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Oral history interview with Gandy Brodie, 1965 September 6

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Transcript

Interview

DS: DOROTHY SECKLER
GB: GANDY BRODIE

DS: This is Dorothy Seckler interviewing Gandy Brodie in Provincetown on September 6, 1965. Gandy, we've just agreed to begin at the beginning and that means where you were born, what kind of family, what kind of childhood, why did you become an artist, and when did you first know it, perhaps?

GB: Well, I first knew I was an artist about the time I was thirty but I had already been painting for ten years and the reason that I decided I was an artist at that time was that I met my wife in Florence and she was very encouraging and she bought the first painting of mine that she ever saw for $400 and we immediately went to Spain to look at paintings at the Prado. The problem of being the kind of artist that I would like to be in the kind of world that we live in presents a lot of problems, namely to be true to many loves, the love of the past and the love of the present and the ambivalent love of painting that one has about one's contemporaries. But it's all relative because one ultimately decides that the most important thing and an essential part of life is to be an artist. That means to wake up in the morning and have the painting on your mind so that you either look around at what you've accomplished the day before or look at a reproduction of something that you admire very much, or have consultation with either an older artist or a younger artist than himself. But as long as it's about painting and the joys of painting and the overcoming, or the attempt to overcome, sorrows in painting, namely the insecurity, the inability to have the all-redeeming love for creating love or kind of love with pigment on canvases. I think you'd better ask me another question.

DS: Yes, Gandy. That's a wonderful way of sort of jumping from beginning almost to end in one sentence.

GB: Yes.

DS: Now, we still have a little bit of the middle.

GB: Oh, my family, that's right.

DS: Well, I mean, that perhaps isn't too important unless you think it is important but sometimes things do happen in childhood that have some kind of way of forecasting interest. We might say what were you doing in Florence and then trace it backwards from there.

GB: Well, actually what I was doing in Florence was trying to find out what I was doing in New York when I was a little boy. In other words, I was trying to find part of my heritage there. Which I did, and when I lived in Costa San Giorgio, which is a kind of ghetto and then on the other side of the wall where my studio was that was right on the Castalli Michelangelo and that's where Jocelyn and I had a studio. I was able to, sort of be in the middle, well, I don't know what middle represented, but anyway, we can talk about my family. Do you think we lost some of the tape?

DS: No.

GB: Well, I was born on the lower East Side, oh, I understand now what the middle was. The middle was the middle of the art cosmos as it existed during the late fifties. In other words, I was able to venture to Paris and London and get a glimpse of how American painting was affecting Europeans. And of course at the time I was very absorbed in earlier painting having already experienced New York Painting during the early fifties and feeling that for my own development that I should know something about what precipitated that. And I'm very happy to have spent the years in Florence that I did. I felt then, and I feel now, that it gave me a wonderful sense of the early love for painting during the Renaissance and pre-Renaissance. And so what I hoped to gain was to overcome any kind of parochial attitude, local attitude about painting. Which I think I have overcome. I'm very happy for that.

DS: When you had first seen what was going on in New York before you went to Florence -- when did you go to Florence? What was the date?

GB: 1955. I had already been in Paris earlier. I was in Paris in 1950 and '51. There was a lot of excitement then about American painting, namely Jackson Pollock, and of course it had its relation and roots in European painting, but the Europeans were very, very excited about what was happening in America, at least some

Europeans were. And I think that by being in Europe at that time I was able to get away from the eventual rivalries that were going to manifest themselves, namely French painting versus American painting and all that. That seems to have been all worked out now so that we have a kind of international acceptance of a form, namely pop art. London picked it up just as soon as it appeared in America without worrying about whether American Pop art was better than English Pop art. It's like an international style. We don't seem to have the same kind of rivalry that existed between French painters and American painters during the fifties, at least not in my opinion, I don't know, maybe it existed but I haven't noticed it. I wanted to talk about my earlier roots, my childhood. I was born on the lower East Side of New York, which I have done some paintings of, there was one I can show you. This is a very good painting for us to talk about, it's called Demolition, and we'll be able to trace a lot of my development in the painting. It's a triptych, it's very large and you can see a lot of the things that influenced my painting in this triptych, namely the influence of what has come to be called expressionist tendencies, although there is an attempt to also include the discoveries of Mondrian. And it's a painting about the fall of a city, whether it's about the demolition of the bombings during the war, the demolition of the old city becoming the new city or whether it's an attempt to destroy something that I probably hated when I was a child and now feel very romantic about.

DS: When did you paint, what year would this have been?

GB: I painted it in 1964 and it was exhibited in an exhibition I had at the Saidenberg Gallery in '64 and it's being considered by Billy Rose. He's considering buying it. I'll know more about that in the fall.

DS: It looks as if it would be quite a fascinating painting.

GB: Well, you can't see the color but what would you imagine the color was like?

DS: Well, I would imagine tawny colors, bricky grays, black grays, purple grays.

GB: That's right.

DS: Browns.

GB: Right here there's a big red, blood-red wall which asserts itself but you know how those walls appear in torn-down tenements that when artists look up at them they say that's a beautiful painting. It's the way frescoes in Italy look when they crack and peel and make them in a sense more beautiful than they were originally. I want to talk about the middle of the painting which you can't really see clearly in the photograph because through it one senses a great deal of landscape and it's the kind of landscape one sees when you're approaching a city very, very rapidly and city and country begin to merge. And when you see the triptych there's a sense of that kind of velocity which you may or may not get in the photograph. Do you feel that kind of very, very swift movement? Or do you just feel that the buildings have fallen and what you see is a kind of stasis? Which of those things do you feel?

DS: Well, I must admit that unless you had called my attention to it I wouldn't have thought of it that way, but it's quite possible that with the color that it might, certainly there's a great deal of activity in the movement of the surfaces it fills so that it might represent a certain merging and changing aspect. Right in this area, this is the....

GB: Center.

DS: This is the center that you were thinking of?

GB: Yes.

DS: I'd like to pursue this a little further. The associations that you have with your early life on the Lower East Side, particularly visual imagery and that sort of thing that might have still remained with you as you began painting.

GB: Well, ultimately I don't think that the lower East Side of my childhood is different than the Lower East side today except that it's called to my attention now that on Orchard Street the people who are trying to sell things have learned to speak Spanish and can call their wares by Spanish names, while they happen to be Jewish. So I find that very interesting because it manifests a change which is kind of sociological change that happens to a lot of people and which has happened to me too. That I can see my change in their change. But apart from that it all remains the same. It's the Lower East Side and although the place where I used to go to the movies as a little boy and had a candy store next to it, that is now a Jazz club. So that again is a change, but it's very much part of my observations in the world and the kind of thing I try to articulate in my painting. So in a sense everything changes, but everything remains the same.

DS: When you were a child were you involved, as many artists turn out to have been, either with music or with drawing or did you see things that were very rich to you in terms of -- well, even, let's say, religious ritual or any kind?

GB: Yes, I painted all those things, as a matter of fact. And for a time I really wanted to avoid painting anything that looked like that because I was sophisticated and realized that that kind of subject matter isn't necessarily the matter of painting. But I became drawn to it anyway, especially when I lived in Williamsburg, and I painted a picture there called City Anguish which is the forerunner of the Demolition painting, and also kind of deliberate scratching out of Cubism. It's a painting that relies heavily on the imagery at the Williamsburg Bridge which has those cross girders and I used the crosses in it to probably cross out all the memories of sorrow that the city is bound to create. And I remember talking with Meyer Schapiro about it and of course he pointed out that although it was very anguished for me it was very, very inviting to people who had never experienced New York and its fantastic variations and possibilities and that to them it's not anguish at all, it's a haven.

DS: What more specifically was the anguish? Was it specifically of your childhood or of New York as a whole?

GB: Well, I think it's not any different than the particular kind of anguish that people experienced in the 20th century. I used to think that the artist suffers because this thing isolated and independently, but I don't believe that anymore. I think that it's just magnified as a result of this having to articulate it in some way in painting or writing or making a film, or any of the other things that an artist might do. But that all people suffer anguish in our time and that for some artists it becomes necessary to articulate that anguish as a kind of catharsis. So that it became necessary for me to express it and I express it as a part of my work rather than to avoid it's presence. I've also admired many painters who've done those things, namely Van Gogh, Soutine, and earlier, I like the Giotto painting of The Kiss of Judas very much.

DS: Gandy, listening to you I get -- I have a sense of what you are now, and what you had as a child, and there's a gap somewhere between the lower East Side and your being in Florence.

GB: Well, there's always Greenwich Village.

DS: Well, before you knew you were an artist, what were you involved with? Where did your schooling end? What was it concerned with? What were you headed for then?

GB: Well, my adolescence was a kind of jazzy one. I was very much involved with the emergence of be-bop. I mean I wasn't a musician, but I was around those people, I mean those people in the sense of people who created it, and I was a friend of Billie Holliday's who was a very important influence on my life and I admired her tremendously as an artist. I hadn't begun to paint then. But I just loved the way she improvised.

DS: Well, you better tell the tape a little bit about Billie Holliday for those people who aren't sophisticated.

GB: Oh, Billie Holliday. Well, she was the foremost singer of our time. She had a scarlet armature and very religious sense of self-assertion, and she had talent. So all those things merged into a phenomenal instrument.

DS: Was she associated with a group? Or was she working alone at that time?

GB: She was always independent of other musicians and singers because of her phenomenal gift, but I think that she was a person who admired people like Lester Young and Count Basie and his orchestra. She also liked Duke Ellington very much. These were the people she would talk to me about. And subsequently I got to know some of them too. And some of my paintings of jazz merged, or rather fused, in my mind at that time. And during the late fifties I painted a picture of Miles Davis, which is in the Hirshhorn Collection. Did you ever see that?

DS: No, I've never seen the Hirshhorn Collection.

GB: Well, I thought you might have seen that painting. It was bought here in Provincetown in 1960.

DS: I think that was the year I was in Europe. I do remember some jazz subjects that I saw at your New York gallery.

GB: Durlacher Brothers.

DS: Yes.

GB: Yes, Mr. Chrysler owns that picture. I think he has it in his home in New York.

DS: So this was when you were in your twenties or later twenties, I assume.

GB: Yes.

DS: And the interest in the be-bop and in Billie Holliday's own expression involved you in a sense of, how did this work from jazz and music into....

GB: Well, that first year that I was in Provincetown, in 1950, I painted a trumpet player that Hans Hofmann bought.

DS: Just with no schooling whatsoever? With nothing in the background?

GB: Well, you can't say I didn't have schooling because I have always loved painting and looked at it very, very carefully from the very, very beginning.

DS: Where did you see paintings when you were a child for instance?

GB: Well, I think I saw my first Picasso, in reproduction, when I was about sixteen. But that's as a child.

DS: Well, that's all right.

GB: And it was The Girl Looking into the Mirror. And that was a very great fascination for me. I've come to dislike the painting very, very much. I mean I don't know if I dislike it, it looks very hard and it still holds the same kind of amazing invention that it did when I first saw it. What I don't like about it is the kind of rigidity. It's funny how something can look so great early and then look so terrible later on. I don't know if it looks terrible, it looks....

DS: The point is what it set going for you at that time.

GB: Yes, but I must say that the person I really got to emulate much more is Paul Klee whom I saw at that time.

DS: You saw reproductions or....

GB: Reproductions. No, I had never been to the museum.

DS: Did you know Meyer Schapiro? Were you studying with him at this point or did that come later?

GB: No, I met him when I was about 23 or 24 years old and his first reaction to me was very negative, at least I thought it was negative because I brought him three paintings to look at, of which he liked only one and that in a kind of condescending way. But through the years he's become a great friend and a great admirer and helped me to the kind of recognition I have, which is a serious recognition as opposed to the kind of commercial recognition that I suppose I would enjoy in other ways, but don't have them.

DS: That came a little later in any case. I'm afraid I shifted you away too quickly from Picasso and Klee. The qualities in Klee that....

GB: Oh, we could say about Picasso and Klee that Picasso enjoyed that kind of commercial recognition where Klee had very great difficulty selling a picture, even in his last years. He couldn't get $100 for one of those beautiful watercolors that now costs as much as $15,000 and $20,000. It's amazing that there should be such discrepancy. I suppose that's the way it is.

DS: Klee was a very subtle artist for a person with relatively little, up until that point, background to have responded to you so intensely. It's interesting that....

GB: Well, as a matter of fact, I distrusted modern art completely. I remember being absolutely contemptuous about Chagall. I didn't like him at all, especially the floating figures and I've mellowed that kind of contempt into something other, but I still don't like his paintings. And I didn't get Mondrian at all in the beginning and now I love him. I just adore his paintings, especially the paintings on the triangle and the late ones, the more difficult the better.

DS: Do you mean the triangle or the diamond?

GB: The diamond shape. I call that -- what did I call it?

DS: The triangle. Well it is two triangles you might say.

GB: Yes, I think the beauty of it is that ultimately it resolves itself in the triangle rather than forcing itself to be a triangular shape, like so many of our younger abstract painters who use ends as means.

DS: Now would you like to clarify that a little bit?

GB: No, I don't want to go into that.

DS: All right.

GB: As a matter of fact, it would be ridiculous to start tearing down other egos in order to build up my own.

DS: Well, in any case, I think we've filled in a bit of the way you came to painting and your interests. Did you get some kind of grant that took you to Florence?

GB: No, I've always done that all on my own. The only grant I've every had is the Ingra-Merrill Foundation. They gave me $5000 and I was able to paint for a whole year without worrying about....

DS: What year was that, Gandy?

GB: One of the recent years, I guess it was 1962 or '63.

DS: That's fine.

GB: Jocelyn will know. I don't remember which one it was exactly.

DS: You got to Florence on your own. After having sold some paintings? Or had you been doing other work at that time?

GB: I sold a picture to a wonderful woman in Chicago named Victoria Sperry. She now lives in Los Angeles. I arrived in Florence and I had about a hundred dollars in my pocket. And I went immediately to Jocelyn's studio. [SIDE TWO TAPE ONE]

DS: You were saying that you had gone directly to Jocelyn's studio. Then did you know her?

GB: No, I had never met her before. I had a slip of paper in my pocket and Meyer Schapiro had told me to call her. She was the first person I went to when I was in Florence.

DS: What's her name.

GB: Jocelyn's?

DS: Yes.

GB: Levine was her maiden name. And well, she introduced me to everything in Florence. Of course she knew everything, she knew practically every stone.

DS: She had been living there for some years?

GB: Yes.

DS: She was painting, I take it?

GB: Yes, she's ultimately going to do a book on Thomas Mann because they had a correspondence and she's been preparing material all these years and I hope that she'll be able to get around to it in the very near future. Of course her interest in my painting has always been a source of very great encouragement to me. She's very critical and has always been able to choose the best painting of a group and keep it for herself. So she has a good collection of paintings.

DS: Were you married over there?

GB: Yes, we were married at the Piazza del Michelangelo, not, I'm sorry, at the Palazzio Vecchio. We very often went to Piazza del Michelangelo. There was a very beautiful cafe overlooking the Arno across from Fiesole where we thought about building a house, but never did. We live in Vermont now, did you know that?

DS: Yes, you had told me this winter that you did. At that time then you went on to Spain. And then did you come back to this country eventually?

GB: Ultimately yes. Because, well, we came back for me to have exhibitions. Every time I had an exhibition we'd come home and then we'd go back which caused a great deal of rehabilitation and new studios. I remember Hans Hofmann once asked me, "Don't you find it difficult having to start all over again?" I said, "Well, that seems to be the way life is, one always has to start all over again a lot of the time." But in recent years, since my boy was born, we haven't been moving around quite as frequently, and I often go to New York but it seems that I'm traveling alone these days.

DS: In Vermont do you live out on a farm? Or is it a village or town?

GB: Well, it's not exactly a farm, maybe it once was. It's at the edge of a village, it's called West Townsend. And there's a view of the mountain and there are horses in pasture, and cows, and dogs, and cats, and bluejays, and robins and everything else that one expects to find in a bucolic setting. It's very beautiful.

DS: And you don't miss the city too much?

GB: Well, I have great ambivalence about the city. I actually decided that the things I like best in the city are the Metropolitan where I frequently go to look at early paintings, and I like the Frick Museum very much, especially to look at the Corots and the Rembrandt Self-Portrait, it's an amazing painting. And I like Greenwich Village. It's quiet down there during the day. And if I want to feel haunted, there's the lower East Side.

DS: Some artists find it very difficult to paint away from all the, you know, the....

GB: The scene.

DS: The scene, yes. The action in the art world and so on. And I was interested in your ability to apparently do without it or at least with only occasional....

GB: I don't know if it's a question of doing without it. I think actually I have to paint. So if I get up in the morning wherever I am I paint, that's all. It's as simple as that. If I were in Sao Paulo or Calcutta I'd get up in the morning and paint. I probably will go to those places some day because they interest me, mainly Sao Paulo because they have a great museum there and probably some interesting painting going on in that city, I don't know.

DS: To get back to your work again, when you were in Florence at that time, when Jocelyn was looking at your paintings, what would she have seen? What kind of painting was this?

GB: Well, it certainly wasn't American painting in the sense then, say, the people that I admired here.

DS: Who did you admire here?

GB: Well, I was friendly with Franz Kline and liked his paintings before they became fashionable; he gave me one of his paintings. And I knew de Kooning when I was much younger. Incidentally he bought a painting from me this year.

DS: Good. It's very, you know, I think it would make you feel very good when an artist likes your work, particularly an artist of de Kooning's stature.

GB: Yes.

DS: So that you had known, you were, in other words, circulating more or less in New York with a group of the....

GB: Yes, but I felt that if I were going to accomplish anything I'd have to find out about something other than the present so that I could have a future.

DS: Had you been through things like Cubist painting at all at this point?

GB: I avoided it completely I think. I was never particularly drawn to it. I've come to like it better in recent years. But there's something about it that I find very cold and very dry.

DS: But the Klee work, the idea of this....

GB: Oh, Klee, well, that's something else.

DS: Yes, had that entered into your painting then?

GB: It still is in my painting very, very often. It's very rooted and it's very difficult for me to love and hate them at the same time, which is naturally what I have to do in order to evolve what he left untouched. And I think the way I go about doing that is to try to relate them to a kind of macrocosm, so to speak, while he was more involved in microcosm.

DS: That's very interestingly put. Here we have Jocelyn still looking at paintings in Florence and seeing what you had done to break away from the vogue of the artists that you did respect and like. What kind of work were you doing? The same things your doing today -- landscapes, still lifes?

GB: Oh, well, I painted one picture that is in the collection of a man named Sherry in Peekskill and his name is, what is his name? His name is Fred, Fred Sherry. And that was a much more articulated painting than the

Demolition painting, particularly in the sense that it was formed within the boundaries of a very, very obvious and sloping triangle, which I have eliminated now and the triangle in my painting is more in the realm of suggestion than assertion. But one of the first things that Meyer Schapiro ever pointed out to me was the beauty of the triangle that I do in painting. It's kind of a summit. And it's also a very expedient way of dealing with the architecture of the painting because I've never been very good at perfection so that the kind of thing I get closest to is the suggestion of a perfection rather than a perfection, which interests me more. I'm not interested in perfection. I don't think I ever could be perfect.

DS: I guess Picasso feels the same way although he's not one of your close kin.

GB: Well, we are very different temperamentally I think. I think he's a very great master.

DS: Do you have the same feeling that he mentioned in speaking of this, that painting was like a diary, his diary of whatever happens? In other words, you live your life and your painting is what you live?

GB: I think my painting is more a diary of myself in relation to other people and things that I admire. I think they include other people's diaries as well as my own. In other words, I think what I paint might not be necessarily part of someone else's diary, but that it could be in relation to the thing that I've isolated to paint as a part of a kind of universal experience. I think it's a very important consideration in the making of a work of art that it should be objectified and not just subjectified.

DS: And, of course, you have, as far as I've ever known your work, painted things that were around you. For instance, here in Provincetown and the first painting I saw when I came in the studio was Sea Gulls and the sort of underpinnings of a duck with sea gulls. A most interesting spatial arrangement, of course with your triangle here very subtly stated as I recall. Beautiful, large paintings. But the point is that these are the things that you now see right here in Provincetown, and then we have flowers in vases and pilings.

GB: Well, I could call your attention that those are not vases. They're rusted cans.

DS: Excuse me. I remember now, because I knew when I was in the other room that they were cans and looking here, of course, I'm not as aware of that, but that's interesting. And I remember you used to use milk bottle cartons one time.

GB: Yes, well, I get very addicted to particular objects and never relinquish them. I'll probably be painting rusted cans the rest of my life. It becomes thematic and also challenging. What I try to do is paint one that's better than another. It's like a dream sequence in that one dream superimposes itself on another so that you have a kind of hoping to find the most beautiful suggestion of existence possible with all the possible interferences and also with a consideration of simple existence. Which is a very important consideration in my work.

DS: You've been able so far to avoid any kind of ideological painting.

GB: What do you mean by that? I think I know what you mean, but I'm not ....

DS: Well, painters today in some of the recent movements seem to be carrying on polemics with each other about art history and what should be going on.

GB: Well, I'm conscious of all those things.

DS: You're conscious of it, but your painting isn't a conversation with other artists or movements or directions.

GB: Well, I'm conscious of all other movements. I feel that even these paintings of rusted cans, for example, might relate to the junk sculpture of recent years or even to pop art because what is it that Jasper Johns cast? It was a can, it was a beer can.

DS: It's just that yours are romanticized, very beautifully romanticized but not in a pretty way. It's 20th century romanticism, not 19th, for instance.

GB: Well, I used to be very worried about that, but I've actually overcome being fearful of being romantic because I'm just not concerned with classical painting. I think any significant art that emerges now can carry both polarities. They are equally classical and romantic although I admit looking at them now that they look very, very romantic. What do you think? Do you think they're as classical they are romantic?

DS: Well, classical would have to be defined in a particular way. There is a sense in which they're serene and contained and brooding and in which the relationships are very contained and yet active. I don't know, it's a balance of elements and classical in the sense that the agitation is not allowed to make their agony something that takes you outside the painting. It remains a sort of reverie on agony, perhaps, rather than a direct motor explosion of any kind.

GB: Yes, I guess that's what distinguishes them from Soutine's paintings.

DS: Yes, I feel in that sense they're more classical than Soutine.

GB: Much more, yes.

DS: And so it requires an enormous kind of relevancy in that sense anyway.

GB: Yes. I'm so sorry that we have to -- I can't tell if it's the content, or just liking to hear the sound of my own voice or your voice or the fact that we're talking about my paintings. Why don't we talk about other people's paintings and see if I like that sound. I mean it might be interesting.

DS: All right. Yes. Go ahead. We have some time. What's on your mind the most?

GB: About painting?

DS: You're up here now, you've seen a lot of painting, or perhaps you haven't seen, but I feel that you've been around anyway.

GB: Well, fortunately for the first time in my life I feel very secure about feeling insecure. And it's always jarring to see the work of artists whose paintings you just don't like because they have some kind of meretricious connotation or you feel that they could be doing a lot better, or if they can't be doing a lot better that they are pompous about what they do badly, and all that kind of sour grapes sound. I mean, by that specifically, that when an artist discusses the work of other people he inevitably finds something negative to say. And so I've said it. I think it's a beautiful thing that people need to spend their lives with paint and canvas, no matter what they want to express. And that although it's been very difficult in recent years for me to find any kind of economic security so that I'm always at the mercy of collectors, or critics, or friends, that I do love to see a beautiful painting. Of course, the beauty of painting as it existed in, well, let's say, the impressionist period, is something that I still regard as very important and have incorporated some of that in my painting. Now the subjective painting of the past fifty years you know, cubism and after, I like it but somehow there's something about it that is not moving. I don't mean not moving in the sense of movement, because it has that, I mean moving in the sense of movement about it and I've always wanted to take that and mix it with emotion. I think that this Demolition painting does that, to use the discoveries of Picasso and Mondrian in an emotional way. As a matter of fact, there was a young painter at that exhibition who looked at this picture and said, "You've done a very strange thing. You've combined the work of Mondrian and Soutine." I thought that was a very nice compliment.

DS: I should think so. I'll have to see the painting before I can....

GB: Make that kind of judgement.

DS: Yes. But it's interesting to see it even in dark and light.

GB: I think it is one of the more significant paintings I've ever done. Upside down in a strange way, it takes on more of a feeling of the dissonance because in painting right side up I ultimately found a harmony. These are all musical terms, but since I'm not a musician, I have to be a musician in painting.

DS: The Mondrianesque aspect should have taken you through this in the sense of many equilibriums playing through each other, and I assume that the color would make that even more important than it is already evident in the grid and the sort of continuous play of painterly elements moving through a grid of almost squares that are broken into various ways, or even have parts, diagonals, and suggestions of light curving shapes, but all following the brush. The use of the brush itself has certainly been very eloquent in your work. The feeling for paint is one of the things about your work that has always deeply attracted me. It can really pull me right across the street, as I told you before to see the Sea Gull of yours in a window of a gallery. Something about the touch, it's very difficult to even locate it, usually I'm not as much interested in that quality in other paintings but in yours it happens to be very expressive. How have you developed that? What is it about your work that makes it so interesting?

GB: I think the most interesting thing about that is the fact that I don't think I'm a natural painter and that I have to struggle very, very ardently to assert the particular image that I want to discover. And it's never the first image although people have said that I have an ability to draw and draw well. I'm never satisfied with my first encounter with an image. It's as if I want to see it from every possible vantage point until I surrender completely to it and it creates me rather than I create it. So I think that ultimately a painting that creates its creator is a very significant object int he world in that it allows a history, an aesthetic history and it also allows a personal history in its evolution. It's as if all the problems of the world could be solved. It's a poetic thought, by having the world itself create the people in it rather than the people in it create the world.

DS: That's a very provocative concept.

GB: I don't know how provocative it is. It's just the way I feel about the workings of a 20th century work of art. That there's so much significant art in the world that has been created by people that I feel now art should have a chance to create people rather than people create art. Do you think I'm being witty?

DS: I think you're possibly witty enough, but I do feel that this is the natural expression of your suspicion that the tides of subjectivity have about run out.

GB: Yes. I don't know that they've run out, Dorothy, I think they have to objectified. And it's very difficult domain in that there's a lot of vested interest in keeping the kind of status quo, subjectivity where it is. On the other hand, I don't know, certainly there must be other artists in the world that feel exactly as I do about the nature of the way art could be or could go, in that there have been so many wonderful antecedents so that the future of art is certainly promising in its richness. I'm sure glad I had a chance to talk to you about this triptych because it's given me a new way of looking at it. Not seeing it upside down I'm sure of it's properties than I've ever been.

DS: Will this be in your coming exhibition?

GB: No, well, I'm supposed to have an exhibition in Boston and it might go there. Do you know Jerome Stoneman?

DS: No, I don't.

GB: At the Obelisk Gallery, yes.

DS: We haven't talked much about your shows. Of course, you're at the Durlacher Gallery.

GB: For years.

DS: And also this important exhibition of your work coming up in, did you say in February? At the Jewish Museum?

GB: Well, they're only talking about that so I think it's a little premature to say when it will be. It should happen within the course of the next two years.

DS: And that would be a retrospective?

GB: Yes.

DS: It will be interesting to see that, all the various stages of your work. And I imagine there will be a very strong continuity nevertheless from things of yours that I've seen.

GB: Yes, oh, yes. That might not be such a good thing from the way I'm battling with a painting in my studio right now. I hate to think that I've painted all these years and still end up with the same way of making some decisions unless, as I said earlier, suddenly out of the canvas will pop some kind of monitor who will create me and say, well, this is the way it should be. [END OF INTERVIEW]