact with him at all at this time. He just—the cops had gotten there and got him out. And O'Neill didn't go down there when the fighting was on—[inaudible]—this was happening, just afterwards. But the house was—it was quite interesting. The house was—everything was upside-down. There was a stove—he had taken the coal stove right apart. It was just scattered all over the place, pieces of it. The pictures were all on the floor or upside-down on the walls, and the beds were all torn up. He had really gone through it like a cyclone, and I remember O'Neill said, "This is a typical Harvard man." I was going to go to Harvard the next year. He said—for example, I remember this particular remark. This was typical. "Normal graduate," he said. And he was a great friend of his, of course, but—[inaudible]. He had a—the two things—there were two things that were very outstanding in the kitchen or in the two lower rooms where the bookcase was upside-down. There was a temperance pledge, because he had been bedeviled with this kind of stuff from time to time. The rest of the time, he's all right, quite an attractive man. He had jumped up and down and slammed the temperance pledge on the floor, apparently, according to Fern. He'd done everything, and he couldn't bust it. And it was intact. It was intact. The rest of them—the glass was all broken, but nothing had happened to the temperance pledge. It was there. And the other thing was an upturned bookcase just over—so it was up, ass end up. And on top of it was a plate of soup and not a drop on it. I don't know how this was done. I just remember thinking it was remarkable. I never forgot this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, now, a fellow like that would be ostracized or not—

GARDNER COX: [01:02:02] No, no, no. Oh, no, no, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —taken by storm?

GARDNER COX: It was just—Frank was just—[inaudible]. Mrs. Vorse didn't hold it against him at all. Many things happened like this at times and spasmodically. Then, it would all be very fine, and they would all kind of—they were pretty cultivated. There was a sculptor who used to—with a red-headed wife, and he used to raise hell with her because she'd smile at somebody, and he would take her to whatever party—I remember this, going out to parties. It was quite impressive for a kid. He was a very big, strong guy with a great, red beard, and I remember his wife had these little heels on. And he was just like a plow. They came out of this party, and she'd smiled at somebody, and, God, he grabbed her, and out they went. And, uh, he in his corduroy pants and his red beard flying, and she was holding back like this, and the heels went down right down to the front gate. That sort of thing, it was kind of funny. It wasn't exactly sordid. There were just people running amok now and then and getting awfully angry or excited in the moment. The rest of them, they'd sit around and talk—do you remember Harry Kemp [ph]? Did you ever hear of him? He stayed—he died just a couple of years ago down on the—he was down there being a great big shot when I was there first. He had just come out of jail, and he had just seduced Upton Sinclair's wife or something like that. And he was a tall, young—I suppose he was 30, probably in his 30s, 35 or so, and full of himself. And he—he was a great favorite with O'Neill and all of them, and he used to—I remember him because I used to date everything by when he was in jail and when he got out of jail, because he was always being put in for picketing or assaulting somebody. And, uh, well, he was a labor agitator among other things, so he'd always say, "Well, that was just—I had just been out of jail—[inaudible]—second time—[inaudible]." That's the way he dated things. I remember that. Well, that was the kind of thing it was like, and I was very much younger. But because I was a friend of her daughter and her son, Mary Eaton Vorse, she was right in the center of all this stuff, so I saw almost—a great deal of that crowd. [01:04:03] And it was very entertaining. Yeah. It really would have been to anybody, because—[inaudible]—talk, too, you know. They weren't always [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: What effect do you think it had on you?

GARDNER COX: I don't know. I enjoyed it. I don't think I—I didn't want to make it my way of life, because it had a sad side, you know. I didn't—I don't think I—it didn't make me want to be bohemian, but I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did this—

GARDNER COX: —I didn't—in those days, you know, the—painters weren't so bohemian, the ones that, at least, I knew about, you know. They were sort of [inaudible], I was brought up to think at the time, Sargent and Chase and all those people. They were rather—artists in those days were rather kind of elegant.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: You know, they weren't—they weren't—[inaudible]—as much, and they were—the best ones, the successful ones, or the ones at that time I thought were the best—in fact, it wasn't until Van Gogh and some

of those boys came along a little later that that got more, as you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. [Inaudible.] Hawthorne.

GARDNER COX: And Hawthorne was very much of a—[inaudible], but they had fun. They—Saint-Gaudens [ph] had his—[inaudible]—and all that kind of stuff, but they didn't—they didn't go in for—they weren't hips, and, uh, neither was—of course, neither was O'Neill or Mrs. Vorse. But I didn't—I enjoyed it, but I didn't want to particularly live a bohemian life on that scale—on that scale, sometimes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, occasionally. [Laughs.] You also at this time knew—

GARDNER COX: But I was very good friends with [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: —had near-contemporaries there, too, I mean, other painters out there.

GARDNER COX: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you know John Frazier at that time?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, I knew John Frazier, and he didn't mix up with this crowd much, or Gammell didn't. I did because I knew the son and the daughter, and then I got on with Mrs. Vorse and—[01:06:03] And then, over the years, the later years, I helped her out some, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you know Edwin Dickinson at this time?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, but I only just knew him, see. That was a little group, Gammell, Dickinson, Frazier. There was a whole series of studios in kind of a quadrangle made of woods. I remember it now. They were right along, the whole lot of them. It looked like a little motel. It was just studios, little white, all in a little string, and it went around a corner. And Dickinson was in there, and Frazier was in there, and Gammell was in there and quite a number of others. And I remember going to Dickinson's studio. I've gotten to know Dickinson since then, but I was quite a lot younger, and I just went in to see—he was probably—well, I was, say, 17. He probably was 27 or 30, so I was friends with the ones I was living with, and then they—I didn't—and Gammell. I was a friend of Gammell's. I've always been a friend of Gammell's ever since. And they—oh, let me say. No, the one that did the teaching in the class, excuse me, was not Hensche. It was Frazier. Hensche was a monitor. Frazier was the assistant. He criticized during the week. I forgot. But he was the one that criticized.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he was in his 20s or so then.

GARDNER COX: Well, he was older than that, I think. He must have been—he was a mature man, and he married, and he—I think he was married then. He was a pretty good watercolor—he was a good watercolor painter then. My family bought one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like as a teacher, Hawthorne?

GARDNER COX: It was so long ago. I liked him. He was a serious, undemonstrative kind of man. He would sort of say this and that and point it out, and I just remember him saying he got—he started to drink because he had worked in a club. I guess it was in Providence. Maybe it was a Providence club. I don't know what it was, but he worked in this club, and he wasn't a drinker, but he said he did start to drink there because he couldn't stand the arrogance of the members. [01:08:02] So he'd get himself potted before he went into work there because it was the only way he could take this without blowing up. I remember him telling—I remember that. I knew him well enough to hear that, but he was always rather austere. He didn't—and he was doing his own work when he could on the side. You know, he must have criticized a couple times a week, I would guess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was Gammell like when you were—[inaudible]?

GARDNER COX: Gammell was very much just like he is now, just sassy. Have you interviewed him yet? He's about the same as he is now. He hasn't changed much, just as sassy and just as—very much the same. Did you like him? Well, I shouldn't ask you that, because—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —he's an awful nice friend. He's a very amusing man. I like him very much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he has strong—very opinions, but he had a group of friends, did he?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yes. Yeah, but they painted—they didn't necessarily paint a lot. See, now, Frazier and he—Frazier and he didn't have anything to do with—[inaudible]. Dickinson and he [inaudible], but then not really, but

they were good friends. Yeah. See up there?

ROBERT F. BROWN: On the shelf?

GARDNER COX: It wouldn't make any difference. He knows I think—[inaudible]—sassy, strong-opinioned man.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. These fellows are all [inaudible].

GARDNER COX: And he's got a very good sense of humor.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Um—

GARDNER COX: And Dickinson was doing very impressive work, this mystical stuff—very—some of it was very big pictures, it was great, big pictures of all kinds of—[inaudible]—it reminds me of now. [Inaudible] is not as good as he was, I don't think. I think he's quite an artist himself. He's the most distinguished one that came out of the whole place, I'd say, almost. I think, of the ones that were there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did—[inaudible]—or did you ever talk with him about what you were doing—[inaudible]

GARDNER COX: I don't remember now. I suppose I did, you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: I'm sure we talked about this stuff all the time, but I don't remember what I said to them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was on the eve, then, of your going to college.

GARDNER COX: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were at Harvard, what, three years, through your junior year?

GARDNER COX: I was at Harvard three years, and then I resigned from it because I didn't want to—I wasn't fired or anything. [01:10:05] I resigned there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You wanted to go on—

GARDNER COX: I wanted to paint. Now, there actually was—I don't think I got much out of the year I was out of there. I kind of goofed around and saw my friends, and I didn't—I really didn't—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where were you that year?

GARDNER COX: I was around here, but I had a lot of fun in college, a lot of friends, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What date was that?

GARDNER COX: That would be 1927 and '28, the winter of—the fall of '27 and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you didn't, in fact, go steadily into painting.

GARDNER COX: No, I was—really, that year, I kind of goofed off, and I think I worked in my father's office a bit, and I painted some. I didn't—it didn't—it wasn't a particularly fruitful year. I had a very good time, but I don't—and I used to draw for the *Lampoon* all the time. I got a prize for doing that. It was mostly—it was a pretty good prize, \$1,500, which in those days was about—you know, \$4,000 or \$5,000 today, that they'd saved up. I was the star on the *Lampoon*—[inaudible], and once in a while they gave this prize, and they gave it to me that year. And I was doing that, and I was painting some, but I don't think I went to the museum school the next year. It really was a—I was really kind of goofing off a good deal of the time, fiddling around and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you—[inaudible]—

GARDNER COX: —getting tight and seeing girls and stuff, not—I didn't—I was not a—I was being kind of happy-go-lucky.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —agreeable to you, was it? You didn't—[inaudible].

GARDNER COX: Yes. No, I didn't feel too bad about this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your parents, did they care?

GARDNER COX: I don't think they liked it at all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When did you then begin—

GARDNER COX: I think they [inaudible] like it. I don't think they liked it a bit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you then—did get back into the traces, did you? Did you go—

GARDNER COX: Well, I got into the—well, I then went to the museum school. [01:12:00] Also, I was also going to—the beginning of freshman year—I went to Provincetown, I think, from 17 until I went to college. That must have been about when they—maybe it was two or three years, certainly two. And then, uh, my freshman year, after I finished my freshman year at college, I went down to Bridgman.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Art Students League?

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Yeah, but I think—and I think the summer before that I probably went to Hibbard. I mean, no, it couldn't have been that. And then—but, anyway, I went to Hibbard one summer, and I went to the Art Students League another summer. I may have gone to Hibbard two summers. I'm not sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where was Hibbard teaching?

GARDNER COX: He was in Rockport.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what did you study with him?

GARDNER COX: I studied just landscapes. We just went out and painted outdoors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did he compare with Hawthorne [ph]?

GARDNER COX: It was the same kind of teaching.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As Hawthorne?

GARDNER COX: He didn't demonstrate. It was a Saturday morning criticism, and I think he came around, though I'm not sure, because we weren't—we didn't paint as a class. We painted at different places. I think it was just Saturday morning that he criticized.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But what did Rockport seem like to you compared with Provincetown?

GARDNER COX: Well, Rockport then was just—Provincetown was much more—it was a more exciting place. I didn't go there because I preferred to go there. I wanted to go there. I had been with Hawthorne long enough, and there was nobody else in Provincetown I would have studied with. And I didn't totally like the decadence. Some of it was pretty [inaudible] season up there, but that's not what kept me going. But I just—I didn't—I think I didn't want to go back to Hawthorne again.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Hibbard an effective a teacher for you?

GARDNER COX: I think I—Hawthorne was a more distinguished man, if you—[inaudible]. He was certainly more—but at that time, Hibbard was a—Hibbard was a very good painter when he was young, in his—[01:14:05] Are you familiar with Willard Metcalf's work?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Well, now, for instance, he wasn't quite as good at Metcalf, but he was damn near as—Metcalf is first-class, I think. You know, that kind of thing is very subtle stuff.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: There's nothing cheap about that at all. That's quite—it may not be a la mode and so on, but there's nothing that [inaudible] is never cheap, and [inaudible] distinguished relationships established [inaudible] he did indeed. And he never ceased doing so until he died. I didn't know him, but people did know him and say he was apparently very charming and very—he had a very nice aura about him, apparently. And Hibbard was not as distinguished a person to me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was in this, uh—

GARDNER COX: But he was—he was—by that point, he was doing some very nice things. He did very—he did some very subtle stuff with cedars and out in Belmont. He just—he was working around there, and then he got

into doing the snow scenes and not—and then, he began knocking them off, you know, when he got older. He just could do them without thinking, practically, and he had a great influence. A lot of people—he had quite an influence. A lot of people painted like him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you spend—with him, did you spend time watching him work?

GARDNER COX: No. No, I don't think we watched him at all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he came to you.

GARDNER COX: Well, no, we went in as we did with Hawthorne on Saturday morning. We'd bring the stuff in, and then there would be all—we'd put them in racks and turn them around, and he'd criticize us. I don't think he went around because we weren't in one place.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: Am I talking too fast, slow, or loud enough, because I can—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

GARDNER COX: —alter that easily?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, then, with Bridgman at the Art Students League, what did you go there for?

GARDNER COX: I went there for the anatomy, and, uh, I was—I'm sure I was only there a summer, my freshman year summer—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get—[inaudible]

GARDNER COX: Yeah, and I came back and did it for the *Lampoon*, did great muscular figures. Way overdone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Bridgman right there with the class?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, he'd come in, and he'd go around and draw, uh—he [inaudible] books and so on, I'm sure. He was very popular. He was a very popular teacher, and a lot of people went to him. [01:16:00] His books were all over the place at that time, and, uh, the—and he'd go around the class, and he could—he knew it so well, the way he did it, that he'd go around, and he wouldn't have to look up much. He'd—[inaudible], and he'd—[inaudible]. He'd come in—[inaudible]—from here, or he'd show the fellow—he'd show the student that he ought to—what he should do on the fellow's drawing, on the student's drawing. So he may—he might take a knee, or he might take an arm. Say he took a knee. I remember this particularly. He'd often take a hand of the drawing and show them how this and that would make this strong. Then, he'd go, and as he went around the room he could do the knee from any angle as he went around. He'd get the right—you know, he knew it all cold that way, or a shoulder blade or an elbow or an arm or a hand. He'd go around, and he'd just take one look to see which direction it was coming from, and then he'd draw it. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you suppose you were to get out of this course? What did you get out of this detailed study of the structures of the body?

GARDNER COX: Well, I got—I guess I got a—well, I used it, and I refined it somewhat. I mean, I don't—well, what did I get? I got, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It wasn't just—

GARDNER COX: In the first place [inaudible] working and thinking about it, and I was among other people who were working and thinking about these things, which—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he talk about how the various parts working together, the function?

GARDNER COX: No. No, he didn't—I think Hale started doing that stuff. No, he didn't do that. No, he didn't.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Just the appearance.

GARDNER COX: I think Hale kind of in—I don't know if he invented it or not, but he made it—he has no book out, has he, Hale? I couldn't get it. I asked him about it, and he didn't have a book. I just know him slightly, but I saw the thing when he was—we were talking about the same thing, what it does, which helps a great deal. I think knowing why is a great deal of help.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You just recorded what you saw.

GARDNER COX: Yeah. He didn't—there was none of this, "This is a lever or a crane," or whatever kind of thing. And he didn't—he didn't—he wouldn't say, "These are the muscles that make you smile," and—[inaudible]—like that. [01:18:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. This is what you'd learned from Hawthorne or Hibbard, to see things—

GARDNER COX: We did all kinds of—I don't know. It all kind of goes together a little bit. I think all these things kind of—you can't put your finger right on it. I learned quite a bit from Hibbard. I learned doing the things, and he was a—put it this way, maybe. You start off with working in the Hawthorne mode, and you decide it's a good thing to do. Now, of course, I was young, and I probably was influenced—obviously, my parents, my mother—[inaudible]—one time before and respected him. And I liked what I saw he'd done, so, accepting that mode then, then you—then I was interested in doing it as well as I could, at least what—[inaudible]—mean I was sympathetic to it. So I learned there, doing that, and I also took it seriously, and I thought it was—and I respected him, and I saw him as a successful—I'm not talking about a rich man, but I mean a man of—worthy of respect, respectable in the real meaning of the words, a considerable, respectable man, worthy of respect. I don't mean using the right fork.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But when you did, uh—

GARDNER COX: So this all was good for me. And then, when I went to Hibbard—[inaudible]—in this connection, in doing these things in the Hawthorne mode, that is, thinking of just color, uh, I developed some, and he—when he criticized, I had respect enough for him so that his favorable criticism would be encouraging, his unfavorable criticism I would think over quite carefully and try to follow it. And then, when I went to Hibbard, Hibbard was good enough, then, so that Hibbard [inaudible] encouraging, he sensed—he could sense the—[inaudible]—all right. [01:20:04] And he could sense the other, even though he did later on. So I got that from them, encouragement and criticism and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then, when you went to Bridgman, what did you—

GARDNER COX: Then, Bridgman is the same kind of thing. I wanted to learn the anatomy. I wanted to do that down there, and I—and then, when I went—I may have gone to Rockport a couple of summers. I went someplace every summer. I went to summer school from the time I was 17 on until I got through college. That year, I didn't go. I don't know what I did that summer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you, um—then, after you—that year, after you left Harvard, then, did you—is that when you began going both to MIT and to the Museum of Fine Arts school?

GARDNER COX: No, the year, I think—I think there was one year I kind of goofed. Then, the next year, I went to the two schools.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You went to both at one time.

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did that work out? What were you planning to do by going—

GARDNER COX: That worked out well. Well, I think I told you that time [inaudible] prove it now, because I was—I think, as I told you, the idea had always been—at least, it had been put to me. And my parents never tried to ram something down my throat, but, you know, I was an only child—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You could sense—

GARDNER COX: —and they could kind of work on me a little bit, you know—

ROBERT F. BROWN: They had certain hopes.

GARDNER COX: Yes, suggestions and so on, and then the idea, the sensible thing seemed to be preparation, because they weren't bad about this at all, but the preparation was to paint as I did and keep on painting and paint and be a painter, but make my living by being an architect so that I could paint what I wanted to paint and not be forced into anything. They're theory was, also—which I accept, accepted—that if you—that a half-ass painter, not a first-class painter, wasn't worth anything. [01:22:08] It was worthless, and a good one was very worthwhile indeed, and that—they had a little joke. They had a little joke, see, because of the type of work that—[inaudible] things, they had both been in Paris, as you know—four years, and eight years she'd been there among all these people, artists. And they knew—had seen a lot of trouble and had seen people—they were very familiar with the life—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —and the sort of—[inaudible]—quotation very well, said, "The shortest novel in the world, the shortest story in the world, or the shortest tragedy in the world was, 'He was a landscape painter, and she, too, was poor.'" [Laughs.] This is a ticket to starvation and frustration and pain and sorrow and everything else. [Inaudible] put forward, and, uh, so the idea was that I would eventually study architecture and make a living at that because people have to have architecture, and there's some use—and they assumed I probably would have some ability. And you could do things, and it would be—in those days, that was a nice—it was a hard way to make a living, actually. People didn't make much money, but you made enough. You could always make some and then paint as I wanted to without any—anybody having to push me around or try to get me to change it or do anything, the idea being I'd be able to—I could paint better than if I went out and tried to make some money unless I was very, very good, indeed. And then—and you'll never know, of course. I could see, being the son, you can't ever say to somebody, "You're going to hit it," though they had—she thought I'd really hit it pretty strong if I worked enough. [01:24:05]

ROBERT F. BROWN: The problem is there wasn't maybe the usefulness that there was with architecture.

GARDNER COX: Yes, it was something you could always do. The idea at that time was—this was before the Depression put the architects practically out of business, but up to then architecture looked like a pretty—a negotiable occupation.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Whereas, unless you were sup—very, very good at painting, it wasn't negotiable, particularly. And, uh, that still is—they were right. They were right enough about that, so then I went to the museum school. I started off there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What year was this?

GARDNER COX: That would be—now, I think that would be '28. Let me see. Yeah, the fall of '28 I would think that was, about.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What level did you come in?

GARDNER COX: I came in—I think I went into the second or third year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: It may have been the second year I went into.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was—

GARDNER COX: I had been saying—I think I said third year, and I thought—I think I went—I didn't go through the preliminary things of painting still-lives and all that kind of stuff. I went right into the portrait class, which in those days was a portrait class of head and shoulders. Then, the next year, the third year, was called intermediate, and that was the whole figure. And I went two years there. And about halfway through the first year, I think it was, I went into the—I think I started at Tech, MIT, and my father had been—as I told you, he also taught under [inaudible] as a—like John Frazier or Hensche. And, uh, so, anyway, he had a lot of contacts there, and they did it anyway. It wasn't that they were doing him a favor, but they took me in the middle of the year as a special student because I had been to Harvard already. And, uh, the special students just did the design. They didn't have to take the history of European art and French and all that kind of stuff. They didn't have to take the other things that they gave to give a well-rounded education, so to speak, along with it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [01:26:00] Did these two curriculums, uh, suit you well?

GARDNER COX: It was quite—yeah, it was quite hard work. I mean, it was hard. It was long. I would paint in the morning because the morning was when the model was there, and then I'd go to school in the afternoon and the evening. I did that for—I did it for two and a half, because I went to the museum school for two years. And then, I got through Tech in two and a half years because I went—then, I went to Tech every summer. I was at Tech all year round for two and a half years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Could I first ask about the museum school, the teaching and the people who taught you?

GARDNER COX: Is this what you want now? Am I going on too long on this?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, if I could hear a bit of that—

GARDNER COX: Any time you want to shut me up.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —that—

GARDNER COX: All right. The, uh, people that taught us then were a fellow named Leslie P. Thompson, Leslie P. Thomson—and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is the portrait class?

GARDNER COX: And the painting, intermediate. They were the painting teachers. They taught the painting, all of it, through all the [inaudible], and a fellow named Bosley. I think his name was Frederick Bosley. I'm not sure. It was Bosley, anyway, and they were both products of the Tarbell-Benson school who had been there before.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you were there?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, and I liked Benson's work very much. I never liked Tarbell's work as much. And I never liked Paxton's work at all. [Inaudible.] Paxton—there was something cheap about Paxton, as skilled as he was, and Benson was the most distinguished of them. I know Tarbell was very good, but—Tarbell was a pretty good painter, but I thought—I liked Benson better. [01:28:02] And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Thompson and Bosley were protégés.

GARDNER COX: Very definitely, and, I mean, they were—and I had Paxton. That's one of the reasons we'd fall out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —Paxton was a local master, and, uh, they—and Lett [ph] Thompson liked Paxton, too, but they were there, that whole group. And the allegiance of some of those men to that—to those ideas and that manner was very—to my mind, very crippling to them, because they really—anything that wasn't like that they didn't like at all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you got this—when you—then, when you went to the museum school, they were strict about the way they taught?

GARDNER COX: I went to the museum school. Well, they—of course, you can't—you know, you can't be too strict because you can't make everybody paint the way you want them to—[inaudible]—varieties of things. But they—but that would be what their ideal would be.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you do when you were there?

GARDNER COX: Well, I did—well, I did what they thought was very good. Well, I say "good." I mean, I [inaudible] and things like that, but then they were going for edges and things like—but they didn't really bother me very much, if you want to know the truth. I didn't admire either of their works. I didn't like either Bosley or Thompson's painting, personally, and people maintain—I maintain, you know, the best—what you get out of an art school is not so much the teachers but the other students. If you have good other students, that's much better than having just a great teacher.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did you have good fellow students?

GARDNER COX: Pretty good, pretty good. Yes, pretty good. We got good models, and it was work, so I didn't have any—I remember how they'd teach. I remember Thompson would just come in and kind of say—kind of draw and say, "A little bit pinker there. It would be nice to have it a little bluer there," or something like that, see. That's about all he'd do. They really took it pretty easy, and Bosley would just come in, and I remember him—he always taught with a penknife. He'd take a penknife out, and he'd go up, and he'd say—I'll do it with this picture up here. [01:30:03] I'll imitate—[inaudible]. He would [inaudible] picture, and he'd take the penknife, and he'd say—and he'd take off a 32nd—a piece off the nose, like I said. He'd take that right down like that, and he'd do—like this. That's the way he criticized, so it didn't—you know, you didn't—I liked them. I liked them both all right, but I didn't—I didn't, uh—working was the important thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did they ever say why they—

GARDNER COX: I'd go to the museum and look at things like that. No, no, it was a very unintellectual approach at that time. In fact, that whole era, uh, was, I think—I use my mother as an example again and again, as you see, because she did know this stuff, and she—and I respected her, though we differed some all right. But she was a very intelligent woman. She was not—she was a very intelligent woman. She was very intelligent, but she'd say—the things they'd say would be—well, I mean, probably—and this was repeated all over the place, "You paint better if you don't think so much." There's something in it, but this is—of course, that's totally reversed now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's a natural, spontaneous, intuitive thing.

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—and Sargent, it was an intuitive thing. Rembrandt was that way. He didn't think too much. I mean, [inaudible] put it on, and they felt it. And this—and, as a matter of fact, there is something to be said for that. That may come back to this right-hand, left-hand side of the brain, because I believe that—are you familiar with that much? I've—I'm very interested in that because I'm left-handed, and I've been aware of this a little bit. But, uh, when this becomes more firmly established, established as it is, it does—I basically understand a lot of people better. I know some people—and people think they're kind of nutty because they're very left-handed and very, very good this way, but they aren't very strong on the verbal and analytical stuff, and so they seem stupid, whereas they're extremely brilliant in one area that other people are quite stupid in. And I think that there has been a tendency, probably, over the last 30 years to—not knowing this—a lot of people who aren't maybe terribly strong on the right have been making up for it on the left, and also the left—the practical, analytical, scientific attitude is so much respected that a lot of people have put maybe too much weight on that. And then, as a result, sooner or later some of this stuff has fallen off, you know, because a lot of what's being done now wouldn't pass muster at all, I mean, people like Pearlstein [ph] and so on. That stuff is pretty boring, you know. Hawthorne would do that 10 times better than Pearlstein. He'd be richer. The same thing, if he wanted to do it in that mode and did this, he could come up with something much better. This is just a—but that was the attitude, so they didn't teach. They didn't do any of that theorizing at all. They didn't even know about techniques, not a damn thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They didn't, and yet some of them strove for a good deal of exactness in what they depicted.

GARDNER COX: Oh, yes, they tried to make it just as—well, of course, Benson was more Impressionistic. I always liked the more Impressionistic stuff. I didn't like Copley, for example, at that time too much. I like Stuart much better. I like—now, I like Copley, the early ones, much better than I did. But, uh, the—so they didn't know—it was a very unintellectual teaching. I remember Thompson would say—he had a very silly woman in the—I went to one summer class there, too, come to think of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had a very silly what?

GARDNER COX: A very silly woman in this summer school. I went to summer school there one time before I went into the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible].

GARDNER COX: That was—that's [inaudible] summer. Every summer I did something, and he—I remember this woman saying, "I can see it. I can see it, but I can't—I can't paint it. I can't mix it. I don't know what to do." And he'd say, "Well," he had a nasal—he said, "Well, if it looks red, put a little red in it. If it looks green, put a little green in it." And then, he went on. [01:34:01] [Laughs.] That was the kind of teaching.

[END OF TRACK AAA_cox74_8240_m.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Could you say a little more about—

GARDNER COX: Well, just, uh—this is—they were got rid of by Billy James, William James, also a painter. You've probably got some of—got to get some of his things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Thompson and Bosley were—

GARDNER COX: Yeah, they—I think they—well, they got some Englishmen in. They got some Englishmen.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Into the museum?

GARDNER COX: Yeah [inaudible] and so on, who became—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And they—and I think quite rightly they got rid of Bosley and Thompson, but it was very—it must have been a shock to them, and Bosley—apparently, Bosley had wandered through the Fenway, you know, and finally I think he killed himself, but Thompson did not. Thompson was just as feisty as he—it didn't stop him much. It didn't stop him. It made him sour—[inaudible] people, and he was quite a hater. And I remember after the war I came back and went into the St. Botolph Club, and argued with him. And he—I had—[inaudible], so to speak—[inaudible]—things around and had before the war—[inaudible]—quite a lot—not quite a lot, some. And we got into this discussion at the lunch table at the St. Botolph in the old building, and I got to—this is—don't ever do is get into an argument about the fine arts with anybody, you know. [Laughs.] But, anyway, I was [inaudible], and I said that—and, of course, Thompson—there was only way—[inaudible]—edges like—

[inaudible], and edges, edges, edges; Hawthorne, no edges, just colors. [Inaudible] edges, only by colors, but edges with him. [00:02:02] And so I began to say I liked a lot of people, and I thought a lot of people were— [inaudible], and I said, "For example—" and Lett was listening to this across the table from me. There were other people there, and I said, "Well, I remember—" it's funny. At one point, I said, "Well, after all," I said, "don't you think a man like Sargent is an able man? A remarkable man? But Mr. Picasso is a very remarkable man, a very good man, too?" And that was—that got him. That was too much, and he said, "By God," he said, "I'll tell you the difference between them. The difference between them is that Sargent is great and Picasso is rotten," and he got up, and he tore off and left the table. He gave the table a hell of a bang and got up and left. Well, I—there it was, so—and I remember thinking, "Well, I'll never get that way. That's a hell of a way to get, and I hope I'll never get that way. Now, as I get older, I'm not going to ever do this." And funny enough, it's getting just to the point where I have a little difficulty. That is, I'm having difficulty—I'm having difficulty judging anything—dance for me and put toilet paper around a crowd of people [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: This I am unable to judge, and I don't mind it. I don't—I don't mind it at all, but I don't exactly—I don't think of it as painting. Of course, they don't either, for that matter, but I'm getting—it's getting—and I think sometimes they're very—they don't impress me as having a great deal up here. I think they pretend to have it, but they've got—don't you?

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

GARDNER COX: Now, here and there, there's something very interesting indeed, but this—this gives an awful lot of people who have egos and very little, really—tremendous [inaudible]. They'll say, "I'll go out and take a crap in such and such a place," or almost as silly as that. [00:04:03] You know, and it shows great independence. Well, this—I can't—I can't, uh, necessarily accept this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You—[inaudible]—

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible], because I like all kinds of painting, all kinds of stuff. I don't care at all. I like it—that's what I like about Ms. [inaudible]. She likes all kinds of things, but he's stuck on this, and there it was. And later on, uh, I—I was up for the—[inaudible]—at the time, and I knew—[inaudible]—was a member. And I kept saying, "Well, there goes the Tavern Club." Somebody asked me—[inaudible]—I just wrote it off—[inaudible]. But he was a nice enough guy. He didn't—he didn't—[inaudible]. So later on, I had been a member there a long time, and he was a member at the time, and I had seen him there all the time. Years later at the Tavern, I said, "You think I'm a renegade, don't you?" And he said, "Yes, by Jesus, you are." [They laugh.] And, you know, imagine—he thinks this is—this stuff is terrible, and I don't—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why do you suppose that his group had such a narrow view of other modes of painting?

GARDNER COX: I think because they—there was just great loyalty, it seemed, that this group seemed to have. They had a great success, you know. Benson had those pictures that they'd sell before—out in Chicago. I remember there were some that sold—I don't know, a great many thousands of dollars before the show opened.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, he had a terrific income. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Well, I mean, he had great prestige, and they weren't—I don't think Lett thought about money much. I wouldn't say—I wouldn't really put that on it at all, but they—the Boston School at that time was—I think was very prestigious, and they thought it was going to last forever, I think, and they—I guess, as so many of them have over the years. And—[inaudible]—my life, there have been two or three Boston Schools now that have gone down.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Well, the—

GARDNER COX: Jack Levine, you know [inaudible], just terrible, you know, and they had this. And I guess it was quite a clear-cut kind of thing that Tarbell had a way. [00:06:05] And Lett, as I understand it, he got prizes and got things for a while. He was kind of coming up, and then he felt the rug had been, I think, pulled out from under him, and he had no desire to make any other change. He never changed at all. They didn't like Hopkinson, you know. They all hated Hopkinson.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why was that?

GARDNER COX: Because he took these experiments.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you know Hopkinson when you were a young man?

GARDNER COX: See, I always liked—very well, yeah, I've known Hopkinson since I was a little bit of a boy. I

mean, I didn't—I got to know him—I really got to know him when I was in my, oh, 30s. I knew his daughter. I used to visit him and see him around with my parents all my life, but I got to—we got to be—he had a studio right next door, you know, and we got—we went down—[inaudible]—every week, 20 years together with [inaudible]. He put me up—[inaudible]—arts and letters. I think he did. I don't know if [inaudible]. He said, "We had to work like hell to get you in," he told me. [Laughs]—[inaudible]—tell me that. He said, "You don't realize how we had to work to get you into that." [Inaudible] years ago, but I had some people who were strong for me, and he was one. So we knew one another, and he—and I liked what he did, and I liked his experimenting. But they didn't like it at all, and he told me that when he came back from Paris, that the only one of the Boston School who would speak to him, who would be decent to him at all, was Benson, and Benson was very nice to him. But the rest of them cut him and cut him, and he hated Thompson. Thompson he didn't get on worth a damn. They were both—they didn't get on worth a damn.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hopkinson—

GARDNER COX: I think both disapproved of the other.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Hopkinson much more experimental?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah, he was always trying things. You know, he doesn't look very experimental now, but he tried all kinds of things. He tried techniques. They never—they didn't have any techniques at all when I went to school up and through, until about the '30s. And just before the war, we started a little painters workshop about six of us, George Hope [ph] and—a nice guy, Sterner, Frank Sterner, who was from Yale. [00:08:12] None of them were painters, Betty Robbins, and Polly Thayer, Polly Starr. Are you doing her? She might worth taking a look at, actually. [Inaudible] about her, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—some techniques?

GARDNER COX: And we got Edward Forbes to come in. We got John—we got Mayer [ph]. We got people to come in and talk to us about this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this something—

GARDNER COX: John Gibbons [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this something you had not had in your education?

GARDNER COX: None, just alla prima [ph]. "Don't think. Just let it flow out of you." And, uh, the—and Hopkinson started right off doing that. I mean, that started—he's the one that put me onto it. [Inaudible.] I suppose in the 1930s, '35 and '36. Before then, he told me about Derner [ph], and he was always trying these things. But Lett just—they never did anything like that. They'd just put it right on and kept going and going and going.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Derner was the—

GARDNER COX: Derner was the first one, the really reputable one, but he was very—if you—[inaudible], he's quite confusing, and, uh, May [ph] is very much clearer. I mean, Derner will—you know, Derner will say you can do this, put egg and such and such a color, such and such a color, such and such, and they can do this and do that, and then [inaudible] page down at the bottom it would say, of course, if you do it, it would peel off, you know, in about three days. And then sometimes they'd find this wouldn't really work very well. You'd have to watch him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] Was this kind of a great contrast—[inaudible]—your—when you were going to museum school where it was sort of just painting alla prima and—

GARDNER COX: Painting alla prima.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —then going to MIT, was it rather different there?

GARDNER COX: It was so different it was kind of an interesting change.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it like there? Who were your—

GARDNER COX: Oh, that was—the patron then was [inaudible], but I didn't have anything to do with him because I wasn't advanced enough. [00:10:00] He was the fifth year. I just went for—through four years of design. Oh—[inaudible]—fellow named Gardner. There was a fellow named Cash [ph]. None of them were well-known. The best known around here would be Bob Dean [ph], who is now the head—the senior partner of—[inaudible]. And they had a lot of—[inaudible]—went right through—[inaudible]—protégés and—[inaudible]—and all that kind of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you like that? That was the—

GARDNER COX: I liked it, but—yes, I liked it. The students always had a good time. Student life was great fun, and they were a very nice bunch there. We had a little group that knew one another very well indeed, and we had a lot of fun. And they were nice. They were a nice bunch—amusing bunch, and, uh, girls and fellows. The girls I liked as well as the fellows, and we all—[inaudible]—together, 10 of us, I guess. And we had been in different classes. We weren't all together in the same years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you really show aptitude for architecture?

GARDNER COX: No. I don't think I did have much. I didn't have—I was a pretty—I could design pretty well, and, of course, I had a very—I had a—they used to get me to render everything because I could—in those days, they used to bushel things up, and the very first thing I did was with John Church, who was an older writer's son. He was a terrible architect, but he was charming fellow, amusing and quite a swinger, but he really wasn't a very good architect. And he—and John—[inaudible]—poet, but he was—[inaudible]. He had a terrible thing, some Masonic shrine or something, a temple, and he just—it was referred to as the cake. It just looked like a lump, and he got me—[inaudible]—when I arrived there because they knew I was a painter, and I had known some of them before I came. Some of them had been to Harvard with me, and, uh, so I was in great demand. And he got a hold of me to nigger. They called it "niggering." I suppose they call it—I don't know what they call it now. They wouldn't call it anymore that, but that's what it was always called. [00:12:04] You—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

GARDNER COX: It was always referred to—they referred to it—if someone got—I'd be designing. I'd be a fourth-year student. He was a fourth-year student, and I'd want somebody to help me render it and do—like a draftsman, and they—that was called "niggering."

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

GARDNER COX: And they'd go down to the lower classes and get niggers who would come to work for them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah. So you would do this for these—

GARDNER COX: And I would do it, and he nailed me right off because he thought he had a great thing, so I was—I could make a nice landscape around this thing. So I made a landscape. The big thing was to bushel it up so nobody could see the building. [Inaudible] great elm trees—[inaudible]—doorways. It was a terrific screen of trees. It got—[inaudible]—an X-6, which is the lowest mark he could get.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because they knew [inaudible] teachers. [Laughs.]

GARDNER COX: Right. Right, of course. It was—we had elms in the corner. It was going to, you know—because there was a lot of foreground in an attempt to conceal the building. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you went nights, too, did you?

GARDNER COX: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there lots of people then who—special students?

GARDNER COX: Well, they all went nights. Everyone went nights.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You only—

GARDNER COX: No, I came—I went all day because you—the—it mostly was design. [Inaudible.] They called it EC&A, American—European civilization and art.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: That would be an hour in the morning—[inaudible]—sometime, and then it would be—I took freehand drawing, too. That was one of the things I did, and they all had to do that. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did they seem—

GARDNER COX: —so I—[inaudible]. See, I left the museum school after my third—the last year, I just went to Tech and nothing else but.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did they seem—how would you—

GARDNER COX: Before, I just went in the afternoon and night.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How would you rate that teaching in terms of creativity with that you had with, say, Hawthorne or Hibbard or what you'd seen or Provincetown or what you did at the museum school, the teaching and the curriculum at MIT in architecture?

GARDNER COX: [00:14:04] Well, I hadn't thought of it this way. I think—I suppose it would be, if anything, that, uh, it's a much more specific kind of training. You know, the—you have to have plans. You have to work out a cogent plan. It's not—you talk about the left- and the right-hand sides of the brain. There's a lot of the left-hand side of the brain there, a lot of analysis, uh, so you had more instruction that way. The instructors there would go over it. They're going to judge it, and they judge those plans, you know, and they'd say, "You haven't got the auditorium big enough. You ought to stretch it out—[inaudible]." Of course, you stuck—in those days, I guess—they may still do it, but the thing was that you had a—you did a thing called a—what did they call them?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Esquisse?

GARDNER COX: Esquisse, but there was a—there was a 24-hour problem. You'd start at 9:00 in the morning—not 24. They'd be started at 9:00 in the morning, and you had to hand it in my 10:00 at night, and it had a name like a daily or something, but it was an esquisse. You couldn't do much more than that, and I can't remember the name—[inaudible]—waterfall. They weren't complicated things [inaudible] terrific plan. It would be a thing like water—no, they'd be a thing like a monument or a fountain or a waterfall or a small bank or a child's—something that didn't require too much thinking, too much analysis, to do in a day. Then, they had the—they had those once a week, as I remember, and everybody worked hard. They'd get—of course, you worked until the last minute practically, and at the last minute they're still doing things. When the bell rang, you had to hand it in. Then, they had the six-week problems, which they'd say that you'd do—the first day, you'd do an esquisse. [00:16:03] And you just really did a plan, and you'd be awfully loose about the—[inaudible]. You'd do anything, pretty much, that you wanted to do there, and you can stretch things out and send them up and all that kind of thing. But you couldn't change the real concept, the basic concept of the axis and so on. Then, you had to stick with those for six weeks.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You then had a variety—even though each was a specific problem, you had a number of them?

GARDNER COX: Yes, a great many, a great many different kinds.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were encouraged to pick a variety of kinds of buildings?

GARDNER COX: They gave them to you. You didn't have any choice.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were set the problems.

GARDNER COX: You were set the problems. You—[inaudible]—sheet that long saying—[inaudible]—a rich man—and, boy, he'd have to be awful rich—it would say, "A very rich man wants to establish a colony for the arts, a summer colony for the arts with an auditorium and a sculptor studios and painter studios and, you know, a boathouse for the entertainment if they wanted to go down on the cliffs to the lake. There's a lake—[inaudible]—city, and—[inaudible]—hell of a city—[inaudible]." It would cost \$8 million to have done it, and they didn't—these never—the idea was really to give people problems for things that they never would be able to do again until got to be very, very, very, very famous. [Inaudible] didn't start doing door hinges and things like that. They did these grandiose things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, the language was used at the—[inaudible]—historical styles, or was there any—[inaudible]—strict about that?

GARDNER COX: No, they—you could do anything you wanted to do. You might get a bad mark. I remember one, Sam McMurphy [ph] was one of our group. He was a little older, because he was a fifth-year student, and he had just been over in Paris, and he came back and did what—[inaudible]—particularly—it was pretty contemporary—a great circle and a few little things, very simple. [00:18:03] And they gave him a terrible mark.

ROBERT F. BROWN: On what grounds?

GARDNER COX: Taste. They didn't like it. The judges didn't like it. Now, they'd have been very much more receptive a few years from that. They were pretty good judges in the main, but people—no, you could do anything you wanted to. You could—I remember one man—[inaudible]. This very rich family of Morgans was making a crypt in this elegant cemetery, and, uh—[inaudible]—came out with a thing made out of fieldstone. It—somebody had just thrown a pile of rocks together. It was a sort of grotto. It was a terrible-looking thing, all gray fieldstones, a little mound with a hole. But, uh, he had to stay with it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: All these students—

GARDNER COX: He had to stay with it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible].

GARDNER COX: Yeah, he couldn't change that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you had—did you have—

GARDNER COX: And he got a very bad mark on that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had this pressure, then, of taste, or did you feel the pressure yourself?

GARDNER COX: No, I'll tell you it was so, uh—by the time I was there, say, two and a half years, the modernistic style was coming in, you know, [inaudible] kind of—we called them fern sprouts.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: It was that kind of thing. There are a lot of buildings still around here like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Very, very chaste. The, uh—for example, the Shakespeare Library in Washington by Cret was done at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —Yes.

GARDNER COX: That—the Folger Library. The Folger Library, that was by Cret. That was a—those things—that was the style. They weren't doing Cape Cod cottages and things like that. They were doing this kind of thing, that—[inaudible]. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —generally thought of monumental buildings.

GARDNER COX: That would be a very good example. Cret was considered—that was considered an excellent—Raymond Hood was operating that. [00:20:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Was he admired?

GARDNER COX: The Chicago Tribune Building. Yes. Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would that sort of building have been admired?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah. He—he was a great big shot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: For what?

GARDNER COX: He came and spoke at the school. I remember Corbusier came and spoke at the school when I was there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would he have said? Do you remember?

GARDNER COX: I don't remember. I just—I don't really remember what he had to say. He showed slides. I don't remember. He didn't—[inaudible]—any—he taught—[inaudible]—machine-for-living stuff he was talking about, so that was the—so they had a good—[inaudible]. I would say that they did—they weren't doing colonial Georgian classic stuff, no. The first year, they were doing analytique [ph]. Do you know what that is? No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Please explain about that.

GARDNER COX: Well, it was a big—a piece of paper about that big, and you would have a—typically a vase here and a column, one of the—[inaudible]—broken off, and then the background would be a little front of a temple with open portions of it, and then maybe a helmeted head or a piece of sculpture down at the bottom, all done in India—all done in India ink.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was the reason for that?

GARDNER COX: —with different washes. They were to make you draw carefully and to familiarize yourself with the—[inaudible]. But then, after that, they went out, and they—nobody—[inaudible]—that stuff.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was a time they were simplifying the historic styles.

GARDNER COX: Nobody would have turned up with a thing like the Supreme Court now or the State House [inaudible] like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: They were being simplified. Yeah, but it did—it did—when you asked if you learned something, I just learned those manners, really, that kind of thing. I was—[inaudible]—planning, and you learned about drafting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the method of planning fairly loose and flexible?

GARDNER COX: You had to stick with the plan. I'm talking about—if you made a plan, made an esquisse, you had to stay with it. [00:22:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, you had to stay with it, but, I mean, what you could put into the esquisse could be fairly flexible, and was it related—to be related very closely to the function?

GARDNER COX: It would be—it had to be very closely related to the project, which they gave you.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: The program. You had to—you had 700—an auditorium for 700 people, a reception room for maybe 400 people in the school, in the summer school, an auditorium for, say, 1,000, and then how many bathrooms do you want to put in and how many coatrooms and—[inaudible], how many—you know, all that kind of stuff you'd have to figure out yourself, given that figure in mind. But you had to keep that figure in mind, and it had to be related to that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Apart from the—

GARDNER COX: If you put in a great, big auditorium for 2,000 people, you know, you'd fail.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible].

GARDNER COX: It wouldn't make any sense. If you only put one bathroom in the place, they'd probably—they wouldn't fail you for that, but that would be—you wouldn't get—that would be something they'd consider, or if you made a little narrow passage to get into the auditorium, you know, or too big. And then, they thought a lot about it, and they—the judges had—they'd judge it much more logically than you ever could a painting. I'll say that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about now, apart from—in terms of the aesthetic of the time, apart from this tendency to simplify the historical styles, uh, what principles were there that you think were admired? I mean, was harmony and order admired, or would they tolerate disproportion or—

GARDNER COX: No, no, no. They'd—what they'd want to do is they'd want to get a—get, you know, that famous old definition that architecture has three conditions, firmness, commodity, and delight.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: So they'd want to get—we weren't concerned with the firmness. We couldn't build a leaning tower because it would obviously fall down. We didn't know anything about that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. [Inaudible] engineering you didn't—

GARDNER COX: No, we didn't know—[inaudible], but commodity and delight you were supposed to be able to handle. [00:24:05] We were learning about—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Those are pretty broad terms. How were they interpreted in your—

GARDNER COX: Well, just how it looked to them, you know, this—the proportion—good proportion. [Inaudible] like in the case of Cowman's [ph] tomb. It had absolutely no delight at all. It was just—Cowman was a terrible designer. [Inaudible] stuck in there with—[inaudible]. It was a very, very dismal, ugly thing, and he—I guess he really knew it himself. He kept saying, "Mine is tough." I remember him saying, "Mine is tough, rough, and nasty," with character. It was the only [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: But they couldn't abide the—the school couldn't abide that kind of thing?

GARDNER COX: Well, it obviously was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Even if he were very confident, they wouldn't have tolerated something that was nasty or—

GARDNER COX: Oh, no. It wasn't nasty. It was just ugly. It was just a pile of—it looked like it had been done very ineptly in 1875 in some backward cemetery with the local contractor putting it up and [inaudible] being rustic. It was rustic, and it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go on—you worked in your father's office, did you, at this time?

GARDNER COX: Then, I went after—after that, I went into my father's office, and—[inaudible]—named—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it like—

GARDNER COX: —with a fellow named Nat Saltonstall [ph], who was also—[inaudible]—our group. And we were great friends, and we went in as—well, we went in together there, and another fellow went in named Williams, who left and went down south and joined some other firm. And it was right in the middle of the Depression. The Depression was very tough. [00:26:01] And, uh, the office survived, and my father and his partner and two draftsmen who had been with him a long time. One was—eventually became a partner—very good architect—[inaudible]—man named—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, and we—he teamed up with Saltonstall eventually after I got out, sometime after I got out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it like then to be in a practice after MIT?

GARDNER COX: Well, it was much more—we had to get more practical. It was—I did—I worked, then, there. I'd paint in the mornings, and I would go into the office in the afternoon and evening just as I had at Tech. And that was the advantage of working with my father, because he understood this, and things weren't too fast anyway. He got business for them. I knew quite a lot of people, and Nat knew a lot of people.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What sort of things were they designing then?

GARDNER COX: Oh, we were doing—the firm did general things. It did all kinds of different things, but it was around Boston, I guess—I told you my father's earlier experience.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: He, uh—and incidentally, he didn't—[sometimes he'd go by it on the corner of Berkeley and Boylston, on the uptown corner opposite the, uh, Lord & Taylor. [Inaudible] is still there, and it was done about 19—I don't know, '02 or '03, whatever it was, very early, and it's quite advanced if you take a look at it. There was a lot of glass in that building for that time, just—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: If you go by, you'll see it looks pretty well still, the top store—the bottom store isn't really a store, I guess, now, but the rest of it is all there. Uh, but they did—that's something he did a long time ago. But then, there's the Unitarian building that flanks the State House. [00:28:02] They did that. Then, they did a lot of others, but those were the ones that come to mind. They did—they—[inaudible]—torn down—[inaudible]. They did a whole crescent out here on Stuart Street, at the end of Stuart Street, that's all been torn down. The whole block, the crescent, was quite nice, where the Toy [ph] Theater was, but that's the kind of thing they did. And they did, uh, general practice—[inaudible]—domestic. I did mostly domestic. We did some nightclubs or some stores, Alitalia [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—[inaudible]—have been in the '30s in domestic architecture?

GARDNER COX: Well, the ones I did—we did several. They varied.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What style?

GARDNER COX: They varied. They were—the ones I did were—we did one that was quite modern. Then, we did—that is, in a modern sense, and then we did—then I did—[inaudible]—little stone house down in Cohasset, which was pretty good. And I worked very hard on that, and a friend of mine who was a sculptor did that. And it's—I always liked that house. It was—but it was done in a, uh—well, it wasn't done exactly—it wasn't a Georgian house. It wasn't a Philadelphian house. It was a stone—very nice stone, sort of smooth, you know.

There was a house in Belchertown we got the idea from, beautiful stonework, and the fellow did it very well. It was very plain—[inaudible], and it goes out and—[inaudible]—a little bit. And then, it's got—in the interior, it's got mantles and so on, which are—[inaudible]—quoins that are rather heavy. But it was—I haven't been there for years. I don't remember. That's the first one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why did you enjoy doing it?

GARDNER COX: And then, I did—we did a lot. I did it about six years. It was about six years. It could be damn near six years or more, five or six years. Yeah, we did quite a lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what particularly appeals to you in your architecture?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I like to design, and I like to—I like designing. [00:30:02] And I designed some signs. There's a couple of—there's a couple of—they aren't very good, but do you know the State House grounds? Well, one of the things I did was to—I remember one was to—there were two lamps to go up to a larger statue right by the Unitarian building. Do you know where that is?

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

GARDNER COX: There's a little walk that goes up, and there are two, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Lampposts?

GARDNER COX: —old lampposts and—those lights, and I did those. But they were supposed to have at the top two eagles. They were supposed to have a military motif. You'll see the spears and stuff, and at the top these eagles were supposed to have been straight up in the air like this. But when they put it on, they couldn't—they wouldn't pay the money, so they put on a couple of stuffed eagles, and they looked terrible for years. Thank God somebody has taken them off. But the others were pretty good. The others went right up like this, kind of—it was kind of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very—

GARDNER COX: And I liked doing that. I did that. And then, I did several houses, and, uh, plaques on the walls and lettering, which is hellishly hard to do, as you know—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about the nightclubs? What [inaudible] they like?

GARDNER COX: Oh, we did—well, we—oh, that was a very different kind of thing, you know, red, white, and blue, and benches down the side. We made a pretty damn good-looking one, as a matter of fact. It was pretty good. It failed, failed miserably, after about five or six months.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible].

GARDNER COX: I don't think they got paid.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And there, you were working in a different style, right?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah, we [inaudible]. Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did they want something up to the minute?

GARDNER COX: Oh, we worked in a lot of different styles, yeah, in that sense. I mean, that was—we didn't—we weren't—one fellow—[inaudible]—with a guy named Royal Barry Wills, who—[inaudible]—little, you know, cottages, Cape Cod cottage thing. We weren't—we didn't have—[inaudible]—like that. Oh, we did all kinds of stuff. We did the—the whole frontage down here on, uh, Copley Square, which they've just torn down. [00:32:02] That was—[inaudible]—big circles. I used to get—we'd get all the modern magazines, you know, so it was pretty damn good. It was black—in those days, it was black glass, shiny black glass, a lot of windows and chrome and that kind of stuff. We did all that kind of stuff.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did your father enjoy this eclecticism?

GARDNER COX: Well, he—sure. He would try any old thing—not any old thing, but he liked to experiment. But we were doing these ourselves, and he wasn't—we—those things we did ourselves. They would, uh—they'd have a hand. Certainly on the practical end, boy, they had a hand, so—[inaudible]—an office. But in the—[inaudible]—House, I was in charge of it, so to speak. I remember they'd say—that's when they came out of—when he got out of practice—in a practice. I remember doing what I thought was a hell of a good scheme for the place, and I was going to have a little—[inaudible]—that I was going to have there, a little bedroom unit on two levels in this little

stone—[inaudible]. It was—[inaudible]—house. It was a very pretty country—[inaudible], very, very pretty country. And I was going to have a little winding staircase up to the bedroom, and then I was going to have downstairs a little sitting room for the owner and his wife. And I think this was going from one level to the other—[inaudible]. There was a room down below and a—[inaudible]—above and just up in the corner room, up—[inaudible]—would be very attractive, you see. And I was very pleased. It looked—[inaudible]—outside—[inaudible]—a great, big window he would look out. It was very—it was kind of nice, I thought, and I worked and worked and got it set to go down and see it. And I was the one who had to go down and see it, and this was right in the beginning or not long after I got in the office. I remember them saying—I mean, I remember Morton[ph] saying, you know, "When you come back from here, when you come back from there, there won't be a damn thing left of that plan of yours. [00:34:00] [Laughs.] They'll rip that to pieces." And I said, "Oh, well," and he was absolutely right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: Well, sure, they said—you know, they said, "Well—[inaudible]—have to go down those stairs all the time." They were still very young, but, no, they didn't like the—and they were too conventional—[inaudible], so it was always educating people. Jeez, it was tough to do. You'd have to try to—you'd have to try to educate them, because architects at that time were not as in the main. Certainly—[inaudible]—as young as we were, and about the only guys that—about the only fellows who were really—[inaudible]—was Frank Lloyd Wright. They were—they weren't subservient, but they would try to persuade people. They'd try to educate them. "See, this is a better thing to do." They wouldn't say, "There's only one way to do this, and you're crazy," and things like—there was none of that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —except—[inaudible]. So you'd have to argue for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you think of Wright then? Do you remember?

GARDNER COX: Uh, I didn't think—well, I didn't—my old man hated him at that point, and, uh, a lot of them did, you know, naturally, but, uh—so at that time, I took a dim view of him, but I, of course, changed. And I think my father would have changed as time went along, because he was quite a—[inaudible]—man. His arrogance was what bothered them. I don't think his buildings bothered them. I think it was his arrogance that bothered them, because they wouldn't be able to get away with this, and it kind of irritated them all. And he'd be arrogant to them. He was—he came here, and, God, he was arrogant. I'll never forget it. He was here for three days, and he—and they had—oh, I guess I told you about that. Do you want to hear about that, because that was—he turned up here before—just before the Second World War, and, uh, they—the Institute of Contemporary Art, which Nat Saltonstall started over here, he was very active in all kinds of stuff, a very good man. And he—they had—they got Wright to come on—[inaudible]—the fact was that Wright—[inaudible]—two days, three days. [00:36:03] And the first setup was that he was going to—it was just before the war, 1941, I suppose. And, uh, he turned up, and the first meeting was between him and a fellow named Harold E. Warren, who was a professor at Tech who taught history, things like that, of architecture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Harold E. Warren?

GARDNER COX: Harold E. Warren, a great character and full of—you know, feisty as they come. And they thought this would make a good pair, and it did. I didn't get to this. I wasn't a member of the, uh, architecture group or club, whatever it was at that time. I didn't get to it. But, uh, they had a knock-down, drag-out fight, and insulted one another up and down. And Warren—I mean, Walker [ph] was perfectly capable of taking this and dishing it out, which is—most people couldn't do it—[inaudible]—Wright. And this is the first thunderous meeting between these two titans. And then, Wright gave a talk in the John Hancock Hall, I think it was. Maybe—[inaudible]. It would probably have been there. Yeah—[inaudible]—Hall or someplace in a big auditorium. And then, this—and he was sounding off and telling them to pay no attention to the clients, "To hell with the client." And a young man in his early 30s, I guess, probably got up in the balcony during the questioning period and said, "Mr. Wright, you've been talking about paying no attention to the clients." He said, "And I have—" and he was very nice. He was trying to ask an honest question about what to do, how would you do this. He said, "What do you do? I have a couple of children." He said, "I'm not—" and he said, "I've got to live. Uh, what do you do?" [00:38:00] This client relationship, in that case, and Wright's answer to that was—he looked at him across the entire hall—balcony and spoke to him and said, "Why is it important that you live?" That was quite a crack. He made an enemy. I'm sure of that. Uh, and he had his point, but he was full of that, and that's what my old man didn't like. Then, he finally had a—it was a very—I'll never forget it, the final day. He had a—they had the old Boston Art Club upstairs in a very fine gallery there, and all of these photographs of his major things were around the walls. And he, uh—I went to that. I went to see these. He was going to talk about his work, and I went. And there was a group of—it was the afternoon. There was a group of very eager culture-thirsty Boston women. They were just a bunch of—I knew some of them, and one I know very well now indeed. And, uh, she

had ski boots on and her ski visor, and they had ground grippers, and they were all serious as hell, you know. They were really—they were really no-nonsense whatever, and they were firing the maestro around, and he was loving it. And there was myself, and then there was an old gent. He must have been in his early—in his 70s, who I didn't know. I guess he was, obviously, a Boston architect, and he was walking along. And Wright had his—had a cape. He had his cape on, and he had a cane. And he was pointing out these things and just as arrogant and just as confident as he could be. And these women were just eating it up, and this old guy was shaking and quivering and muttering to himself and was burning. He was burning, and, uh, finally they got to the—he took—they got to the Coffin House, you know—[inaudible]—ones that were really bare—[inaudible]. [00:40:09] And then, Wright started to go on about the Coffin House, started in on it, and, uh, I guess he asked if there were any questions. At that—[inaudible]—the old boy, he couldn't take it any longer, and he—I don't exaggerate this at all now. He—I was standing right next to him, and he put himself together and just—he made a physical effort, and he put himself together, and he said, "Yes, I have a question." Oh, he said—Wright said, "Are there any—do you have any questions?" And then, he said, "Yes." He said, "I've got a question." He said, "How do you defend the fact that you desecrated a work of God like a waterfall with that monstrosity that you—[inaudible]—it." And Wright—and then, he was quivering all over, and Wright looked him up and down. He just looked him up and down as if he was some kind of strange specimen. He looked—[inaudible]—like this, and then he said—[inaudible]—said, "I don't defend it. I proclaim it." And the guy went, "Oh, God!" and then ran out. [Laughs.] I don't exaggerate. This is almost a perfect imitation. He looked him up and down, and—[inaudible]—and said, "I don't defend it. I pro—" and he put his cane up. "I proclaim it." And the old guy went out. And there were all these women—[inaudible], and then Wright went on—[inaudible]—calm—[inaudible]—ruffled, just easy as a—[inaudible]. He was a very difficult guy to attack unless you had a lot of moxie, and Walker had enough, because he couldn't pull this stuff with Walker.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Walker did? [00:42:00]

GARDNER COX: Walker, he couldn't—he could do it, but he would get something back.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Saltonstall still working with you at that time, at the time he was—

GARDNER COX: Oh, yes, we worked together for, uh—we were partners. We became partners, associate partners, along—around about the fifth year, and then I—then, I decided to quit because it was taking too much time for me. And I was doing much better, but I was also—it wasn't because I was doing financially better. That was—I think I told you that it didn't work out like anybody expected, because I was painting all the time, and I was supporting myself with the painting. And I was—the architecture was the, uh, avocation. I kind of liked it, you know, but then I got—I was not—I've got much more of a natural gift for the painting. I was not interested in structure particularly, for example, or engineering angles. I was not interested at all in the drainage problems and stuff like that. It didn't—I didn't—I mean, I didn't—so many other people are so much better at that than I was, and I wasn't very good at it. I didn't know—I wasn't a builder at all, and I—[inaudible]—wallpapers, you know, and colors and all that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: I was always the one who was sent out to do that, and I got pretty tired. And I did a lot of designing, but it was not—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did Saltonstall do mainly in the firm?

GARDNER COX: He did general things. He did general things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —modern architecture pretty early.

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah. We weren't bad about that at all. No, we did. Yeah, sure. We did a modern—[inaudible]. We tried to do the Mount Washington and didn't get the job, but we did—all the nightclubs were very much so. The nightclub was very much—[inaudible], and the storefronts all were. Oh, yeah. No, we didn't—and the firm got more and more that way. They did a lot of things that were—they weren't all—they weren't an eclectic firm—[inaudible]—at all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have anything to do with the new Institute of Modern Art, the—

GARDNER COX: I was a trustee for a long time. [00:44:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were involved in bringing—

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah, from the beginning, in the beginning, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —that must have been a shock for, say, the Boston School painters, people like that.

GARDNER COX: Oh, they—yeah, but by this time it was—[inaudible]—that was—yeah, that was the introduction to the Museum of Modern Art here, all right. That's—and that went down in New York—all went down to New York. [Inaudible] he's the one that started it up, but I was on—I was on the board of it for a number of years, up to the war. But, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why were you interested in it, do you think?

GARDNER COX: Oh, because he wanted me to help, among other things, and we—[inaudible]. And I was sympathetic with it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—

GARDNER COX: They did some very good shows. They brought Van Gogh and—[inaudible]—considered very avant then. And some of the people—[inaudible]—were very good, I thought. I didn't have the trouble I have with the present—[inaudible]—at all. I liked—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. And did you—

GARDNER COX: I liked a lot of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Boston had nothing like that until the—

GARDNER COX: No, not until then. Not until then, not at all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the museum—

GARDNER COX: And, for example, my family, my mother had—[inaudible]—Van Gogh—[inaudible]. She had—she—[inaudible], so there wasn't any—no, there wasn't much stink about it around here. [Inaudible] people liked it. They had a Van Gogh ball. I remember that. It was—[inaudible]—the Copley Plaza. It was quite active, and some very good fellows ran it. During the war, at least, Metcalf and, uh, Russell Allen—Tom Metcalf and Russell Allen ran it for a while. It was over in a house on Beacon Street.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, and James Plaut was with it before and after.

GARDNER COX: Well, he came back—he came in afterwards. He came in after the war. It got more formalized then. He was—in the beginning, it was a lot of students. There were a lot of students, naturally, and there wasn't—nobody got dressed up or anything. They didn't have any dressed-up parties. It was kind of slaphappy. It was kind of—really—[inaudible]—it got formalized, but it had a great influence. I think it had more influence—I don't know—[inaudible]—influence now or not, but it was needed. [00:46:03] They were very, very thirsty for it because there were no galleries. There was nothing, nothing in this town—[inaudible]. Now, I think there have been talks about, you know, whether it's—I don't know. I'm not mixed up in it anymore, really.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How long were you associated with it, until about when?

GARDNER COX: Well, I was a member of it and so right along until just a couple—two or three years ago when we gave money or—they got my wife to give money for this, and she'd been mixed up with it. But it's getting—I'm not sure I want to support some of the—I don't know. I just—let somebody else do it. I wish it no bad luck. I went to the—I like some of the people like—[inaudible]—very much, and I know some of them, not many. But—[inaudible]—something else, I'm not going to hang on—[inaudible]—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is an interview, third session, with Gardner Cox in Boston, and this is April 12, 1974. Well, we've been talking about various things—

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —talking about various things particularly in the 1930s, roughly. I wondered if you could—you mentioned at one point that at that point you were supporting yourself by your painting, and, really, architecture was something of an avocation even though you were working half-days in your father's office. Could you say something about your painting in the '30s, these early years of your career, what you were doing and—

GARDNER COX: Well, I had always—as I've indicated earlier, I started out quite early, and, uh, I began to get—I think the first commission I ever got was when I was about—it was before I went to college—a little girl down on, I think, Martha's Vineyard. It was just a little drawing, but I got paid a little for it. And, uh, I think that was the first—at Tech, I used to—I did a lot of sketching in the summers there. [00:48:02] I was working in the summer,

and I did some landscapes and things of that sort. I sold some of those when I was still—that was in the '30s—at MIT. I think I won the summer sketching prize. And, uh, as a matter of fact, I remember now I made it—yes, I won a prize, summer sketching, for \$25, and I took a girl to the Yale game from here down and the whole business, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: On your prize money.

GARDNER COX: Yes, on my prize money. In fact, I did all right, too, all the way around from here. And, uh, after I got out, of course, it was—let me see. I think I was still in my last year at Tech, and I did a—maybe I was—maybe it was—anyway, it was awfully close, 1931, about, in there, 1931, '30, 1930. I did a little pastel of a friend's child, a friend—a sculptor friend's child, and, uh, it made quite a hit. As a result of that, I began to get others. And I can't remember the sequence of these things now, but I began—so I was about 23, I guess. I must have been 26.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Doing portraits pretty early on?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, about—around in there I began to do them, and I did a man, Mr. Nichols [ph], the first man I ever did, the first big picture I did. That was about 1930. I've gotten mixed up about dates. He was one of the first. I did several people like this, and I did quite a lot of children and, uh, over a period of years there. [00:50:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Most of your painting this early was portraits?

GARDNER COX: These were portraits. I was doing other things, too, and did other things, but I was—this is where I made money, where income was concerned.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And were you pretty pleased by what you were doing? Was it—

GARDNER COX: Well, I always wanted to make it better. You're never—you know, you're never satisfied, but I did—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —I did some of the children in pastel, and they were quite nice. They weren't sentimental at all. They were kind of—they were pretty good. They were cute and all that kind of stuff, as children are marvelous, amusing little things, but they weren't sweet and sentimental. And they—I did quite a number of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you mind doing them?

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]. No. No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Children move around a lot.

GARDNER COX: Oh, no. No, I didn't mind. I was young, and I had a good—I have a good memory. I don't—still, as you know, I just—no, I worked a lot when they've gone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: The most important things I do almost—with the sine qua non, they don't—they're actually not there, very quickly after they—shortly after they've left, and then—[inaudible]—again the next day, and so on. And I—so I could put these children together and remember them pretty well. I had a good memory, and I was—I didn't mind getting down on my hands and knees and barking and fooling around—[inaudible]. And they were—they were very—there's one thing about that was very appealing, which is that you don't—there's no question of any flattery or trying to hold back or anything—a temptation of any of that kind at all. You just cannot make it charming enough. You can't make it lively and fresh enough, so you—there's no question of whoring around or anything like that, whatever. So it was a rather good way to go along because I didn't—you're just put to your limit trying to get the feeling.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So they're a very good beginning in your—

GARDNER COX: [00:52:00] They were good that way, and then I did a lot of them. I did a lot of them in—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you work directly in the pastel when you were—

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Yes, I do, so I did—so I'd made these drawings.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You'd make drawings.

GARDNER COX: And finally, I'd get kind of the general thing, and then—the child is not as complicated. That's another thing. In some ways they're harder, certainly because they don't sit still, but in some ways they're easier because they don't—they're not as complex, and they're not as complicated because they haven't developed that way. So you can—they're a little—they're easier that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You're not trying to—there's not some—

GARDNER COX: You get a feeling of them without having to go into this [inaudible] expression and so on that much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, there's not—their personality is fairly straightforward, is it?

GARDNER COX: Well, you know, children, we all know they're very complicated, but they are—they're easier. A little child looks up, and you can get a charming feeling for this child without exploring his character greatly, because they haven't developed to that extent to the parent, at least.

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

GARDNER COX: So that way, if you got the little charming quality, you had it if they had—[inaudible]—ways.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How long would you spend on these on average?

GARDNER COX: I don't remember, not too long. I'd spend—well, I mean, I'd do—I'd draw them a while and sit around with them, with a nurse or somebody, and maybe—depending on how old the kids was. Mostly, in those days, they were pretty young, so—[inaudible]—like that. And, uh, I'd draw very quick stuff. And then, I'd—[inaudible]—remember it, I'd get the general mass in there without the—just kind of generally, the general proportions. And then, I'd look for things. It would be like hunting. I'd look for expressions, little qualities, one eye—that was an important part, to get this, as I remember it. I'd get these things in there, and I—and I didn't do heavy pastel. It was all—I would—it would slip out of my hand all the time as I was doing it, so I never caked stuff. It was all very lean. [00:54:00] And so, when you'd get through it, you would—[inaudible]—nothing fell off. And I remember now the highlights—eyes, things like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: I'd put those in tempera so they wouldn't. Those are the things you highlight with a pastel, one —

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: —hanging down the face. You know, so I did certain things like that to—so it wouldn't look—it wouldn't be jarred out of existence. And I did quite a lot of those—I wouldn't say a lot. I don't know how many. I did a number of them. And then, I got worried. I didn't want to get typed as a child thing because the danger of doing them that way is, as I say, you live in your—I knew a fair amount about anatomy by the time—am I talking loud enough, do you think?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah—

[Audio Break.]

GARDNER COX: And the danger of that, well, was that you—in doing them, you had to live off your fat. You couldn't study them. They were too soft and too—there wasn't much—you couldn't get any—you couldn't learn anything from them. You'd apply what you knew, I found, but, uh, with an older person sitting there you could really study someone if you wanted to. And, uh, you—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had the time—

GARDNER COX: Well, I mean, you could say to a person—if you wanted to really study something.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And then, you might, um—then you might talk and not be so tight about it. But you might want to really get down and do it. With them, it's very different. You had to do just—you had to do just a shot. When they get a little older, you [inaudible] ways. You go, "Boo," or you'd laugh, or you'd snarl, or you'd bark or something. They'd look at you like this, and then you'd have to get it. You would try to get the end of your nose or something, you see.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: And, uh, so I began to do other things and not do them as much. I began to do—I did some men, did a girl. [00:56:00] I did older children, and children are a very—in the beginning, like, if you can do them—if you're a standup painter who just does them when they're there, they can drive you crazy, you know, because they just won't stay still. And if you're a person that likes to—some people do it where they work just when the person is there. They are very, very difficult. If you have a memory and like them and so on or whatever it is, you—they're a very great source of orders.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were beginning to use your memory a great deal then, were you?

GARDNER COX: I was. Well, I always had a pretty good memory.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: That's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you exhibiting these portraits?

GARDNER COX: I did after a while. I did after a while. I did in about 1931. I exhibited them, started exhibiting them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where, here in Cambridge, in Boston?

GARDNER COX: Well, I exhibited them in the Cambridge Art Association. I think I had a show there. I'm not sure. I had one at the Junior League at a very nice gallery for—[inaudible]—building down here on Arlington Street right near—I don't think it's still there. It's a big—I guess it's an apartment building now on the corner of Newbury and Arlington. And I had a show there, and I did some—but I did some people who were quite well known, and this all sounds—well, this was true. That's the way it worked. Uh, I got work to do because a child's, you know—his time is worth nothing. He can't refuse to do it, and he's changing very fast, and they know it. So they're great. They're a prime source. Everybody knows his child is going to lose this bloom in four or five years, and they're very anxious to get it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: And, uh, so they're the ideal subject as far as being available is concerned. And, uh, so I did these, and I had—yes, I had a show, and I did—after doing one of the little White [ph] kids, they were a great friend of the Lamonts [ph]. And Mrs. Lamont, young Tommy Lamont, the old man—[inaudible]—partner's son, who was also later a partner, was a great friend of the Whites. [00:58:09] And she saw these pictures, and she wanted to get her own children. But it went like that with different people. This happened to be the straight commercial snob standpoint. It was a good order because, you know, the reaction is, "Well, if they get it, they can get anybody. He must be pretty good."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: So the prophet in his own country and all that kind of stuff.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you didn't have to push this. This just sort of happened.

GARDNER COX: Oh, well, I'll tell you I never pushed any—this was at least—I never, uh—I never pushed anything. I really never pushed anything except Frisky Marimont [ph] that I can think of. It was vanity, I guess. I didn't like to—I respected this kind of stuff very much, and I hated hucksters, people that held people's hands and sucked around. And I think I—yeah, I never did that, never did that except for Frisky Marimont. I went right and tried to get him to do, because I thought I could do him very well, and a Russian was going to do him, and I went and got him. And he did—he sat.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When was this, in the '30s?

GARDNER COX: This was about '33. It's up—there's a picture of it right up there, still up there. It never got finished. It was a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why did you want to do him? What was he—what did he represent to you?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I liked him, and he was a—he was a very—he was an outstanding professor at Harvard, very—one of the best known in the place, and he was a very striking-looking fellow. And I knew him, and I had gone to the same undergraduate club he did. And I'd see him around a lot, and he was a—he was a character. He was a marvelous subject.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, he was one of your first adults to—

GARDNER COX: He was one of the early ones, one of the early ones, and Mr. Nichols was another one, who was a neighbor. And there were some neighbors—[inaudible]. It wasn't all—Mrs. Lamont [ph] didn't do the whole thing by any matter or means, but it helped. [01:00:03] It didn't—I had done quite a bit. It just didn't—it didn't so-called "make" me or—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —or break, but it was a help to go out of here, away from here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You went to New York for this?

GARDNER COX: No, I did it here, but people began to know about me around, and that was from—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Right.

GARDNER COX: —that [inaudible] in New York. See, I'd been doing these around here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What technique were you using? Were these still pastels? Were these—

GARDNER COX: Yeah, the Lamont ones were pastels. The—almost all the children were pastels—[inaudible]—began to do them in oil, and then some of them were done in oil.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that more difficult for you or—

GARDNER COX: No, no, because I had done a lot of that. In fact, the pastels were easier because I had done oil. I had—pastel was just something I did because it was an easy medium to work with, and it's a rather appropriate medium for them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: It's a [inaudible] medium, and you didn't have to put too much color on it. As a matter of fact, also, it didn't—when you [inaudible] oil, it's much more difficult because it—you have to—in that field, in a portrait, because you've got—the great tendency [inaudible]—becomes infinitely greater. And every—you leave paper in a pastel, and you can make little [inaudible] if you wanted to [inaudible] little accents.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: So as you—if you had a brown paper or something like that—[inaudible]—a colored paper, which you always did—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: —you didn't have to cover every damn inch of it. You could just—you would indicate. But as soon as you'd put oil paint on the thing, you've got to do the whole—unless you're very, very—you've got to account for everything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: So you've got to account what's going on here, and it can be done all right, obviously, but you have to—you have to account for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—could you describe the technique you were using then—

GARDNER COX: In other words, you can't just make a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in oil?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I was just doing alla prima, so-called, painting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: I didn't know anything about underpainting or anything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. What preparation did you make, any—

GARDNER COX: No. No—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —to the canvas?

GARDNER COX: In those days, no, I painted right straight on. See, that was in the '30s.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And were you painting—was your technique fairly loose, or tighter then or—

GARDNER COX: [01:02:02] Yeah. Not much, no, it was not dissimilar. It was—it's changed, but it wasn't all that dissimilar, no. No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In the adults, what were you trying to do, get a likeness or capture something else?

GARDNER COX: I was trying to get a feel. I was trying to get—I always tried to get a feel, and to get that I would get a likeness, and then I'd try to get the feeling. Some were more successful than others, obviously, but I began to do adults along—around, oh—right along I began to do them. And, uh, about the middle '30s, I guess—I did Mr. Nichols before that. I—[inaudible]—a store, I remember. I used a storefront and shut the light off at the bottom. I didn't have a studio. [Inaudible] empty storefront and cut the light off at the bottom, and you had a pretty good studio.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mentioned that your teachers at the museum school and all—you characterized it sort of as a don't-think approach, just get into the work.

GARDNER COX: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yet, later in the '30s, you began to question that, didn't you, when you—

GARDNER COX: Yes, I—when I questioned, I used to question quite a lot, I mean, along, and I used to argue with my parents, my mother, about it. She was actually very—she was a very intelligent woman, an intellectual. Yes, she was quite intellectual—

ROBERT F. BROWN: She went along with the spontaneous approach?

GARDNER COX: But she would say—when I'd get talking, she would just—"Maybe it would be better if you just went out and did a lot of work," in other words, because, of course, sometimes when you talk you're not doing work. You do a lot of talking, and you don't work much, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: But I began to just—[inaudible]—about that. Yeah. I was—oh, and I did—then, I can't remember how these—if you want to, I could get the dates to this. You don't care if—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, no, no.

GARDNER COX: —because the sequence is—just as a history of—[inaudible]—starts off, I did—and then I did Ernest Hocking, a philosopher. I did a pretty good one of him. I got—at least, they liked it very much. It was a big picture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was done for the, uh—

GARDNER COX: It was done for them, yeah, and my mother was painting a picture of him, and this one came out much better. [01:04:01] Uh, these—it was—in a much more restrained way. Certainly, the color was a little rawer than I do now, but it felt very much like him as a jolly man. And this went over big, and then I did—as a result of that, I did Alfred North Whitehead. Now, those things helped me, see, in another area—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. Right.

GARDNER COX: —which is an area I've been in. I've never gone in the past much for—I've always been—[inaudible]—with professors or, uh, college people. I haven't been much in the business community. I do—I do some now, occasionally, but it's—I'm just—[inaudible]—around. It's nice. I've got—[inaudible]—that I can do what I want, which—I don't have to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —everything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But, by and large, you've been more interested in doing people in the academic world or—

GARDNER COX: I have done that kind of thing and doctors and lawyers, professional people—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: —and all that kind of thing, not—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you say you—

GARDNER COX: —businessmen primarily—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your painting of Hocking was perhaps—was liked better than your mother's painting of him. Did this—was there any problem there for you and your mother?

GARDNER COX: No, no, no. She was—she was very—she was kind of—she was getting older then. She was glad that, you know—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was about this time that you, uh, began to be more interested in techniques of painting. There's this group you—you discussed this group.

GARDNER COX: The time—things went on the way I'm saying now, and I had gotten things to do, and I did—I'm saying this in case anybody ever listens to this who—other painters doing this kind of thing. I did not let things go that I didn't like, so if they liked them and I didn't like them, I wouldn't let them have it because I didn't want to have things I didn't like out. And this was a sense of—of, uh, business or pride. Actually, it was pride more, you know, which was damaging to—I didn't want to have somebody say I wasn't any good. [01:06:05]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: And also, it's very good—and also, it's good business. I think that was a—it was—[my mind because it's no use to have this—and it's not worth anything to somebody else to have a thing that's no good, either, so I didn't—I never had any trouble—[inaudible]. If they didn't like it, they didn't have to take it right—pretty much at the beginning. And if I didn't like it, they couldn't have it, and occasionally that would happen.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And would you keep working on it—

GARDNER COX: Well, I might, but some of them I let go. I remember a friend's wife—I did his child, and it came out very well, and they liked it, and we all liked it, and so on. And then, the wife, and I couldn't—I wasn't—she—[inaudible]—work there, and I told her it was no good. And they—and they respected that, as a matter of fact. My friend said, "I respect you for this." They were very well off, and they—see, it's funny. People will get some terrible things, you know, sometimes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And, uh, so it went on that way for—until—and then I began to do other kinds of work, too. All the time I was doing other, you know, landscapes and things like that at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you exhibiting these, the landscapes and other—

GARDNER COX: Yeah, sometimes. Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you in on the—

GARDNER COX: I did some—and I did some fairly good ones. Some sold.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you affiliated with any—

GARDNER COX: Some sold—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —groups of artists?

GARDNER COX: Not at that time. There wasn't a group around here at that time. There wasn't any group like the Boston group at that time, that is, in my particular day. There had been before, Benson, Tarbell, and so on, and then there was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: —later on, Zerbe at the museum school who—or—[inaudible]. They had a group. But there was—at that time, there was no cohesive group at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. What of your painters workshop group?

GARDNER COX: I was going to get to that. The painters workshop would be—I'm trying to bring you up to there. That was—that was, uh—see, I got married in 19—I stopped the architecture in 1936. I got out of the firm.

ROBERT F. BROWN: With regrets, or you felt you had [inaudible] time?

GARDNER COX: No, no, no. Well, I had to choose, see. [01:08:00] I was working mornings painting, afternoon and night architecture. We got so much to do in architecture. We began to get a lot of work, and there was no—it had to be one or the other.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And there was no question in my mind, because I told you one time before this wasn't the reason. Again, I'm trying to defend myself from seeming like a whore, you know, because I didn't do it for that reason. I liked it. It was much more my cup of tea. I'm a right-handed brain type, rather, and I was quite—we did very well, but I had no doubt in my mind which—as I say, I had supported the architecture for quite a while with the painting. I was putting everything back in the firm. Everything nickel we made in the firm we put right back in to keep it going. We were beginning to make money when I left—[inaudible]—getting—things were getting better. So in 1936, I stopped and painted all the time. I was getting a lot to do, and, uh, then I got married in 1937, the year afterwards. And, uh, a little bit after—a little bit after that, I got into the—into this—no, before that, before I was married, by 1936, Charles Hopkinson was an old friend of mine. He's an older man, but we were—he knew me, and I knew him. And he was a—he was very—he liked what I did, and he was, uh—I used to go—he would give me ideas. That is, the ideas he—the idea he gave me, particularly, was Derner. And he was one of the few people around here that was interested in techniques. The rest of the Boston School—at that time, the Boston School—were painting alla prima, Benson, Tarbell, Gammell, Paxton. They were all—they weren't doing any Venetian technique at all, but Hopkinson was always experimenting. And he put me on to Derner, which I got, and then I—so I did some myself. I had been doing—I had begun to get interested in it. [01:10:00] But there's no question about it in those things. It's much better to have people doing demonstrations. It's a hell of a lot of help.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, than reading about it.

GARDNER COX: Than reading about it. So I was reading about it for two or three years off and on. Then, this, uh, friend George Hope [ph] from the Fogg and a fellow named Frank Sterner at the Yale Art School, a graduate of it, who came up here. And they got together. George was very interested in techniques and was teaching at Harvard, and we got a little thing called the painters workshop, which was—Polly Starr was in it and, uh—there were half a dozen of us.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where did you meet, or did you—

GARDNER COX: We used to—we used to meet down someplace in Boston. I forget what the number was now, but he had a little room, and we'd—and George would demonstrate. Sterner would demonstrate, and we got John Gettens [ph] to come, and he showed us a lot of stuff. John Gettens is—[inaudible]—business, you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were men who really knew things—

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah, well, Gettens—[inaudible]—at the Fogg, and I think he's down at the Smithsonian now or Washington, somewhere. And Mayer came one time. Then, we got Mayer, and then Edward Forbes came over to show us how the Japanese painted. We had—we had a lot of things, and we did a lot of work. I got one of them—Betty Robbins—[inaudible]—show you. We've got it in there. It's a damn good painting I bought. We had an exhibition at the old Boston Art Club, quite a big show, and this was just before the war.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the effect of the exhibition? Were other painters quite interested in it?

GARDNER COX: Oh, we—oh, I think so. Yeah. I don't know—people were beginning—it wasn't—it wasn't like the armory show or anything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: But, uh—because now, of course, Zerbe came on later on and really made a big thing of techniques [inaudible] school, but we got to that early. And then, the war came, and I was in the army for three and a half years. And then, when I got out, I went on with this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: I had this—the class had dissolved totally. I mean—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. Was Hopkinson involved with you too?

GARDNER COX: No, he was not involved with that, but he had—because he was—no, he was not. [01:12:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was—could you characterize him a bit? What was he like to you, with you as a painter, a fellow painter?

GARDNER COX: Well, he was a charming man, and he was a very gentle man. And he was quite a stubborn, tough man underneath all his gentleness because nobody ever—you know, they gave him a hard time, as I told you, and it didn't slow him down. He kept going. He was tough that way. He was very soft, gentle-spoken, and benign and pleasant, but you couldn't shove him around at all. And he had strong opinions, which he was quite gentle in expressing, but they were very strong. He was fascinated with light, and he would endlessly—he was interested in the glancing lights. He'd say, "Look at this—" I think I told you this. He'd hold his hand up, and he'd—he would talk to me about this again and again, this gray light and then the—[inaudible]—back in again. He had these spinning tops. I got tops for a while. I used the tops for a while and, uh, to see how it worked. It worked pretty well, but he was trying to make things exist in light. And he had a great sense of what he considered beauty. And indeed, when you see his things—I was down at his house a little while ago and—[inaudible]—a big show and you see his things, some of them are quite lovely. He had a lovely sense of color and was never cheap, and he—but he was thinking in terms of beauty, of his time, because he was a lot older than I was. And after the war, our friendship remained and continued. It increased, as I told you. I used to go to—[inaudible]. The last 20 years of his life, we went down there every summer—every fall together with a whole group of us, and I knew his family. I knew his daughters when I was a kid and all, and he—and we—the only place we'd differ would be his—I began to think some things that were ugly were beautiful. [01:14:02] And they weren't—and they weren't the kind of thing he thought was beautiful, but he was a big-gauge type like the—I was talking about—[inaudible]—or any of these people like this. He had a good sense of—he could see the virtue in something even if it wasn't his way of doing something.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: He would subscribe to it, and he'd—he said the good word for me all along the line, everywhere. He gave me a lot of—I'm sure he did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was unlike some of the others.

GARDNER COX: All kinds of things he'd get me into, things I'm sure he put me up to, things like—Arts and Letters or not, but he certainly did for the [inaudible]. I'm sure he wrote for me for the Institute of Arts and Letters and all that kind of thing. He, uh, had—after the war, he began to think I had ability.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The other men, the older men of the Boston School, weren't quite so generous. Were they more opinionated and—

GARDNER COX: Well, they were more opinion—oh, yeah, they were much more opinionated. They were much more rigid than he was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you ever—did you ever know Frank Benson or—

GARDNER COX: I never knew him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —or Tarbell or—

GARDNER COX: No, I didn't know them. They were just a little too old for me. I had a letter of introduction to Benson in New Haven when I was up there, and I never looked him up.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about Paxton?

GARDNER COX: I never liked Paxton's work. I never liked Paxton's work either. His wife was a very charming woman, and I—but I didn't like his work either.

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

GARDNER COX: There was something about him I didn't like. It was too some—too little—I don't know, artificial or something. I liked Benson's work the best of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about—Karl Zerbe comes over in the late '30s, and he's interested in techniques, as were you.

GARDNER COX: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get to know him fairly well?

GARDNER COX: I knew him pretty well. Yeah. Well, I knew him as he was a—he was an intimate acquaintance.

He wasn't a close friend. I didn't see—I knew him pretty well. Yes. In fact, when he left the museum school, he asked me to take his place as a holding position. I think he thought I wouldn't do any harm, probably, and he asked me to take his place for two years, which I did. And then, he decided not to come back, and I got out anyway.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It sounds as though he—from what you say, you would simply hold it, that he had a definite, set way about—

GARDNER COX: [01:16:04] Well, I had a different way. I had a different way, but he—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he have a very set way about his—

GARDNER COX: I don't know. He was a great guy for technique, and he was a very good—I thought he was a very good colorist. He had a very nice sense of color. He wasn't a very good draftsman. He didn't draw very well. He was quite Germanic, but he—and he was a very Herr Professor kind of a teacher, apparently.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really?

GARDNER COX: They'd tell me that he was—they were quite right. He didn't take any nonsense. If you had to be there on time and they—they'd get a bawling out for one thing or another. He wanted them right in there, you know. It was very good, very good. I was a little easier, but, uh, anyway, yes, I knew him, but I didn't—by this time, I had the techniques I wanted, so to speak, and I didn't go to him. But he didn't make a big thing of it, and, incidentally, I often say I—in the art schools, there are always these—you know, how they move along and what they try to do, but about the only thing an art school really can do is teach you technique. They can't teach you spiritual stuff. They can't teach you—they can't give you the gift. They can teach you good manners or manners. That's all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And yet, a lot of students come out looking something like their teachers.

GARDNER COX: That's right. Well, that's the manners, but they can teach techniques, and they really can, because people—without knowing them, as we were talking, really, you can't do certain things. People used to try to copy these things they were doing. You couldn't have done it. And he was excellent at that. He was—I think he was a very strong and stimulating teacher.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He certainly seemed to have influenced a number of prominent younger painters.

GARDNER COX: A lot of people. Yes, he did. He influenced Aronson, and he influenced—well, Aronson is one of the chief ones. Levine [ph] never went to him. He didn't have anything to do with Levine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

GARDNER COX: Uh, but he [inaudible] Schwartz [ph] and a lot of people. [01:18:00] There was a whole little school there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Among your contemporaries as painters, who were some of your friends then?

GARDNER COX: Well, I had friends that were students. I didn't have any friends that were important painters. Uh, I've never—seen—my son asked me, "Why don't you see her? I'm surprised you haven't seen more painters." Older painters don't see much of one another, you know. They usually—from old school days, you know. That's the way [inaudible] school days.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Painters—[inaudible], right?

GARDNER COX: I bet you'd find that again and again. They don't—you don't find—they don't—they leave the Left Bank, and they go out and live on their own. [Inaudible] goes down to—[inaudible], New Jersey, and you don't—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: I remember David Aronson said, "I don't want to see painters. I want to see architects and doctors and people like that," you know. Well, it isn't all—that isn't quite true, but it's—so I don't—I have—oh, I had friends that were painters, yeah—[inaudible]—school days very much, and then—and I liked—among artists, I liked Harold very much, who was—[inaudible]. I don't see him very much. I like Aronson. I didn't—Aronson and I didn't get on too well for a while. We were both teaching at the same time at the museum school. I think he probably—the reason he resented me, because I came in and was put at the head of the department. And I don't think he thought I was all that good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you enjoy teaching there?

GARDNER COX: I did the first year, and then I didn't like the second year too much. The first year I did enjoy. I was new, and the second year I didn't feel I was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: When was this, in the mid-1950s?

GARDNER COX: It was '54. I went in the fall of '54, '55, and I was asked to come back '55 and '56, and then I left.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there camps there? Was there feuding going on at that time?

GARDNER COX: Oh, well, there was some, but not too bad. At least, I didn't pay very much attention to it, but I did—I was a pretty good teacher the first year, I think. And the second year, I don't think I did as well, so I thought I'd—and I wanted to go on with my own things. [01:20:01] It's—it's a—I get kind of depressed. I feel some various things bugging me, and I don't think I—I don't think they thought so, but I didn't feel I was doing as well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What, uh—you were—

GARDNER COX: It's a tough thing, you know, because if you teach, you—I try to bring the best—well, these are self-serving remarks, but I tried to bring out what a person had. [Inaudible] you really—you spent all your time thinking about other people's problems, all, and then I wanted to get back to what I did, my own things, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you feel sort of a vacuum in yourself, then, because you were giving so much to others?

GARDNER COX: Well, I think, actually, I was—you know, people have different times in their lives. That happened to be a bad year for me. There were various things in my life I didn't like.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What effect—you were in the army three and a half years. Was that a—what did you do there? Did you—were you able to at all keep in touch with art?

GARDNER COX: Well, I did. I was in the—I was in the camouflage. I went in and was commissioned directly. A lot of people—they get about 50 people, 60 scene designers and architects and landscape architects and painters and so on. See, I was about—I was 36 when the war came along, and, uh, we were all commissioned directly. And the air corps—I never shipped to the engineer corps. We were scattered all over the place, and I was a training engineer office for a lot of the time, and I—practically all the time. And I went all over the country. I didn't go abroad. The—but I did—I did some—yeah, I did some, you know—[inaudible]. I had—actually, I had—the army was a very good experience for me in many ways. I, uh—I had a very—the last three years I enjoyed the army in many ways. I didn't like—I was ready to get out, but when I got it, it was—I developed in some ways in the army. [01:22:02] I came out painting very much better than when I went in.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you think—

GARDNER COX: I had kind of an explosion when I went out. I was full of a lot of feelings that worked out very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you think you enjoyed about the army?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I don't know. I think this is probably just personal stuff. I don't—[inaudible]—at great length. This is—I have—[inaudible]—kind of religious awakening in the army. The best way to describe might be a sense of the universe, spirits moving through things and so on. This was a very—a very—it was a very stimulating experience. And if I hadn't been there, I probably wouldn't have had it quite that way, because I didn't like the first part of it at all. I came out of—I didn't like it at all, and then I said the—as a result of it, this—[inaudible]—came together, and I got an awareness that I hadn't had before, which was a very, very—it was very well worthwhile.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this extended into your explosion of painting afterward?

GARDNER COX: It extended into quite a long time, and I never forgot it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were you doing?

GARDNER COX: No, it was a valuable thing. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you got out, did you mainly again into portraits?

GARDNER COX: Uh, well, see, by the time that that came out, I had enough reputation at that time, you see, for

doing—to get into this thing. They knew about me. Yeah, I did some—I did—no, I did a lot of eggs and rocks, and I did a lot of—I did a lot of things. I did a lot of—no, I didn't do mainly portraits. I did about 50-50.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you exhibiting—

GARDNER COX: I maybe did, uh—yeah, I exhibited a fair amount, but I was doing a lot of—oh, I did these eggs and rocks and things of that sort, and they all—I did a lot of them, quite a lot of them, and the museum bought one, and I sold lots of those. [01:24:00] People bought those like hotcakes. I didn't—and they weren't done for sale or anything. I was very surprised.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were studies of—

GARDNER COX: No, they were—some of them were quite big pictures. You never saw any of those, I guess, did you? Some of them were quite good, and they were—they had some very good technical things in them. They were done in the—they were done in the [inaudible], and I won some prizes and so on. I did—and then, I did other things besides them, too, and then I did the—but I did—and I was doing some portraits, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you at all involved with these—the group of local artists who, I think, in 1947—

GARDNER COX: I did [inaudible] the portraits went pretty well, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In '47 or '48, the group of local artists who protested the Institute of Contemporary Art not showing local artists, did you—were you at all involved in that?

GARDNER COX: No. No. No, I didn't—no, I was not.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were a trustee for a long time at the—

GARDNER COX: But I won a prize. Yeah, I was a trustee.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

GARDNER COX: Yeah, and I had a—eventually, I had a one-man show there about 1953 when I had—I won a prize there right after the war. It was just a members show, but I—no, I've forgotten who was protesting it now. I didn't—I didn't—I've never trusted artists in that kind of thing too much. They could—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very self-serving?

GARDNER COX: Uh, well, I think they get—well, I know they get—they go off half-cocked. If somebody starts the thing, they're very volatile. They're all quite volatile, and everyone wants to take the noble stance, you know, and sacrifice themselves—[inaudible], or they're pretty mean, sometimes. They were quite unstable on that line, uh, because I've seen this since I was quite young, in Provincetown when I was young.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —have mentioned that in Provincetown when they told you never to talk about it.

GARDNER COX: Well, no, it wasn't quite that. No, I'm thinking that they—well, for example, they'd go down to the arts festival here, and the arts festival was—manifested as a very—I was mixed up with that, and it was very fair. They made a terrific attempt to give fair treatment to people. [01:26:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And, uh—but one year, they didn't—I think Tom Messer was running it, and they came around to see me, would I join them, because Messer they said was doing the whole thing, and it just was a one-man, arbitrary performance. And, uh, I said—[inaudible]—I told them as a trustee I couldn't but that I thought they ought to look into it pretty carefully. They hadn't—they had never—nobody had bothered to go and ask Messer anything. They had just heard this. As a result of this, they got together, and I remember Reed Kay [ph], who was a hell of a nice fellow, and another fellow, Arthur Polansky [ph], who was just a—[inaudible]—I like very much. I don't see him, but I like him very much, and Arthur had been turned down by the festival for a number of years. And, uh, he just happened to have been turned down, and he was with this group. And what happened—what it was was that—so a lot of them refused to—before the jury—before any decision was made, they would not accept it. Now this, of course, was face-saving as the case might have been.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: What Messer had done was he had very fairly—he had gotten all kinds of people—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To jury.

GARDNER COX: —to jury, to propose—[inaudible]—going to just ask. So he—and, uh, Polansky was going to be—was in. All these guys were in. A lot of people they hadn't thought of were in. It was a very, very overall thing, but they hadn't bothered, and they were all mad as hell. And they were, you know—and nobody had bothered to find out. Artists are inclined to do this. They just got together one night, you know, and they'd spread it around and say, "Would you support it?" And the guy would say, "Yeah, I'll support it," because nobody wanted to say no. I didn't even want to say no, exactly, but I could not do it as a trustee.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What, an anti-festival statement or—

GARDNER COX: Well, I told them—I told them if I was going to make a statement I'd make it right in the trustees' meeting. [01:28:00] I couldn't—I wasn't going to go around to the backdoor and come up—[inaudible]—manifesto. That wouldn't—[inaudible]. You know, the place, to me, was right there in the meeting. And then, I found this out. Anyway, I used this as an example.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: And I don't—so I don't look into it—I haven't been—I had been in some things, but not many.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you think the—

GARDNER COX: I mistrust them when they get together and get sore.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In your opinion, was the arts festival a major thing for artists?

GARDNER COX: I think it was great. I think it was great. Yeah. I'll tell you another thing that was great. It was the, uh—it was the Society of Independent Artists. I guess I spoke of that. You must have heard of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, you haven't. No.

GARDNER COX: Oh, this is—I'd like to put something in about this, because this is the whole era here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: It was—a man named Harley Perkins [ph] started it, who was a painter and an art critic—[inaudible]—transcript. He wasn't—he was no great shakes as a painter, a very nice little fellow, man. And he started the thing, and what it did was it would hire a loft or hire a big space, and anybody by paying \$2 could show what they had unless it was palpably obscene. Today, they'd show anything, but then, if it was genitalia it would not be shown, or if it is was palpably obscene in those mores of the time. And this gave all kinds of people a chance, and I used to show up there, and I got—I got a chance out of that. That was another place I got a—this was before the war.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was before the war.

GARDNER COX: Before the war, and it went on after the war. And I got to be very active in it, and we finally got—but he was the one that deserved the credit for that, and we'd show around all—we got some very good places, a lot of space. And the result was that people could—and anything could be taken, the bleeding hearts in velvet. There would be a hell of a good landscape. There would be a portrait. There would be non-objective stuff, anything, and it was very entertaining. It was like the Villa—[inaudible]—in Rome, only you didn't have to sit next to your picture. [01:30:01] It was in [inaudible]. It was a dignified show. The reviewers all came. People sold, and people came to see what they could see and find. And Harold Tovish [ph] got his start there. A lot of people got started there, and you could put in—you could put in an experiment. I was doing portraits then—I put in an experiment, a picture of wind with a lot of newspapers blowing all over the place. And Margaret McCain [ph], who was a very knowledgeable woman, indeed, got it, and that was a help. She was a highly sophisticated woman. And it gave people a chance to—I did it again and again. Every year it came. Every year, you would put in something. You could try it out—[inaudible], see, for \$2 without fear of being turned down. And the art festival had a little of that quality, but, of course, it was not an open show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. Well, how long did these Society of Independent Artists shows continue?

GARDNER COX: It lasted for quite a long time, and we got to—it lasted for quite a long time—[inaudible]. I wish I could tell you the date. It must have been—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Into the '50s?

GARDNER COX: I would think it did. I don't think it—I remember we—it would be worth—it was a real development, and we did—we went down and got things like—and I had quite a bit to do with this. We'd go down—[inaudible]—Paine's [ph] Furniture Store, and we put the pictures all up in Paine's Furniture Store in the place

—[inaudible]—rooms, model rooms, so all the pictures were in the model rooms, the pictures—and it was regularly shown, you know. They looked very well, domesticated, you know, and they had them all in there. We did that a couple of years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The sophisticated community, locally, came to see the—

GARDNER COX: Well, all kinds of people came. It was a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. General public as well?

GARDNER COX: And finally they had—the final thing was they got it—they made the art museum, and they had it up in the art museum. And then, it fell apart after that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hm.

GARDNER COX: I don't know why.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible] before it was gone by then?

GARDNER COX: I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There were more commercial galleries or—

GARDNER COX: I don't know. It—even with the commercial galleries, it was an awfully good place to put things up in, but for \$2. I think it went up to \$3 or \$4 finally, but that's small. [01:32:01] You could—you know, if you really had a good piece, it stood out, too, because the competition was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you like to show in such conditions as well as you were—as being in a very fine gallery?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah, you'd—of course, you would put the—you wouldn't have to pad out a thing. You could do—if I do these trees now, if I did one—I just begin to fool around with these now. I may get—I may get one or two I like pretty much. I might get a good one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: But I'd take it and put it in.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: I would have to fill it out with the rest of the stuff until I got ready. Damn right. The matter—oh, I'll tell you one thing. I say now, some of the people would never show in it because he didn't believe in paying to go into a show. I thought he was pretty rigid about this, and some of them got up and began to get proud about—that they should be invited. But that wasn't the main reason, I don't think. It just got old.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was run by artists, wasn't it?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, it was run by a committee of artists. Yeah, it was done by—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was just a show

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]interested. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was a place to show, whereas the arts festival was an invitation.

GARDNER COX: Well, no, it was—with the arts festival, it was a jury show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The arts festival got—

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible] Messer, which he enjoyed—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there a good deal of feeling at the arts festival between conservative painters and others?

GARDNER COX: No, I don't think so. At least, I never felt any.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: I mean, I think maybe the extreme conservatives, and, of course, the extreme left didn't mind,

because they had such contempt, you know. I think probably the conservatives got madder because the extreme left—the left thought it was having its day, and, of course, the right was thinking it was going, and, of course, they were madder.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Did you ever show at the Guild of Boston Artists and those places?

GARDNER COX: No, I never showed there. I didn't show there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. [01:34:00]

GARDNER COX: No, I didn't.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There were two galleries run by women in the late '30s through the '50s, the Grace Horne Gallery and the Margaret Brown Gallery.

GARDNER COX: Brown, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you involved with either of those?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, I was involved with Margaret Brown very much. Yeah, I had a lot of shows with her. I had—after the war, I went with her until she died.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was she like?

GARDNER COX: She was a very nice woman. She was a very nice woman, and she—she had it going about 10 years. And when she died, I think she had—she said, "I'm just getting on to this." She was getting down to New York and having a lot of contacts. She knew her way around, and she said it had taken about that long to really get on, but she had a very, very fair, uh—she had some very distinguished shows there. And then, she was the only one in town that had this catholicity of taste.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: She had all kinds of things, and it was—to my mind, it was much the best in town. Boris [ph] was very good, but Boris had his one group. She didn't have any, you know—she had a great variety and almost all of it was pretty good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At that time in the '50s, were there some—several good galleries?

GARDNER COX: Well, let me see. There would be—Grace Horne, of course, was a—Grace Horne was a—she was the early—she was the earliest sort of liberal, beginning to be liberal, gallery, and, uh, John Whorf [ph] was one of her great mainstays, among other things, but she tried a lot of things. And a fellow named Gabe Whitmore [ph] took it over from her when she died. Then, Margaret came along and Boris. The Guild has always been there. When I was a boy, the Copley was there. There used to be a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And now, who else was—those are the ones that stand out in my mind. The proliferations [ph] come later. Am I talking too fast?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. No. Did you work fairly—did you get to know some of these dealers fairly well?

GARDNER COX: Well, the Voses were there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: [01:36:00] I knew the Voses a little bit though I had never shown there. The boys are younger than I was a little bit, pretty near my age. I knew the old man. I don't know—[inaudible]—the Guild. I was asked to do the Guild after the war, and I didn't want to do it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the Guild too much one camp by that time?

GARDNER COX: To me it was. Yeah, I felt myself as a liberal somewhat, you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And I didn't want to—I didn't like the old stuff too much, the old straight Tarbell line.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah [inaudible].

GARDNER COX: And, uh, I guess that's about all. Childs Gallery wasn't going yet, but Childs might have been started about in there. But he—[inaudible]—my style.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. No.

GARDNER COX: He's married to my cousin, actually—my—I know him, of course, quite well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: And I remember Grace Horne. I remember Gabe Whitmore all right, and—but I don't—that's about it.

[END OF TRACK AAA_cox74_8241_m.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Just say anything.

GARDNER COX: All right. Anything, anything, anything go—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is a fourth interview with Gardner Cox. This is July 8th, 1974, and today I thought we could talk a bit about, uh—you've talked about the various kinds of painting you've done. You talked about your involvement in the painters workshop and your technique, but today why don't we concentrate on the mode of painting for which you're principally known, portraiture. And, uh, you've described a bit about your early days, doing pastels of children and things like that. Uh, when did you really decide that portraiture was going to be your main way of painting?

GARDNER COX: Well, I guess I didn't make a—I always had kind of a gift, I guess, for caricature and getting across the feeling of somebody. And, uh, I began to do these things. I guess the first that I ever did, a commission, I was about 17 or 18. It was a drawing of a little girl, a young girl, a young woman, a young girl. It was a girl. And, uh, so I was sort of led to it. I didn't—and I—my mother had done this sort of work, and in those—and when I was young, it was the admired thing. Particularly, Sargent was a great figure in my youth, and, uh, I thought it was—portrait painting was a very distinguished activity. And, uh, so I leaned toward it, and I had—I had ability, which was probably the reason I did it. [00:02:06] I didn't—I had a little feel—I had feel for it, and, uh, so I started—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where did that—

GARDNER COX: —doing it, and then I—but I always did other things, as I've told you, and I do—I still do. [Inaudible] more, though at one time I did a lot of the other stuff after—after the war, the Second World War. But this is—the reason I did it I think is that I'm fairly good at it, and I have a feel for it, and I'm interested in it. And it was a challenge, and it's—I find it difficult. So I said, you know [inaudible] all fun. There's tensions to it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What's the feel that you've been mentioning? What do you think—what do you mean by that, the feel for it?

GARDNER COX: Well, I could get—I could do—I've been able to do things that, uh—of people that often feel like the people to other people rather than just a straight geographic likeness. They apparently would have a little light, a little feeling to them. That seems to be the idea. And I have a—that, I guess you have to say, is a gift, not necessarily an artistic gift. It's a gift.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it doesn't have much—too much to do with skill in drawing.

GARDNER COX: Well, yes, it does, kind of. Yes, I'd say it did. I'd say—yes, I'd say it did because a very little bit—very little delicate things would make a difference between an expression of stupidity or wonder or liveliness or dullness. A damn little bit will do it, I mean, really, a 32nd of an inch of accent someplace—[inaudible]—analysis in certain places—[inaudible]—this difference. So, no, I'd say you have to be—no, I'd say that—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you have to get to know your subject pretty well? [00:04:01]

GARDNER COX: I don't know—I don't think you can think of a great portrait painter who couldn't draw well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: I'd go back, and I—no, I can't—Van Gogh did some very—[inaudible]—emotions of himself, but he was not a great human being. [Inaudible] but he did—[inaudible]—things. You know, Rembrandt could draw very well indeed. Titian [ph] could draw very well indeed, and so could—[inaudible], and so could Goya. I'd say

you have to be able to draw pretty well. It's a great help.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But when you're trying to get that thing that makes the difference between stupidity and—a stupid expression and animation, uh, are you conscious of just how you're using your pencil or your brush, or do you think this sort of just happens? Is this—

GARDNER COX: It's kind of a combination. [Inaudible] you start off and respond and do something, and then you certainly aren't thinking. That is, you aren't thinking, "I'm going to—" you're thinking all right, because you're thinking of a whole lot of relationships at one time without even being totally conscious of it. Sometimes, you're quite conscious—[inaudible]—that. Sometimes, you just kind of look at it as a whole. You kind of get the whole feeling of something, and then you'll do something, and you'll find that—and then you'll see that maybe it's got just the feeling you want. It often doesn't, and then—[inaudible]—you need to think about it. And how I—[inaudible]—differently at different times in your life, so to speak. I mean, I used to sit down and just—[inaudible]—right off, you know. I'd draw. Sometimes, at different times, people would draw—[inaudible]—on a canvas and then paint into it. I don't do that much. I did—at times, I've done some. I've done all kinds of different ways of approaching it, so to speak. [00:06:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you think now you've found the way that's best for you?

GARDNER COX: Well, I find the way—you find the way that's the best for you at the time, I guess. I found the way that's best for me right now, I think, and, uh, it has been for some time as I—well, I learned something last fall about proportion—[inaudible]—proportion to help me, a person who can get into—I suppose like any—you can get into habits, which can betray you after a while if you go on—[inaudible]. And then, you begin to—you don't think as much, and the habit begins to get in your way. And then, you suddenly find something else that will refresh your approach a little bit, and then you'll get a hold of it again.

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

GARDNER COX: Do you understand that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, I mean—well, if you get into a habit—

GARDNER COX: Well, because you get in the habit of, for example, using certain colors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: right.

GARDNER COX: You get in the habit of making your green with a certain blue and a certain yellow.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You don't bother to check what that green is really like.

GARDNER COX: Well, you don't—you keep using it and using it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible] you've been using it without maybe thinking about it enough, or you rely on it too much, and then [inaudible] greens and find different kinds of things you can get—[inaudible]—just this one way of doing this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You find this strays from the effects you're trying to get sometimes, and then you have to catch yourself short—

GARDNER COX: Well, you—[inaudible]—same effect—[inaudible]—certain aspect of this effect you don't necessarily like, that you want to change.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: But you can, uh—what was I saying?—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were saying it betrays you if you get—

GARDNER COX: Yeah, I—you, uh—this feeling I'm talking about—maybe—about the feeling is that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:08:01] Is part of this feeling—

GARDNER COX: You kind of, uh—I'm feeling kind of stupid trying to—this is something I know perfectly well, but I'm feeling kind of stupid.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is part of this feeling, uh, perhaps the way you know your sitter? Do you get in—do you get to become quite familiar with the person that you're painting?

GARDNER COX: Well, you see—you get to be with a person. You get to—and you see many different kinds of—a great many expressions go across a person's face all the time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Little flashes of fear or worry or all kinds of little combinations of feelings, and then you—and after you—what I do now is just hang around with them and draw them when they're not posing. You get the pose, in the first place, but also to get a little feel.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you make repeated sketches then.

GARDNER COX: I make notebooks. I have a great many without any posing [inaudible]—a little posing. I would maybe say, "Hold it for a minute or two," but not any formal posing. Then, you begin to—you begin to get a little—you know, you feel like you can say this is an intelligent man. This is a kindly man. This is kind of a tough man, a ruthless man [inaudible] a kind of sensitive quality also here and there. You begin to try to—you think of those qualities a little bit, and you write them down sometimes, just—and then, you can't get everything. Obviously, you're not going to get everything, so you pick up on certain dominant things, it seems to you.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Does this—how do you distill it then?

GARDNER COX: And then, you, uh—and then, say, if I've done all the drawings of them, you get very familiar with their expressions, their face when certain things happen. For example, when they smile, certain muscular things happen, and you try to figure out what those things are. And then, you paint maybe as I'm starting to paint that block it in. [00:10:03] And then, you—[inaudible] the drawing I made there, and you get all these materials to see—and there are different kinds of things, all kinds of ways that they express these expressions—[inaudible]—up, or they could—or you could—there are all kinds of ways this is done. You begin to find how this particular individual does this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes. When you're blocking them in, what are you doing?

GARDNER COX: Then, well, I'm just—I'm kind of exposing myself to the whole thing. I go out—you know, if I suddenly see something, I might take a crack at it right there, or I might draw it like this—when they go, I do a great deal when they go. This is unlike some of my contemporaries, I know. They paint just when they're there. Sometimes I do, but I do the most important things usually when—about—within an hour after hour after they've left, because what I've been getting is data, and it's fresh in my mind, values and colors and so on. It's fresh in my mind, and then I look at the picture—the one up there, for example, this man is a very—is kind of an impish, puckish, cheerful fellow in many ways.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The man—Menzer [ph]?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, Menzel, M-E-N-Z-E-L. Now, he—that's a very—[inaudible]—looking, you know, sour-looking man.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. At this point, it is.

GARDNER COX: Yes, sure, and I know that. And then, I know this is what I want to get, but I'm not going to try to make it up now. I couldn't right now [inaudible] looking for things. So when I see him again, I'll begin to see what happens when he smiles.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Does this often happen, that you've got him in one way and you want to find quite the opposite?

GARDNER COX: Oh, almost all—oh, yeah, sure. This is just how the paint lands. Often, you're trying to get the—I just try to get the proportions of eyes to nose to mouth to—a little bit, the main proportions.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:12:04] Yes.

GARDNER COX: And then, you put the expressions into that. Now, this—somebody's expression [inaudible] very quickly, but mostly not. And then, you sit back as I do, and then I work until it feels like him to me. And then, when I think it feels like him to me, then I—it's done, so to speak. Then, I show—I don't show it to him until then ever, practically never.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ah.

GARDNER COX: As long as I know—because if I don't like it—[inaudible]—then. [Inaudible] any good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: So the only time you show it to anybody is when you've got—if you think it's pretty good. And then, they might point out something you've forgotten all about like the size of his ears—[inaudible]—thinking of, and—[inaudible]—right. That kind of criticism you take. You can't take criticism—[inaudible]. You cannot take criticism you don't agree with or understand. But often, they'll point out something, or you may have a suspicion of something and—[inaudible]—maybe you're over—you may think, "Maybe—[inaudible]—getting too—[inaudible]. I've seen this too much." And then, they'll come in, and they'll corroborate it, or they'll say, "No, it doesn't bother us at all. We never thought of it." But most of the time they'll corroborate it. So when you want to see—[inaudible]—if you get to a certain point, if a thing has life, it's a very valuable quality, and accuracy—I would sacrifice accuracy any time—[inaudible]—life. That is—[inaudible], "Well, his eye is actually a little this way." [Inaudible]. If it feels like him, that's the important thing, and that the thing he can lose. And when it's lost, the great—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you have to work—

GARDNER COX: Even that picture isn't—[inaudible]—it doesn't feel like him has got a little thing of life to it—[inaudible].

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

GARDNER COX: But this is going to—[inaudible]—I'm going to sacrifice life—[inaudible]—is not what I want.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But at this point, when you block in, you're not really looking to get expression, or just these partial—

GARDNER COX: Oh all different kinds of ones. [00:14:00] And as I—you get—[inaudible]—very commonly—I get several expressions. If you get two—you can easily get two expressions certainly, sad—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Everybody has, say, a cheerful and a gloomy side. You can get both those sides. That's—to do almost always, put a very serious man in a charming light. You can combine those two. One side will be serious, and the other side won't be. You won't know it until put your hand up and go like this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you sometimes combine those two, then, in the one—

GARDNER COX: You almost do—very, very often.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Most—I try to with any—I do, and it makes for a—I've noticed in the—I discovered this just on my own, but I've checked back on [inaudible]. The great ones I like always had this quality.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Of dual expressions?

GARDNER COX: Dual, almost always dual.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: Sometimes more. You can get—you can have one side and—[inaudible]—the other way on the other side, so it's never exactly—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The mouth, the eyes, yes.

GARDNER COX: —the person never was actually—ever actually had that—[inaudible]—face at the same time, but you—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this way, you can get a broader range of the character of the man—[inaudible]—facial expressions.

GARDNER COX: You can get—I think it makes a difference. This one, a person shouldn't overdo this, but if it's a thing like that with a three-quarter face, you know, I'm not going to get that in that one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: I might get a little even in that one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Even that one, if you cut that off on that eye—see, the right-hand side, if you cut your—if you put your finger up and see the—[inaudible]—that side—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —that's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's right.

GARDNER COX: And the other side is much softer and pleasant.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: That's a little of that. That's what I mean. Even that would—[inaudible]—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —because this guy is a very sharp fellow. He's also very—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So this, uh—this portrait here, you usually begin with the head, do you, in the portrait?

GARDNER COX: I almost always do. Yeah, I—[inaudible]—like that, and I go on around.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: I get the hard—and then, I go back to it. I might—[inaudible]—go back to it—[inaudible]—them.
[00:16:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've said before that—

GARDNER COX: It's never finished. You can always go back to it, and you do go back. You'll be doing the hands and look up and suddenly see something you want to do, just what you want to do—[inaudible]—reaction, and you do it like that. So it's a very good move, sometimes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you have to work with men—people who are—with whom you're somewhat on the same wavelength or, at least, you're sympathetic with?

GARDNER COX: Um, I don't think so, not sympathetic. One of the best ones to do is a real son of a bitch.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, I mean, I know you—

GARDNER COX: You don't have to like him, if you understand—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: But I don't—after all, you know, probably Senator McCarthy would have made a very—I mean the old senator—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, Joe.

GARDNER COX: —would make quite a good picture. He was a real—he was just a nasty fellow—[inaudible]—type.

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

GARDNER COX: You—[inaudible]—would want to be around him too much. That's the trouble. Uh, so—but I like people. I generally like people—[inaudible]. Also, people that are getting their portraits painted as far as this kind of—[inaudible]—permission to do that. They're usually people somebody—at least somebody thinks something of and something—[inaudible]—the ball one way or another.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—to find—[inaudible]. It's very easy to make a gloomy picture—[inaudible]. These

heavy ones are very easy to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These heavy—in the painting?

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—all heavy—[inaudible]—interested in—[inaudible]. The man looks—you can make a man look sour at the same time you can make him look—not all sour—[inaudible]—isn't all sour. If he's all sour, you—[inaudible]—was kind of nutty. He was a—[inaudible]—nutty, and he looked—[inaudible]. [00:18:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: If you don't like the portrait—

GARDNER COX: But I was sort of disgusted with him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: If you don't like a portrait, you don't release it, do you?

GARDNER COX: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: No, definitely not if you—no. You know, it's the thing—if you say, "If I don't like it, you can't have it,"—[inaudible]—say, "If you don't like it, you don't have to take it, and if I don't like it you can't have it." Now, this would be for private commission. The committee for a college president or a professor, you know, something like that, a committee—you don't say that—you don't say that—if you don't like it, but you don't say, "If you don't like it, you don't have to take it," because—[inaudible]—committee. You don't want to say that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: If—[inaudible]—good, then you—if they don't like it, they can refuse it, but you don't give them that option.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Have you had to do many posthumous portraits, or will you do them?

GARDNER COX: No, I've done a couple, but I don't like doing them. I've done—you've seen a couple around here, one of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: And I did one of Franklin—no, wait a minute. [Inaudible] replicas. Those weren't posthumous portraits.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, they were replicas of ones you had done.

GARDNER COX: No, no, I've done very few. I did just—I think I did one guy that was killed in a war. Am I speaking clearly enough?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: I—[inaudible]. No, I've done only a couple, and I don't like to do them at all. I can't do them. I was—you know, I was commissioned to do one of President Kennedy for the White House, and, uh, that was a posthumous one. I couldn't do it. I could probably—no, I couldn't do it—[inaudible]. I don't work that way. I can't —

ROBERT F. BROWN: How far were you able to carry the Kennedy posthumous portrait?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I had—[inaudible]—four years off and on. I worked on it off and on, here and there, and it never was any good, really, but it—[inaudible]—bad. It was spurious. You know, in other words, there wasn't anything—there was nothing that—there was nothing—[inaudible]. It was the photographs, almost. [00:20:01] I have to have something to stimulate—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: I saw thousands of them, of course. I thought I could do it. I thought it would be fun to try and see in that case [inaudible]. You know, some of the—[inaudible]—sometimes you have quite a good time doing it—you have an interesting time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But with this, you—

GARDNER COX: You—[inaudible]. You—[inaudible]—situations which normally you wouldn't get into, like a reporter, like—[inaudible]—congress. I could get into some—you could get into a lot of special things—

[inaudible]—that you wouldn't normally—[inaudible]—if you—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: The Kennedy thing had side benefits of—just for the hell of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really?

GARDNER COX: They let me go down and—[inaudible], because I didn't see her much. [Inaudible] it would be better if I had. I probably could have pieced it together a bit more, but I didn't want to—[inaudible]. I thought it might be fun to—[inaudible]—the archives and go all through all kinds of—[inaudible]. He'd had—[inaudible]—stay in Hyannis Port anytime—[inaudible]—going on. I never did that. I probably should have. So it was kind of—so I thought I'd try it. I was going to do him when he was alive, incidentally. I was doing Arthur Goldberg who was—[inaudible]—on the Supreme Court, who was the Secretary of Labor—[inaudible]. I was doing him as Secretary of Labor, but he was then on the court, before he went to the UN. And he was a—he was a great guy for—[inaudible]—fancy, and—[inaudible]. I liked him very much, but he wanted to get me to—[inaudible]—the cabinet—[inaudible]—money, and they were going—[inaudible]. And then, he was shot about a month later, a month and a half. He was—[inaudible]. So then, they came to me about—[inaudible]—about a year later—[inaudible]—would I do it the posthumous, and I said I'd try it. [00:22:00] But, uh, at the end I was—I was—[inaudible]—never seen—[inaudible]. I would have liked to. It was one of those—it was one of those funny situations where your worst instincts come out and so on. [Inaudible.] this is an opportunity to break into publicity.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: There was some—[inaudible]—anyway, and I—[inaudible], and I could have done that—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: That would have been no problem.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: But, uh, this was—[inaudible], and I wanted to make it—and actually, the situation—[inaudible]—make a damn good thing. [Inaudible.] want to have something crummy—[inaudible]—and get—[inaudible]—couldn't make it. So I had a great opportunity to strike a great note on this—[inaudible], and I could not do it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you kept your studies?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I think I've—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—look like him and things like that, but it just was—it was tired, and it was contrived, and indeed it was. It could have gotten by. I never showed it to them. I never showed it to them—[inaudible]—get somebody else. So, anyway, that answered the question about posthumous.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Well, did you find—

GARDNER COX: Then, I did Bobby later on, but I saw Bobby a whole day, all day long. I was with him all day long—[inaudible]. I did a lot of drawings that day. And then, when he was—[inaudible], I had enough to go on to—I had a—I'll tell you I had—[inaudible]. Is this boring? This is kind of a funny—[inaudible]—to talk about. I had a—I knew—like I tell you—[inaudible]—when they go away, it's got to feel like the person to me. And as long as it doesn't, I know it isn't any good. It's not—[inaudible]—what I'm trying to do. You're trying to get the good painting and this together. That's essentially what you're trying to do. [00:24:00] And, uh, you can sometimes paint very well, and then—[inaudible]—about the painting—[inaudible]—not distracted by another person, but you know how it ought to feel.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: That is, how you think it ought to feel.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that's what happened with your Robert Kennedy—

GARDNER COX: And with Bobby, I knew how I want it to be. With Jack Kennedy, I wasn't quite sure. I'd get lost in the thing. Also, the other thing is, if you work after they're gone, half an hour, an hour, it's all right. If you work

two hours, then the picture takes over, and you've kind of lost the feeling of them and—[inaudible]—the picture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: And then, you don't know what the hell, and you may think it's great, and—[inaudible]—no good at all. And that's what seeing the person—if they're alive, they can come back, and you see them again. Then, you get on track again, if you do get off the track, and I got off the track. I mean, I didn't know, and I couldn't—I didn't get back on the track, really—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: —a feeling I could. And somehow, I just couldn't do this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There's no way of restoring it.

GARDNER COX: Well, I had—I—[inaudible]—look like him, and I said to myself, "Doesn't this look pretty good?" He said, "This doesn't look like him at all." So I was, like, in a fog. It was a very strange feeling, and, uh, the only way to get rid of it all was to just not do anything for a while, and then you go back to it again. But it was a—it was an unpleasant feeling, because I just felt I was really just sort of—[inaudible]—just trying to—[inaudible]—together, and then I

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you doing others at the time?

GARDNER COX: He's an example of—you don't let them have it if it's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: I'd rather have nothing there than a cheap attempt.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you see when you day you sketched Bobby Kennedy? What—could you say what—what do you think you perceived in him?

GARDNER COX: Well, I've got the sketches someplace. Maybe—[inaudible]—down there. Again, now, this is—[inaudible]—I can talk. I can't—I couldn't—[inaudible]—sit and slouch, sit a little—[inaudible]. He was very pleasant to be around. He reminded me of my youngest son. He was a nice—[inaudible]—to be around. He didn't—I'm very, uh—you know, I said I'm a fly on the wall. [00:26:04] Pay no attention to me. I'll pay no attention to you except I'll go—[inaudible]—and do what I have to do. So—[inaudible]—do what I had to do, and he went and did what he had to do, and we—[inaudible]—in the room together and had lunch together. There was stuff set up, you know, and then we didn't—I didn't try to be polite to him or him to me. He had a very nice little shy smile, for example. He would—[inaudible]—came in and talked to him about various things. He was—[inaudible]. Obviously, he was—[inaudible], but at the same time he was—he was—[inaudible]. He'd been away. He'd been down—that's when he'd gone down to the Kentucky mountains and had just come back and seen all the poverty there in Appalachia. And, uh, he got—came back that morning. He hadn't been home for a week—[inaudible]—called him up. He was, uh—I liked him. I liked him, and he had a little, shy, kind of funny way about him. And he'd—[inaudible]. I couldn't—you don't—you're not a psychiatrist. You don't—you know, you just—[inaudible], but you get quite a feeling for them. You get quite a feeling for a person.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you're sketching all the while.

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Yeah, and then you'll—if I showed you—I'll get something together for you next time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: When I show you these—[inaudible]—you'll understand exactly what I mean, because—[inaudible]—nasty—[inaudible]—get that done—[inaudible]—smiling over there, and another one would be just one eye.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: Or suddenly you'll see his hair go like this—[inaudible]—you want to use that spurt.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: You [inaudible] to do all kinds of funny [inaudible], or if the guy was a very dismal guy—perky—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this helping—

GARDNER COX: —if one piece went up like this, you—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This ingrains it in your mind, doesn't it?

GARDNER COX: I use all those things, see, to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Do you look at your sketches a lot afterward?

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—up—oh, yeah—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You do?

GARDNER COX: Well, they're in your mind as a result.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They're in your mind. Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And then, you don't copy them off—[inaudible], but you may look at one. [00:28:00] Oh, yes, you'd run through like this, maybe, and see—[inaudible]—these little things. You use all kinds of things. At least, I did. [Inaudible.] Little lines—[inaudible]—necktie or a—[inaudible]—instead of a—[inaudible]—very particularly. Suddenly, a piece of hair would go like this or just a little—[inaudible]—up here—[inaudible]—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —as opposed to having it all—whatever it is, just even if it's—[inaudible]—few little things, depending on what kind of—you use all these things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you think it's mainly celebrities or important people, uh, who get their portraits painted now?

GARDNER COX: Uh, I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or is portraiture—

GARDNER COX: I don't know. I suppose so. I get—I've had a lot of what you might call celebrities, so to speak. They're not—[inaudible]—I've had a lot of quite well-known—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. When did you begin—

GARDNER COX: But I'm trying to think of—but I've also—[inaudible]—art, obviously, and a lot of people are getting their portraits painted now. I don't know what the future is going to be. I suppose—I would take a guess it would probably keep on going. It always has. At least, it always—it's the kind of thing—I don't think the photograph will take its place.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes. You think it's in a pretty healthy state now?

GARDNER COX: I wouldn't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you think of your contemporaries?

GARDNER COX: I don't—I don't—[inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: When did you begin painting—

GARDNER COX: I think—I don't think there's any—it may be—[inaudible]—a lot of people aren't—when I started out, a lot of people wanted to do it. Now, a lot of people don't seem to want to do it much. A lot of people aren't very good at it either.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: They aren't—I mean, very good painters—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The kind of gift you've described, yeah.

GARDNER COX: Yeah, that's right. They have to have that, two together.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you see in portraiture or your portraiture any relation to the painting—other painting, or do you think it's its own mode?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I suppose so. Oh, I suppose so. I keep thinking of—I get dissatisfied with—I don't like to have a thing look like an old academic painting. [00:30:01] And, uh, I—and I keep thinking of ways, which I fail at, of—particularly, backgrounds I find very difficult, and a great many painters find this. Unless they just settle for an old exhibited background, they have a hell of a time, and I have a hell of a time with backgrounds, every time. I hang on to these for months and months before I make up my mind, and, uh, then I try to have the background have something to do with them, too. [Inaudible] subordinate it, and I don't like—[inaudible]—frame out. [Inaudible] frame in many cases.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: So I keep changing it. I'm not in any rut in that way. At least, I try not to be, and maybe I am, and—[inaudible]—to be. And I like the old-time thing would be—the old-time thing was to have—[inaudible]—dark. It was very simple. It was a very good solution, too—[inaudible]—room.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The head stood out.

GARDNER COX: And there was industry about the body, and there was—[inaudible]. The other way around it is to have—[inaudible]—way to do it is to have it all one tone, more or less, like the—[inaudible]. You've seen the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: That's another application of that principle. It's in behind—[inaudible]. Do you remember it at all?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: It's all one tone—variation in that tone, which achieves the same purpose. That's an experiment along that line, and a very original one—[inaudible]. And then, I like to get away from the edge of the canvas, and I don't like to change. I think it's [inaudible] enough.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you try to experiment?

GARDNER COX: And I experiment that way, and I—I am inclined at times to—well, no, this—I don't want to do too much more of that. I'm going to some more of that, but what to do—[inaudible]—I'll probably put—[inaudible], and I'll do a little bit—[inaudible]—arms. I don't want make a lot of—[inaudible]—so I'm not going to do his arms—[inaudible]—length. I just want the action. But I—sometimes I resolve this pretty well, and sometimes I don't resolve it very well, because you can see examples all over there on the wall—[inaudible]—behind, some photographs of them in there. [00:32:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Do you try to be innovative? Is that part of your intention?

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Well, I don't—I'm not trying to be—I don't think I'm trying to be—well, I suppose I'm trying to be innovative, but I—but, uh, more I'm trying to—I don't want to have it feel like an old-fashioned portrait.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: Because that is such a—has such a clichéd quality that it has an adverse effect on a modern viewer, and I don't like it myself. So I try to get away from that. Well, in an attempt to do that, if you want to call it novelty—I'm not trying for novelty. No, I don't—I'm sure I do sometimes, and then I scratch it out if I'm getting too smart or getting too—you don't like it. I go over and do things I don't like and then get rid of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Then, I do things I don't like, and I get rid of them, and then maybe in the end I make it very simple again. And, uh, no, I don't like that picture of my daughter-in-law, really. It's very good of her, but I don't like the background stuff of that very much. I don't—I think, probably—I'm sure I could do something with it, but I don't know—[inaudible]—it is now. I don't like it. I don't like it, so I'll change it. Maybe—[inaudible]—around her, I'll try to—I don't quite know what to do to her. But now—three or four months I may get an idea—[inaudible]—exactly what to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why do you think you have that difficulty with the background?

GARDNER COX: It's a very common one. It's a very, very common one. Most of them settle for just doing the one thing. They do the same thing every time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you want the background to do?

GARDNER COX: I like—well, what it should do is—ideally, what a portrait should do is everything like—every stroke should support, enrich, and heighten the main idea—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which is—

GARDNER COX: —to support and heighten it. [00:34:06] And, uh, so the whole thing will be a picture as well as a likeness of somebody, so the whole thing will be—and so that the picture—this is ideal—so this object on the wall feels like a person and suggests a person in many different ways, through color, through edges, softness, harshness, whatever it is, all throughout it. Each—should have some relation to him a little bit, the person. This is very hard to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And it should be a beautiful object as well?

GARDNER COX: Well, yes, if it's very good it'll be interesting. It'll be interesting. If it's really good, it will be, but the colors and the textures and the [inaudible] of the strokes or the calmness of the strokes, the variety of the—[inaudible]—should always have the character of the person or something to do with the person in mind. Then, if you get those altogether, you can get a very handsome picture, a very interesting one, and one that is very unphony [ph]. So my best—I don't think about what—[inaudible]—trying to be smart and all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right, so this sounds like this—your not being phony and so forth, this sounds—for yourself, have you?

GARDNER COX: Hm?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you see any indebtedness to your training in part in the way that—[inaudible]—past—

GARDNER COX: Not particularly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —or do you think you've worked most of this out yourself?

GARDNER COX: —this particular thing I'm talking about myself.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. Right. When did you begin—

GARDNER COX: But many people have trouble with backgrounds, but that's—that's the—sometimes, as I see, it's sort of action painting in relation to the person. Sometimes you don't quite know what to do, and I have a little trouble with this—[inaudible]. Now, I'm going to get rid of the color of the coat. I don't like that. [00:36:00]—[inaudible]—trouble with that. I don't like that, and I'll do a couple more things, and then suddenly it'll kind of come together. So, at least, everything that is in it—or at least as much as I can do it—will have something to do with this as I can see them, which can result in some originality—[inaudible]. It's kind of a subtle originality—[inaudible], and I don't—I often—[inaudible]. I try to make it—[inaudible]. Ideally, I try to. There are lots of things you can employ.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Thin or thick, light and dark and—[inaudible]—over so it's sort of ugly and kind of [inaudible] all that. There are kinds of ways you can do it, and each person could—a man would be very different than a child.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A man—

GARDNER COX: A man—the treatment of a man would be very different than a child or a delicate woman.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, the treatment of a—

GARDNER COX: And a delicate woman is very different than it should be.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about the treatment of these very often important people that you've painted? When did you begin painting celebrities, would you say?

GARDNER COX: Oh, I began quite young painting people, I painted Alfred North Whitehead. He certainly was a celebrity—whatever you would call him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: He certainly was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you have any recollections of these—some of these people sitting for you?

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]. Oh, yeah, sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about Whitehead?

GARDNER COX: Whitehead and Hocking and all those when I was in my early '20s, 25, something like that, 25 or 26, around in there. Well, it was—yeah—[inaudible]—Cambridge—[inaudible]—I painted Hocking.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, in Cambridge.

GARDNER COX: And he got me to paint Whitehead, and I did various other people—[inaudible]—off. I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you were—

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—sprinkled around, and some—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have quite a different relationship with sitters when you were young than you do now?

GARDNER COX: Yeah, I guess I was younger. [00:38:00] No, I liked Whitehead very much, and Whitehead liked me. We got on very well, and I was—I wish I had availed myself more of his—he had offered friendship more than I took it because he liked to have young men around and so on. And I was a little shy of him—[inaudible]—and not—no, I don't know—[inaudible]—shy around him at all. [Inaudible.] that I—I saw a lot of him. I used to go once in a while, but I could have gone a lot. I guess I didn't—[inaudible]—him. I guess I didn't think I was intelligent enough. And actually—[inaudible]. I underrated myself. I—[inaudible]—on the tape, I shouldn't put this in the tape, or why not?

ROBERT F. BROWN: But is this generally the case?

GARDNER COX: He was a marvelous fellow. No, I wouldn't—no, I don't think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Have you made some close friendships through this—

GARDNER COX: Yeah, I've made a lot of friendships. I don't necessarily follow them all up. I don't see—I often don't see the people again for quite a while, but when I see them right away—[inaudible], not all, not all, but a great many, a great many. No, I think I'll probably—I think I could have made a friend of—[inaudible]—and his wife. I enjoyed—yeah, I think—I can go anytime I want to go there from now on [inaudible]. I'm going back anyway to finish up, but, uh, I may never do it, but I may. I don't know. But then, I did one of Chief Justice Warren, and, uh, he was very nice and very considerate and everything else. [Inaudible] but I never would see him again. It didn't develop that way at all—[inaudible]—perfectly pleasant. John—[inaudible]—I don't—[inaudible], but a great many of them. A great many of them I go back and see. Potter Stewart [ph]—I like very much, and I like Goldberg. I saw Goldberg a little after his—[inaudible]. You know, you—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. [00:40:00] You—one of the first big government people was Dean Acheson, wasn't it, that you painted?

GARDNER COX: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like to paint? Did you—

GARDNER COX: He was very interesting indeed. He was then—that was when he was Secretary of State. That was 1950, '51, and he was under attack by McCarthy, the early McCarthy. I remember him coming in one day, and he had—his daughter was being operated on. His favorite daughter was being operated on for—to have a lung taken out because of TB—[inaudible]—in the morning. And that same morning, McCarthy had accused him openly in the—I think it was in the house—[inaudible]—the senate or a hearing, publicly, of being the greatest traitor since Benedict Arnold. [Inaudible] came in—[inaudible], you know. It was right after this, and he was undeterred, undismayed, very much—

ROBERT F. BROWN: A very steely guy.

GARDNER COX: Well, he was tough and also very sentimental, I think, very sentimental also. He was very warm, but he was a very loyal friend of Franklin, you know. He did all kinds of—[inaudible]. He was a very attractive man. He was very funny, very funny, a very funny man. Now—[inaudible]—was not a very funny man. He's nice, but he's not—Acheson was funny. [Inaudible] laugh and laugh—[inaudible]—funny.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—mustache and—

GARDNER COX: Well, he looked like Donald Duck or Br'er Rabbit or some—[inaudible]. He was very—[inaudible]—Br'er Rabbit. I saw a lot of him, and then I did him again just—[inaudible]—was old John Lord O'Brian, and I made a great friend of him. Then, he died. He was very old. Often, you make good friends. You see a lot of them, you know, and then they—as a matter of fact, they also—if you—they can be quite—I wouldn't say this applied to Acheson, but it would apply to, say, Frost, or it would apply to various other people. [00:42:06] You know, you'd—[inaudible]—of them they'd feel quite warm towards you. People like to be appreciated—[inaudible]. If you've done something that makes them look the way they like to be, they think—you—[inaudible]—you don't try to—you don't do it that way—[inaudible]. If you—if you—[inaudible]—lost, because you don't know what they feel. You don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: And—[inaudible]—thing, all certainty—everything goes out of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I was thinking maybe that's because you've got a part of them. I mean, you could almost look at it the way the prim—the way the Indians, for example, look at it. You've taken part of them—

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]. This is—[inaudible]—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and developed a certain bond.

GARDNER COX: I suppose it does, yeah. You've been through an endeavor together. They've given their time. You've give your time. You've—[inaudible]—together, talked together. You've laughed. They see you in trouble.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But then, in the portrait itself, there's a part of them in there.

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Yeah, that's—the—well, as I say, time will go, and you won't see them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

GARDNER COX: And they're busy. You're busy, and you don't see them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In your—do you—is a good deal of your time spent seeing these friends or painting them?

GARDNER COX: I don't see the ones I've painted too much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you spend—how much of your time do you spend doing portraits, would you say, of your—is it very—

GARDNER COX: Right now, I'm spending about—not all of it, but pretty near all of the painting—my painting time, not my—[inaudible]—other things. But, uh, professionally, right now I do—I do some other work, but—oh, I'd say 90 percent. Now, this August, I'm going to probably—I think this August I'll paint—I think I'll do things outdoors. I think I'll paint some trees and rocks and various things like that and try to experiment with them and—[inaudible]—kind of interested in them. [00:44:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've shown me those. And do you think there's any connection with your trying to get the expression from many sketches in the portrait? You've shown how you—

GARDNER COX: I think so. I think you could do a portrait of a tree, so to speak, in a sense. But, no, I—this may be—there are different ways you can feel about trees, and I feel—[inaudible]—great many trees, and I see them—the other day, I began to feel a strong—[inaudible]—overdo this, but an essence. They're rather like—they remind me of water. They remind me of waves. You get a bunch going over a hill or something like this, and it's like a—it can be—it's like a foam on a—as it goes over a hill, like the foam on a wave—[inaudible]. And then, they leap like spray, and then they—this is a way I feel about them, and I don't know if I can—this may be one of those things that you can't—but I have quite a distinct feeling. I always have liked the mystery of the—[inaudible], you know, going into a tree—[inaudible]—and the body and the transparency of it, the space in there. [Inaudible] it's a hard thing to do, but it's not—I don't think it's as hard to do as a person. I think I could solve it. Now, what I come up with—[inaudible]—very corny-looking pictures—[inaudible]—done before or felt the same way, I'm sure. I haven't seen the water feeling so much. I've seen—I've seen the, uh, cloud feeling—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Clouds? These are—

GARDNER COX: But I'd like to get this—Van Gogh used to—he had a way of doing—[inaudible]. I kind of—I can see some of these things have a very spurting quality, and I think that could be done.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this comparable to the spontaneous things you try to find in a person's face?

GARDNER COX: That's right. You're right. I'm thinking of—I'm thinking of making a little study of, uh—which would be sort of a portrait—of a tree—[inaudible]—trees, the spirit or the essence—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:46:02] Yes. Well, you mentioned that—

GARDNER COX: —to see if I can do it with a certain economy and get it across.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And the quick changes—

GARDNER COX: And I—but I like to do it. See, I like to try it out. I like colors. I like—[inaudible]. I don't know whether this will amount to anything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You seem to like to witness change and capture change.

GARDNER COX: Yeah, I like action.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you seem—and action, because you mentioned with Bobby Kennedy when the hair blew up, it's something like you just said with the trees. Suddenly, a tree will spurt up—

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —out of the mass of trees.

GARDNER COX: That's right, and I think another little thing on this is that I feel that—it has something to do with this, action and so on—is that there has been a lot of talk at different times about painting and the picture plane and how paint should be used and the quality of painting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: And how it's used to represent perspective or a window, and then it's a travesty, and it should be just itself and all that kind of thing. You know what I'm talking about, the nature of paint. One of the natures of paint, and I think it's—[inaudible], is—an important one, not the only one, but an important one is that it's the medium that can express very definitely—well, I was going to say exuberance. But rather than that, it can—it can capture the immediate feeling of somebody. You know, Rembrandt, I'm thinking of—[inaudible], and he went like that, see, with great skill. And it was also—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this—

GARDNER COX: —and it was emotion. It was emotion. He responded—[inaudible]—April 10th, 1645 or whatever it was. At 10 o'clock in the morning, he—[inaudible], and there it is, just exactly how he felt, 300 years later.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: And it—and the emotion is carried through.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That brushstroke.

GARDNER COX: Yeah, so I think some of these lively things have that quality to them, too. [00:48:01] But, again, you're really—this is—you should—[inaudible]—because I happen to be kind of—[inaudible], and I have grave doubts. But I don't know, because often I've done things that I didn't like, and then they did like them. I did boats, rowboats. I like to—I do like to find out sometimes—[inaudible], and you'd find out certain expression or certain—say, a certain expression could be made or got across with one or two lines or accents, not all gone over—[inaudible]. Now and then, it—[inaudible]—clear that two—a couple of things would put it across. This is always interesting to find because it certainly—[inaudible]. And, uh, if you can get it—this is always better if you can get it with this, and the same thing with—[inaudible]—boats, when I could do boats.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It certainly—

GARDNER COX: —[inaudible]—a way to get [inaudible] expression. it gives me pleasure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. But you don't worry over the properties of paint. These are things—when you want to do them, the paint lends itself to—

GARDNER COX: When you—you do it how you feel. You do it how you feel.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And the paint particularly lends itself to—

GARDNER COX: It lends itself to that because you can go like this, or you can—and go like that, or you—you

know, there's a lot of ways you can do that. And I think that's one of the qualities that's why it can be very exciting in paint. And actually, Abstract Expressionism, in any case, is just nothing but—[inaudible]—paint.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. Do you like that?

GARDNER COX: Well, I like some of it, but I also don't see—I also like it if it's—I think it's a little richer if it's in the service of something that you can also get another metaphor out of. You know, if you could—if the person—if you can do a person's hair so it's doing this—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: —and it doesn't—it may be more interesting, really, than if you just do it alone.

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

GARDNER COX: You know, it suggests—I don't know. It might be—it might be more interesting than just alone. [00:50:03] There it is. In fact, that's one thing that's always kind of fascinated me, is that in the great painting it's got all the things that—not all the things, but a great many things of the contemporary movement, in Abstract Expressionism—[inaudible]—large parts of Titian are just nothing but textures, you know. And, uh, I think many of the contemporary—at one point, not now, but the contemporary movement was becoming a laboratory where they were taking parts of—[inaudible]—and exploiting that, one aspect, like Pollock—[inaudible]—texture, and French Impressionism, the vibration between colors and texture. That could be a corner of a Rembrandt. If you cut out and blow up a Rembrandt, the corners in Rembrandt—[inaudible], you know, they sort of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've never been of that kind of analytical temperament, have you?

GARDNER COX: What do you mean?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Are you more of an Expressionist? Do you respond to something through your sketches?

GARDNER COX: Well, I analyze quite a little bit about—I analyze quite a lot about why—well, this is analysis we're talking about now, isn't it?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Well, you're talking—as you talk, you're analyzing.

GARDNER COX: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I do quite a lot of that, a lot of that—I don't—as I paint, I—I think I make very definite, conscious moves, very definitely. Yeah, I'm very self-conscious in certain areas, but there are parts that aren't, and I greatly value the parts that aren't. I think a combination is good. This idea is not me. I'm saying—I mean, I make plenty of mistakes. Degas, you know, he—[inaudible]—essays of his. You know, he said, "I'm the most self-conscious painter that ever lived," and yet he'd change their arms or—tracings and so on. And then—but then, when he did it—when he did it, it was filled with knowledge and feeling and not done that way at all. [00:52:08] So it's a mixture, and I think that's a good—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you feel now you're moving steadily along, or are you thinking of breakthroughs or—

GARDNER COX: I would hope so, but I don't know. I would hope so. I don't—there's a great danger as you get older of thinking you're getting—feeling full of yourself. I think I'm getting—I think I'm getting more controlled, and I know a lot more ways out of trouble than I used to. [Inaudible] trouble—[inaudible]—trouble, it's terribly—[inaudible], and then you don't know—[inaudible]—to do. And I've got some—now, I'm—[inaudible]—worried about that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, now, like the portrait of Mr., uh, of Menzel over here, where it's—he looks too heavy, and he also has this impish side, will that be any big problem for you to correct this?

GARDNER COX: It will be a problem, but I've done—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's one you've done before, and you know—

GARDNER COX: —say, 40 years ago, 30 years ago, I'd be worrying if I could do it, but I'm pretty damn sure I can do it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. You're pretty confident now.

GARDNER COX: Well, I'm confident that—you find out things that are very—that you should have known long ago all the time and, uh, things they said that you didn't quite get through your head or things you did instinctively. So I know more. I know enough to know that I can—that if I—[inaudible]—values in one area very

close together—[inaudible]—trouble—[inaudible]—earlier. I still—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What matters most to you, or do both matter, how you feel about your portraits or what—how other people respond? Are both equally important?

GARDNER COX: Oh, no. No, I'd say how I feel is the most important. You like to have—I was just thinking of this thing. I got the thing wrong. [00:54:01] I [inaudible] very good, and I [inaudible]. And then, I—because I hoped she'd say she looked pretty good. And I was—and then, I thought, "What the hell is this? This isn't very important one way or another." For a minute, I kind of wanted his reassurance, and I began to—I didn't like [inaudible]. But that's an example of when you began to think it's more important what they thought. But I didn't like this, and I put this feeling behind me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

GARDNER COX: And, uh—[inaudible]—anything that—you know, you do things that are—they aren't all equally good. They aren't all equally—no, they aren't all equally—one isn't exactly as good as the other, in my opinion, because I like some more than I do others. I don't make these comparisons. [Inaudible] say, "Which is the best one ever did?" I don't—I don't—[inaudible]. I like several. I like a number, but I don't pick out one. I couldn't pick out one. I could pick out a few, so that—people have pictures that they think are very good indeed—at least, they say they think they're very good—which I don't think are as good as others. The others give me much more satisfaction, and if people say they're marvelous or something like this and they go overboard, if I don't think they're marvelous, it doesn't mean a thing. And I don't very often—[inaudible]—work marvelous. I don't think they're—I always can find things that are wrong with them, but the overall—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you're not particularly interested in exhibitions, then, are you?

GARDNER COX: Well, no, I haven't for quite a while because I have all I can do. I don't—I'm not trying to get any more to do. I'll have exhibitions again if—say, the trees—[inaudible]—I'll have an exhibition to see how they go, to see if anybody, to see if what I feel is being conveyed. [00:56:08]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: I've had pretty good luck. Normally, if I like something very much, other people like it, too, or they'll find something in it that they—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, when you have an exhibition, do you get a lot of reply from people, response?

GARDNER COX: Oh, yeah, I always have when I've had them, but I—[inaudible]—now. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you have a group of friends who commonly come and give their response to you or—

GARDNER COX: I have quite a lot of people, because I—[inaudible]—two years—[inaudible]—Cambridge Art Association—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: I don't like—I don't like—[inaudible]. I just put a few things—[inaudible]—presented. A lot of people came to that—[inaudible]. A lot of people came. Yeah, but, no, I haven't—[inaudible]—for quite a long time, at least—[inaudible]—Margaret Brown. No, lots of people came. [Inaudible] all kinds of people came, just an ordinary—[inaudible]. But, uh, I have pretty—generally, if I like something—this has happened. If I like something very much myself, usually somebody else is going to like it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

GARDNER COX: Uh, and this may be—I don't know if it's a virtue or a vice.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: It would be—[inaudible]—either way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you were a boy, you had strong backing from your mother and your father, your father an architect, your mother a painter. Uh, the family that you've raised, your children and all, are they quite—have they always closely followed your work?

GARDNER COX: No, they respect it. They're all artistic, so to speak, rather than, uh—holistic rather—well, no, one of them is a combination—[inaudible]—holistic. They're intelligent and lively, and they're all artistic. Yeah, they're very much so. They have a lot of feeling. But they all can—both girls, one girl—[inaudible]. The other,

she used to paint like a streak. She was a natural painter, and the other one was very talented indeed but isn't—she—the other one is—well, is a very talented girl when it comes to portraiture. [00:58:06] She has—[inaudible], but she's not working very hard at it. She's not very hungry about it. She—[inaudible]—keep doing all right, but she's not—30 or 40 years ago she would have worked very hard at it, and the boys are both—one is a musician, and one is a singer, and a very good singer. And he also can paint quite well. Both boys can paint. The younger one I thought was going to be a painter for sure, but he likes music, and he likes English. They're all in that kind of field, the humanities—[inaudible]—field, all of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: Strongly. There are no bankers or anything in the crowd.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So they accepted your—what you were doing.

GARDNER COX: —they've accepted—their mother is a musician and so on. They just have that—that's their—[inaudible], and they come by. I mean, as I say, the whole family—[inaudible]—as I told you, my cousin, my mother's first cousin was the—[inaudible]—sculptors in England. There's been—[inaudible]—around the family. They happen to be that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

GARDNER COX: So they're not—they're not—I mean, they're all quite—you know, they can be reasonably practical and so on, too. They aren't Van Goghs.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

GARDNER COX: They're pretty good. But the little one, I thought—God, I thought the little one would be an artist—[inaudible]. He really had the—you'd say to him—he's a very bright fellow—[inaudible]—later on—[inaudible]. I'd say to him, "Do me a picture of a bicycle." [Inaudible], say, three years old, and he'd just go—no, I said, "Do a tricycle." He just—[inaudible]—felt like a tricycle or a bicycle. It would be two just—it just was very extraordinary, but he didn't want to be a painter. He paints once in a while some now. He's got this feeling, too, which is funny. [01:00:02] But they respect it, and they—I get on very well with them. I enjoy them very much.

[Audio Break.]

[END OF TRACK AAA_cox74_8242_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]