



Smithsonian  
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Oral history interview with Andrew M.  
Dasburg, 1964 July 2

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Andrew Michael Dasburg on July 2, 1964. The interview took place in Rancho De Taos, New Mexico, and was conducted by Sylvia Glidden Loomis for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives created a more verbatim transcript. Additional information from the original transcript that seemed relevant was added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution. 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

SYLVIA LOOMIS: This is an interview with Mr. Andrew Dasburg at his studio in Ranchos De Taos on July 2, 1964. The interviewer is Mrs. Sylvia Loomis out of the Santa Fe office of the Archives of American Art. And although Mr. Dasburg was not personally involved in any of the Federal Art Projects of the 1930s and '40s, he was in Taos part of the time and was closely associated with many of the artists who worked on them. So, part of our discussion will touch on this period. But first we would like to know something of your own background, Mr. Dasburg. Where you were born and where you received your early education and your art education.

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, I was born in Paris on May 4, 1887. And I was brought to New York City by my mother at the age of five, and lived there for a number of years. And soon after we arrived in New York I developed an arthritic hip—tubercular arthritis of the bone. And naturally was confined for a number of years in bed and then put in braces. My first art education began at the Art Students League. It must have been at least in 1905, possibly a couple of years earlier. That I'm not sure. A few years ago, I wrote to the Art Students League to see if I could get the date that I first registered there, and—but I didn't receive a reply. Whether that was due to the early registration books not being available, [laughs] being in storage, I don't know. But I didn't hear from them.

And the first instruction I had when I went to the league was with Kenyon Cox. They put you in the antique class. Kenyon Cox was a tired man. I don't think he was well. He never revealed to you the statuary that you were looking at, you see, but they were just objects like any other objects in his teaching. He would hardly ever say anything, but when he did give you criticism it would be, Well, I think I'd move this over a little further here, move that a little further over here, and I think you've got that too short. But he never illuminated what you were looking at, you know. Some of those reproductions of the Greek sculpture, which are facsimiles, you might just as well have been drawing a chair, or any inanimate object. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: And then eventually from the antique class I was graduated up into the life class where I worked with Frank Vincent DuMond. He had a theory that everything should be seen in ovals. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I didn't know that.

ANDREW DASBURG: Not in as—astra—what would you call it? I'm looking for a work that doesn't come to me at the moment.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, third dimension? Or

ANDREW DASBURG: No, off-center, asymmet—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Asymmetrical. [Cross talk.]

ANDREW DASBURG: Asymmetrical elliptical ovals, you see. They were merely egg forms,

perfectly symmetrical, which of course isn't true to the figure in the least.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No.

ANDREW DASBURG: And then in the life class he would dwell so much about the pearly light upon the breast of the model so that [laughs] most of our looking and painting was—[laughs]  
—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.]

ANDREW DASBURG: —with the pearly light.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: And trying to achieve it, which we rarely did.

[00:05:03]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well.

ANDREW DASBURG: And then for a time there Bridgeman was also teaching at the League. And his emphasis was on anatomy, you know. The construction of a contour, the construction of an ankle. Without any regard—much regard to the character of the model you were doing, whether she was slim or fat. Mainly emphasized the anatomy. Which was of value of a kind. And just about at the—no, I was given a scholarship to go to Woodstock, New York. The League had its summer school there. So, I went and Birge Harrison was the instructor. He was an interesting man. His talks were of his period when he studied, you know. His own tendencies in painting were Whistlerian. And his emphasis was on the mood. He liked grey days and moonlight, mainly. And my own inclination was to—more of a realism, you know, positive realism. So that I often came into conflict with him, rather timidly I'd say, you know. It was a tendency of mine, [laughs] but I liked him. He was a gentle person, a sensitive man. And his brother, you know, was also—I've forgotten his brother's first name, he lived in France, he painted seascapes mainly, almost entirely. And of course, there I became gradually acquainted with—as the years went on—with—Henry Lee McFee and I were very close friends. And George Bellows came to Woodstock, had a house there. Eugene Speicher, of course, that was much later. That wasn't my first years at Woodstock. I can say that the Woodstock School of Painting, the very early period, was very vigorous, you know. Quite.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see that. Well, when did you go to Paris?

ANDREW DASBURG: Before I went to Paris I worked for a time with Robert Henri—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: —in an evening class. And he was the first instructor that really revealed what you were looking at. The character of what you were looking at. And I think I gained more from Robert Henri in a few months than in all the period that I've worked with the other men whom I've mentioned. I went to Paris, but—I think it was either late in 1909 or early in 1910. And of course, that's where my real revelation of what painting was came to me. My friend, Morgan Russell, whom I mentioned before you turned on this equipment—  
[laughs]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: —had—he had gone there before me. And also, Arthur Lee, who was—I closely associated in friendship [at the League -Ed.]. They were both there and Morgan Russell had worked with Matisse. Matisse had had a class which came to an end just about the time that I arrived in Paris, but through Morgan I met Matisse. And he took me to his studio one afternoon where we spent some hours, he allowed us to look through his portfolio of drawings, which I was interested in. But he himself kept on working. He was then working on the—that large decorative panel—those panels. *The Joy of Life*, the one with the dancers.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

[00:10:15]

ANDREW DASBURG: You know.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I would like to have seen that in process.

ANDREW DASBURG: And, of course what interested me so much was that a good deal of it in after thought, thinking about it, he was working on the shoulder of one of those figures and he had a stepladder platform that he stood on and worked. He would wipe it all out, look at it, and wipe out the section that he was working on until—he did that about three times—until he had a line that was relaxed and natural which was not mechanical. And that has always stuck in my memory. And there I, through Morgan Russell who had been there earlier than I, I got to know Leo Stein and Gertrude Stein. And, of course, on my own I discovered Cézanne.

But like to return to my earliest interests in painting. When I was a boy and could get about, you know, when my lameness allowed me to, either my mother or friend would take me to the Metropolitan Museum on Sundays. And this friend, particularly, she was interested in the Barbizon School. And I had a strong feeling for country, having been confined to the city. But living on the Moselle as a boy before I came to Paris, I had great attachment to the outdoors naturally. The Barbizon School—you know, Curro, Diaz, Rousseau—what they did I thought of as nature. That was nature for me, I saw it and loved it through them. And I remember in my shock one Sunday seeing a very strange and very startling picture on the wall which hadn't been there before. Which—I never heard the name Monet, but it was—the upper part was a bridge and below were water lilies and I thought, Well, how horrible. You know. [Laughs.] And the good things always come to you in a shock, you know. Your first—any innovation is always a shock. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah, that's true.

ANDREW DASBURG: Gradually, my interest in the Barbizon diminished. And this picture, which looked offensive in regard to nature—I saw others, too, they began to look like nature to me. And what I loved before I rejected. [They laugh.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that happens as one develops—

ANDREW DASBURG: Yeah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —one's taste.

ANDREW DASBURG: And so with my first experience in seeing a Cézanne, I happened to stop Durand-Ruel's window and there was a picture in the window—just one, as I recall. It was of a wall and trees, nearby view, and it looked so wooden to me. And the name Cézanne—I had never heard the name Cézanne before. But, oh, I was interested in it, but I remember, I thought isn't it wooden, isn't it stiff. It didn't have the fluency of [laughs] the Monets that I'd seen, and the Pissarros and those things. But it was soon after that that I happened to be walking up one of the streets and in the window a number of paintings by this man, Cézanne.

[00:15:06]

And I was quite fascinated by them so, I looked in through the door, and there were a lot inside. So, I dared venture in, look, it was a gallery—dealer's—and I was quite possessed by them. As a matter of fact, I was quite set on fire. It was from then on that I became sort of an evangelist in regard to—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

ANDREW DASBURG: —Cézanne.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I don't suppose you remember the year?

ANDREW DASBURG: An old gentleman saw my interest—bearded—in these pictures and he said to me, in French, Wouldn't you like to see some more? So, he took me to the back room and there he showed my some of those marvelous ones. *The Card Players*.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, my.

ANDREW DASBURG: A number of them. The one with the little boy standing in the—you

know, in the corner with the oval head.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: And my French—though at home they spoke both French and German, I didn't—or I was timid. I didn't ask him his name, but I spent several hours there. And he was very, very nice to me and interested in my interest in what I was looking at. And when I got back I mentioned it to, I think, it was Arthur Lee, where I'd been and he said, Why you damn fool, you've been with Vollard. Well, I didn't know who Vollard was, I'd never heard the name.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: And then at Leo Stein's, of course, he had a collection. He and Gertrude. Where I often went on the "night at home," one could go. He had quite a lot of Matisse and Picassos. I met Picasso at Leo Stein's. And because by that time I was really in seventh heaven, if I can use that expression in regards to [laughs]—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I would think so.

ANDREW DASBURG: —painting.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: But—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Do you—

ANDREW DASBURG: That was the first time that the world of art was opened to me, you see. When in comparison with what my experience was at the League, you know, where there was no revelation. Here there was suddenly complete revelation and challenges.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Would you—

ANDREW DASBURG: And as I said before, innovation at first sight is always a shock and the beauty then follows.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Do you remember what year that was?

ANDREW DASBURG: That was in 1910.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Ten. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: I didn't study—I went to the sketch classes when I was there, but I spent my time in the museum. A good deal in the Louvre, you know. And seeing exhibitions, becoming acquainted with what was then contemporary painting and very vital.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Very.

ANDREW DASBURG: Picasso was young then, of course, as I was too. I only met him briefly, but I was interested in his personality, and he had very dark eyes. He was looking at some drawings that Stein had—I don't recall whose they were, they were in a folio. But his looking was so intent. When he looked, he really lifted what he was looking at from the paper.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: And his own work at that time, that was be—just I think—I think he probably had done the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, you know. [Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you—

ANDREW DASBURG: [Inaudible] d'Avignon—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Did you—

ANDREW DASBURG: And also those Negroid—that Negroid African period that he was interested in.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Did you meet Cézanne?

ANDREW DASBURG: No, Cézanne I think was—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was he dead by then?

ANDREW DASBURG: I'm not sure whether he was living. [Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I don't—

ANDREW DASBURG: No, I never met Cézanne. I met Brancusi.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

[00:20:09]

ANDREW DASBURG: Arthur Lee knew him, and he invited us for dinner in his studio one night. He cooked the dinner. It was a very interesting evening.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I should think so.

ANDREW DASBURG: A memorable one. I can say that I then liked his work as well as Maillol. Of course, everybody was interested in Rodin. That was a—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: He was a craze then, wasn't he?

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes, he was a craze then. But already at that time I felt that much of his work was fragmentary, even though the fragments were very vivid, realistic, sensitively modeled pieces of sculpture. But you know, this breaking off an arm or a head—that it didn't have the complete constellation that great sculpture has, you know. Where the constellation of form is always complete. You might switch that for a moment. [Laughs.]

In my own painting and after I got from Paris—I believe that the strongest influences, and the ones that have lasted longest, were Cézanne and the architectonic period of Picasso, which is known as Cubism. Of course, these names are given, not by the artists themselves, but by the critics.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: Just as Impressionism was not something that—a man like Renoir resented it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

ANDREW DASBURG: Oh, yes. But it came about in this way, when they had one the first shows together someone had mentioned, in regard to a Monet, that it looked like an impression of something rather than a rendering of—a facsimile rendering of the subject. There was also—I mentioned Kandinsky because I wonder how—where these ideas stem from that come to one at time—a certain time. I went back to Paris in 1914, right after the war started. But didn't stay more than, perhaps, three or four months. I won't go into the—what one did. One went after the battle of the Marne, you know, and visited the battle fields, that sort of thing. I knew a group of newspaper men, including John Reed, at the time. And the shock of the bombardment of [Grasse -Ed.], you know, was something that possessed one's mind and we had the idea we'd like to go out and see if we couldn't take a look at what had happened. We tried it, but [laughs] ended up in the hoosegow.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, really? [They laugh.] How'd that happen?

ANDREW DASBURG: One day when I was in the Gare Saint-Lazare, you know, the station—the railroad station, I noticed that the schedule of the train stops was out in the direction of Grasse. And the last stop was a place called Cézanne. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: So, I mentioned it to Reed and Don, who was—I think he was with *the New York Times* at this time. He said, Well, why don't we go out there, you know, see what we can see. Maybe we can go on. And I nabbed some photographs—I had a camera with me.

We visited the battlefield.

[00:25:00]

Which—it was in autumn, the autumn trees were dense yellow then. What impressed me among the debris of all sorts in the battlefield—of course, men and horses had been buried, there were graves all over the place—was through all this debris—I suppose, where the camps had been, straw and cover to German helmets and pieces of uniform that were lying around, all sorts of things of that sort—all through the fields the fleur-de-lis had come up.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: It was perfectly beautiful. Reed mentions that in one of the articles that he wrote at the time. And see a man patching a hole in a stone wall surrounding an estate, you know, and you thought, Well, here it's all passing already. The—it all seemed so very unreal, the reality.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And this was in 1914?

ANDREW DASBURG: This is in 1914. So, we wandered on and on from place to place, and the moon came out and of course when we came to a little place where there'd be a squad of Frenchmen, always American—they were always glad to see Americans, you know, and welcomed us and we had drinks together, and then we went on.

And we stopped in the little town of Cézanne. The train hadn't gone that far, but we arrived there after dark and getting hungry, and Reed got the idea that we ought to have something to eat. So, we knocked on a hotel door. I don't know how we knew it was a hotel, of course there was moonlight. You could—and the door was opened and here in this large salon—dining room, I presume it was—[laughs] here were the French officers all around a large table with a map spread, and we had wandered right into the headquarters of the corps—that particular corps which was stationed there. They wanted to know how we got there, naturally. And, All right, you can stay, but tomorrow morning you see the commander. Which we did, and he took our passports and wrote across the back of it, No—well, and in French, but just the—"No good for where we were." That they were not really permits that we had and sent us back to Paris on a military train. And then we went to the French ambassador—I mean the American ambassador the next day. [Laughs.] I think it was Gerard.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: And he said, Well it's a wonder they didn't shoot you. What business do you have out there? [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Really? Well, did this town—

ANDREW DASBURG: [Inaudible] he would fix up our passports again, you see.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did this town have anything to do with Cézanne the painter?

ANDREW DASBURG: No.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, just a coincidence of the name.

ANDREW DASBURG: Just a coincidence.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: Just a coincidence. And—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, you said that you didn't meet Cézanne.

ANDREW DASBURG: Oh, no.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How did you develop your style of painting in—along those lines?

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, [inaudible] as I already said, that the influence of Cézanne—also, to a degree the influence of Matisse. The—and also what I call the architectonic period of—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And you just worked this out by yourself?

ANDREW DASBURG: Oh, yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: It entered into one's thought, into—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: —part of it. But before I began to mention Kandinsky. I must have seen some pictures of him. And the reason I mention it is, you wonder how certain thoughts come to you and others at pretty much the same time.

[00:30:19]

I got the idea of a picture that existed in itself without any reference to natural phenomenon or common imageries, that was composed both in color and in rhythmic configuration of form—shape. Without—independent, as I've already said, of any reference to the world that surrounds one. Eliminating all illusional factors, but existing in itself as a thing—as an object which had a reality just as real as other objects around you, you see. Not dependent on things outside of itself.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: You see. And that was the beginning of the period of work which lasted about four years, now called nonfigurative.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: I have a reproduction in the—switch—I make no claim as to innovation, because I believe the idea simultaneous through the minds of men then. Morgan Russell, for one. Also MacDonald-Wright, another. Let's say it was in the air.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: But what did it generate from? No particular thing. I don't even recall that I had ever seen a Kandinsky, though I cal—I credit him with being the first one, that I am aware of, who in about 1910 did do what appears to be a completely nonobjective, nonfigurative painting. I don't like the term nonobjective because my idea was to do a thing which was objective, you see.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see, yes. [Andrew Dasburg laughs.]

ANDREW DASBURG: In other words, nonobjective I suppose, it [inaudible]—it stems from the—the word does—from the idea of not doing your—a painting with familiar objects.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Probably.

ANDREW DASBURG: Probably.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: I'd think. So, I use the term nonfigurative.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It—did you see—

ANDREW DASBURG: Which is also limited.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Did you see the Armory show? Or—

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes. I saw it. I had three paintings and a piece of sculpture in it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, you did?

ANDREW DASBURG: Yeah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I should think you would see it, then. [They laugh.]



ANDREW DASBURG: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well.

ANDREW DASBURG: Matter of fact, I have the catalog here. The reason that I stopped doing non-figurative work in—after 1916 was that I felt that I was repetitive. I really just felt that I was in a blind alley. That I was cut—I had cut myself off from vital sources. And therefore, I decided to go back to the realism, experiencing my—re-experiencing my environment, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: Which I did for quite a while. I first came to Taos in 1917. Mabel Dodge Sterne, then—she was married to Maurice Sterne—she was a dear friend of mine, and also, Robert Edmond Jones—we had adjoining rooms in New York. Maurice Sterne, who had worked in Bali—he was very discontented in the—when he got back to New York from Bali. During that time, he married Mabel Dodge. I will just refer to her as Mabel. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, all right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: Because I knew her as—since 19—about 1912. It was John Reed that introduced me to her, took me to one of her soirees, her "Evenings." Sterne—someone had said to Sterne, Why don't you go out and look at the American Indians? Perhaps, you'll be reinspired to work. And he did. Came out West here, to Santa Fe. How he happened to come to Taos—I suppose that was the natural thing. If you're in Santa Fe, you came to Taos. But he liked it, and Mabel followed. She wanted to have a looksie, too [laughs], see what it was all about. So, she came, but being a very impatient, impulsive person, she wasn't satisfied to wait until she got to Santa Fe. She got off at Las Vegas—the train at Las Vegas [laughs]—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

ANDREW DASBURG: —and thought she would hurry over here. On the map, of course, it looks very close, but in those days—[they laugh]—there were nothing but wagon roads [laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Of course. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: But she finally got here. I'm digressing.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It's all right.

ANDREW DASBURG: We—Sterne, Jones, and I got a telegram from her: "Wonderful place, you must come out. I'm sending you tickets. Bring me your cook."

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. [They laugh.]

ANDREW DASBURG: So, we came out. We arrived in Lamy. I don't know what the hour was, perhaps nine [p.m.], or 10 [p.m.], or possibly later, because we had to take the train, then, from Lamy to Santa Fe, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: And we got to Santa Fe about midnight. [Laughs.] Of course, didn't see anything. But the next morning, we ventured forth, and we were at—we spent the night in a little lodging house, a hotel, right near the station. It was on a Saturday night. And the next morning, we—in winter, we started out, to see what Santa Fe was like, and walked up San Francisco Street, from the station. And I'll never forget the fragrance [clears throat] in the air—or on the air, whatever it's called [laughs]—of the pinyon.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, isn't that wonderful?

ANDREW DASBURG: You know, I've never experienced the fragrance of pinyon and juniper as I did that cold morning. Then, the next day, of course, we wandered about all over Santa Fe. And then, Monday morning, we got on the train at Santa Fe, and the car met us at Embudo. There was only one car in Taos, possibly, two. A fellow by the name of Davis met us at Embudo and brought us up. The road, with—came in in a very different way, then, at that time. But those first impressions of Santa Fe and the surroundings, and from the train

coming up to Esendudo [ph]—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Embudo?

ANDREW DASBURG: —up to Embudo—I was going to say Espanola, but—which was our first stop. But seeing the mountains of Sangre de Cristo, you know—all of that is so vivid, and the—it seemed like being in the—it was a foreign land, then.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: It really was. Because it was dominantly Spanish in Taos. Taos has no resemblance whatsoever, now, to what Taos was then.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I imagine, now. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:40:10]

ANDREW DASBURG: Mabel had rented the Manby house. You know, the decapitated Manby?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I don't believe I do.

ANDREW DASBURG: You—don't you know the story of Manby? He hadn't been seen for some days, and the neighbors—that's where the Stables gallery is now, the—that was the Manby house—and the Rogers Museum. But it's all—it was all rebuilt. It has no resemblance to what it was then. And the park that's called Kit Carson Park—that was all part of the Manby place. He—they broke—they got the sheriff, and they couldn't rouse anyone. They, I suppose, forced the door and got in, and Manby was found on the floor. He was in one part of the room, and his head was in another. And he had two or three rather fierce dogs who, when the door opened, they just barged out and went off. We just—that's—everyone knows the story of Manby.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Laughs.] I've never heard that before.

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, she had rented his house, and he had lived up in a small part of it, near—on Pueblo Road. He had a few rooms there, and we lived in the rest of it. I stayed on. I loved it. It affected me very deeply. It really gripped me so strongly that I stayed until the spring, and came back again, I guess, in the autumn. Those dates are vague in my mind.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, it's approximately, is all—

ANDREW DASBURG: [Inaudible] really not essential.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: [Inaudible.] While I was still in Woodstock—in those days, I guess I was the nuisance, constantly talking painting, and constantly talking contemporary art of the time. The Art Students League had a summer school in Taos—in Woodstock.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: I must have confused the two. [They laugh.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Quite a ways apart.

ANDREW DASBURG: And asked me to teach for two—which I did, for two summers, for them. And during one winter in New York, in a class which was divided between—I think we each had—between four of us, three or four of us. There was Max Weber, there was myself, I think—I'm not positive—that Speicher had a class, and I don't recall the fourth. But we each had about two months. That was—of course, I taught—I was constantly teaching— [laughs]—I guess, everyone that I came in contact with, my enthusiasm—I think you could call me an evangelist at the time [laughs]. That's where my teach—well, Henry Lee McFee and I had a class which we taught jointly and—in Woodstock—small class, perhaps a dozen, for several summers—dozen students. And then, here in Taos, I taught for the university when the summer school would be here. I don't recall the period of time. I think, toward the end, I only lectured a few times.

[00:45:01]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I remember reading that you taught Ward Lockwood, and Kenneth Adams, and Cady Wells. Were they private students, or were they in a class?

ANDREW DASBURG: Ward Lockwood never studied with me.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, he didn't?

ANDREW DASBURG: But Kenneth Adams—when I had the summer school in Woodstock, he was there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: You see. He worked there. And Cady Wells, yes, he studied with me. I think the best that I ever gave Cady Wells was advice. He was a lost young man, like so many well-to-do young men, you know?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: Wasn't sure of just what he wanted to do. He had worked a little at—did a little painting somewhere, perhaps, in Massachusetts, or wherever he was from. I said, Well, Cady—when he asked whether I would give him some criticism, I said to him, Do it for one year, and I think at the end of that time, you will know, and I'll be glad to coach you as well as I can. Well, he very soon went off on his own, and never stopped.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And all these—

ANDREW DASBURG: And did some beautiful things.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Beautiful things, yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: But I—Ward Lockwood was never in a class of mine, nor did I ever give him private criticism, only the criticisms that friend—painter friends—give each other, you know [laughs]?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see, yes. Well, were you instrumental in getting Kenneth Adams out here?

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes, he came here because of my being here. And I think Kenneth Adams—his early work here is the work that I know best. It's indigenous. Of the—mainly, of the people, you know? He lived here in Ranchos [de Taos -Ed.], among the Spanish-Americans, who posed for him. Somehow, I feel that that is the most significant period of his work.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: He—since he's been in Albuquerque, I know he's done painting which is much more proficient, probably, than what he did when he was here. But somehow, the work he did here is the—it's of a historic interest.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: Because it is of the period, it is of the people as the people were then, which, they no longer are.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: A sort of regional art.

ANDREW DASBURG: It was regional. Definitely regional. I wrote a foreword for his catalog, or his retrospective.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I saw that.

ANDREW DASBURG: That is—tells you better than I'm telling you, now, my feeling about it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, did you follow Mr. Adams' work during the time that he was involved in the Federal Art Project, to see how it developed?

ANDREW DASBURG: His decorations, I'm not familiar with.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's—

ANDREW DASBURG: When you say, "how it developed," I did participate in the—doing a job for the Colorado Springs Art Center, in which he did a panel, and Ward Lockwood did a panel, and I did. Because as I said, I wasn't here during the—much of the time that the Federal Art Project was going on. And so, there's very little that I can tell you. I don't know where— Kenneth Adams did do—because I saw a reproduction, I didn't see the original—decorations for, I believe, some post office. It was—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah. I think he did two or three of them.

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes, he did several. But I didn't—I don't know—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That—

ANDREW DASBURG: —whether he painted them here, or painted them directly on the wall—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Cross talk.] I don't remember it—I don't remember.

ANDREW DASBURG: —there. I think they were done here, and probably not large.

[00:50:08]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Then he did—

ANDREW DASBURG: I don't believe he has one in the courthouse, does he?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, no. I don't think so. He wasn't one that—[Cross talk.]

ANDREW DASBURG: I don't think—well, he was here then.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, what effect would you say that these projects had on the artists that you knew during that period?

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, it carried them over through a difficult time, bridged them over. And they did things which they wouldn't have thought of doing, working in that scale. If left to their own devices.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah.

ANDREW DASBURG: And I think they did develop ability.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, do you think the projects gave impetus to the modern art movement in America?

ANDREW DASBURG: I—no, I don't think so. You mean—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, the type of—

ANDREW DASBURG: —what you think of as a contemporary painting? The—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. I mean, the type of [cross talk] thing that you were—

ANDREW DASBURG: No, I think everyone did just what they knew how to do.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: No, I don't think that there was any particular innovation taking place in these—in the work. They're—they can—of a necessity, can find historic realism for the—because most of them deal with some historic period—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: —in the country—the decorations in the post offices. Now, Higgins dealt with the law. And his decoration here has Moses—the one that's at—in the courthouse, you know? Giver of the Law. That may have been the theme they all agreed on.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: But—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, do you think that it made the public more conscious of art?

ANDREW DASBURG: Very possibly, in the rural districts, it did. Yes, in certain places. Howard Cook did a number of decorations down in—I believe, in San Antonio, if I recall rightly. He is—was very closely associated, and he could tell you a good deal more than I can —

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: —because I wasn't here much, and I didn't participate.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you find much resistance in—among the artists of Taos to your evangelism, as far as Cubism was concerned?

ANDREW DASBURG: Oh, you mean—well, most of that was in Woodstock, New York, when—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, more than here?

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes. Yes, we had a gallery there, and on several occasions p—there were a few incidents where people were so indignant they even removed the pictures from the wall. [Laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, is that right?

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes [laughs]. One or two—the Taos Art Association—I mean, the Woodstock Art Association.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: [Laughs.] It's very easy for me to say Taos. It's—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, of course.

ANDREW DASBURG: —in place of Woodstock.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, well, it's—the association is much closer—

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —certainly.

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes. Oh, yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well—

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, naturally, there's a resistance here in Taos, among some of the older men, you know, like Couse and Sharp, who—it didn't trouble them over much.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, it didn't?

ANDREW DASBURG: [Laughs.] No.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. They let you go your way, and they went theirs.

ANDREW DASBURG: Yeah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, we've gone a long way since then. And the—

ANDREW DASBURG: A great deal further, I think. I think that the so-called avant-garde—if it had come into Taos suddenly, as it did in New York in the past 20 years, I think there would have been—it would have been hooted out of town, probably, if shown.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, what do you think about the art of today that is so popular, sometimes called the universal art, without any representational form?

[00:55:02]

ANDREW DASBURG: I don't object to it not having any representational form whatsoever. As

a matter of fact, I'm—feel very sympathetic. But I do feel that much of it hasn't any basic, formal system. That it is—much of it is accidental, and haphazard, and hopeful, you know?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: Gesturing with hope. On the other hand, some beautiful things have been done. But with everybody doing the same thing, why, naturally, there's very little originality, it seems, as I look at *Art International* and magazines. They all look as if all of a piece, practically, as though they've been turned out by the yard, and cut up into desirable sizes. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Yes. Well, do you think that this is a phase that we're going through, and that we're coming out of it now?

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, I don't know whether we're coming out of it. It's inevitable that the one thing you can count on is change.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Fortunate—

ANDREW DASBURG: That's permanent.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Fortunately.

ANDREW DASBURG: As a matter of fact, it's the only permanence I know [laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's true.

ANDREW DASBURG: Is change.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: But, oh, I think much beautiful, original work has been done. But with everybody taking a hand in it, it's like expecting—or, if everybody takes to the violin [laughs]

—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Gets a little monotonous, doesn't it?

ANDREW DASBURG: —with the same universal freedom [laughs]—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah. A little difficult. Well, are there any other comments that you'd like to make, Mr. Dasburg, about your early days, or the—

ANDREW DASBURG: Just one, in regard to what I am doing—or what I think about what I am doing now—is that it's an abstract metaphor of things seen, is what I would say of it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: I feel that work that—for me, at least—that is rooted in my environment—it opens so much more in imagination than just merely mechanical invention does for me. That is, for myself.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: It's possible that I haven't the facility of decorative design. I feel that I haven't, and it doesn't interest me further. I like something which is more dynamic, but always, for me, a point of departure is necessary. What invention comes to me stems from that. But that would be the nucleus of my approach.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: [Inaudible.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I wanted to ask you a little about your relationship to John Marin and Marsden Hartley, when they were in Taos.

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, Marsden Hartley spent most of his time in Santa Fe, but he was here for a while. But John Marin, who loved it, he was here for two summers. The dates, you can easily find out. I think it might have been 1928 or '29, or 1929 and '30, when they were

here. But I already knew Marin in New York, at Stieglitz's 291. And I went painting with him a number of times, and he was interested in fishing. And so, I taught him how to cast flies for top trout. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Uh-huh [affirmative].

[01:00:12]

ANDREW DASBURG: But of course, what interests one most in Marin is his work. He seemed to have the ability to grasp the—what I would call the mystique of his subjects, you know?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: Not the obvious, but those factors which made up the character and the mood of the scene. He would reorganize them in such a way that they were even more vivid—New Mexico in character—than any one particular subject, because they were not literal transcriptions of what he was looking at, but a poet's way of rendering. I don't know whether the term "mystique" is an acceptable one, but it has a significance to me. The—Marin talked a good deal about the law—the law that shouldn't be violated, you know, that a painter should not violate. [Laughs.] That is the poet's law, the law of art—the truth of the thing seen.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: You see.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's an interesting comment on—

ANDREW DASBURG: Hartley, I knew in New York. I knew him in Mexico. He had also had a Guggenheim fellowship, and I was given one at 32, where I saw quite—saw him frequently, when we were both there. And he was a—one of the most sensitive human beings that I've ever known. A beautiful thing brought tears to his eyes, you know?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

ANDREW DASBURG: Oh, yes. He also wrote poetry.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDREW DASBURG: But I was looking at a reproduction just the other day in *Time* magazine. They reprinted—they had four American portraits. You probably saw it. And one of his—of a woman up in Maine, I think.

And he was always able to reduce something to a very simple factor, which seems to have gone out the world, pretty much, today, when you speak of the universality of painting today [laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah. That doesn't seem to—

ANDREW DASBURG: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —have the character that his things did.

ANDREW DASBURG: The what?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I said it doesn't—that doesn't seem to have the character that his paintings did.

ANDREW DASBURG: Well, his paintings have the essence of whatever he did.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Right.

ANDREW DASBURG: I was thinking of a thing that he did outside of Santa Fe, a landscape, which is reproduced in this [book on -Ed.] New Mexico painters, you know.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah. Yes, I remember that. Beautiful.

ANDREW DASBURG: Some amole cactus, and the round mountain, and studded with the

pinyon, you know?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

ANDREW DASBURG: The—in such simple lines, you know, that—I say lines—it's written.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I know what you mean.

ANDREW DASBURG: It'd be written in—he wrote in such simple terms.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Terms. That's right. Well, I'm afraid our tape is just about over now. So, I guess I'll just thank you, Mr. Dasburg, for this extremely interesting interview. And maybe I can—

ANDREW DASBURG: That thing, you know, just sort of freezes when you think—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It does? [Laughs.]

ANDREW DASBURG: —[inaudible] [laughs]—you're talking to a machine [laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, you're talking to me, and the machine is just picking it up.

ANDREW DASBURG: I should have been—if you had had that hidden, you know? If—it'd be very much easier to talk to you, instead of my looking at it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

ANDREW DASBURG: When I see the wheels turn, why [laughs]—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It inhibits you?

[01:05:04]

ANDREW DASBURG: I feel very—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: A little?

ANDREW DASBURG: I feel inhibited.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I—

ANDREW DASBURG: I really [laughs]—my fluency, which I can often get into leisurely—[They laugh.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I think you've been very fluent, and you certainly have given us a lot of very valuable information, which we—

ANDREW DASBURG: Oh, there's so much more I know that—to be talked about—that I can't—you can't bring 50 years of your past, or more, into a—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Into an hour's conversation, can you?

ANDREW DASBURG: —into an hour's conversation. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, we're grateful for what you did, and maybe, I can come back and get some more information some time.

ANDREW DASBURG: All right, do that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Fine. Well, thank you very much.

ANDREW DASBURG: Yeah. It's always in—at the following day that you—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That you think of all the things you should have said.

ANDREW DASBURG: You should have said, yes. [They laugh.]

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]