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Oral history interview with Elizabeth  
Saltonstall, 1981 November 18

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Elizabeth Saltonstall on 18 November 1981. The interview was conducted at Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

## Interview

ROBERT BROWN: Today is November 18, 1981, an interview with Ms. Elizabeth Saltonstall in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, Robert Brown, the interviewer.

Perhaps we could begin by your talking about when you remember you really had your first interest in art.

ELIZABETH SALTONSTALL: Oh, I remember that very well. It was on the back piazza of the big house. And we had an old aunt who always spent June with us, Miss Carrie Billesley [phonetic]. She was quite a good watercolorist. And on a hot June morning, she would have me out on the back piazza with her watercolors and my little sketchbook and some flowers. And I probably was about maybe eight or nine years old. I have an idea that she did most of the ones that were any good. But anyway, my interest was sparked right then and there.

MR. BROWN: You liked doing it?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, I loved it. And of course, in those days, spontaneous children's work was not so well known, and people weren't interested in it. A little still life was set up for most children, and that's what they did.

MR. BROWN: And you were taught then to look very closely and draw very carefully?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I don't remember much talk about that kind of thing. But I think I learned to handle a brush in a good way. And of course, watercolor is a very difficult medium. But in those days, they had children using the transparent watercolor, whereas I think that that thick poster color came a little later. This would have been way back in the -- 1907 or '08, somewhere around there.

MR. BROWN: With the poster paint, you can cover up?

MS. SALTONSTALL: You can cover up and work much more freely. There's more of it. You don't have to work hard with the brush and a little cake of paint.

MR. BROWN: In their watercolors, you had to calculate beforehand very carefully?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, you did. You did.

MR. BROWN: Your aunt, was she a good teacher?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. She was what we might call an adopted aunt. She was a great friend of my grandmother's. And when my grandmother died, Aunt Carrie came and spent June with us.

MR. BROWN: Did your parents encourage your excursion into watercolor?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes. Oh, they encouraged me in anything like that that I wanted to do. And I think that was one of my special bits of good fortune, to have a mother who was so keen about all those things. See, when I was seven years old, I had my first trip abroad. That would have been 1907. And before we went, my mother bought a great many of the old-fashioned Perry pictures, which were reproductions in black and white of all the famous paintings. And we made a scrapbook of all the wonderful paintings that I might see in London and Paris.

Well, now, nowadays of course, that is done so much. I mean, children go abroad at the age of two in a backpack. But me, at the age of seven, it was quite unusual to go, in 1907.

MR. BROWN: Sure. And did you look at those Perry pictures with your mother?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, I did.

MR. BROWN: Studied them beforehand?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, we really looked at them. And we pasted them in a scrapbook. And it was a wonderful beginning to looking at paintings. And also, when I was a little older, she took me around to all the exhibitions in Boston. She herself was not a -- she was not a painter. She was just a very -- interested in many things, music and art and reading. She was a great reader. So I had what I feel was a wonderful background.

MR. BROWN: Do you remember some of the things you saw in Europe that particularly stood out?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I think I remember funny things that a child would remember, you know? Like the bees on the velvet curtain in Napoleon's throne out in Fontainebleau and things like that.

[LAUGHTER]

MS. SALTONSTALL: But I certainly remember very clearly things in London. I was in London then a little longer than Paris. And I remember my feelings being so hurt because my father took me to the Wallace Collection. And they wouldn't let me in because I was too young, even with him. And I can remember now the smile on the face of the guardian that refused me entrance. And I thought he was making fun of me. I think he wasn't; I think he was just kindly and sorry. But my feelings were dreadfully hurt that I couldn't get in there.

MR. BROWN: Do you recall some of the exhibitions your mother took you to in Boston when you were very young?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I can't tell you exactly, but I know they were of a period of Frank Benson and DeKalb and Paxton. And let's see? Who else would there be?

MR. BROWN: Tarbell, I think?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, Edmund Tarbell.

MR. BROWN: Did you get to meet any of those painters before you went to art school yourself?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No. I met Frank Benson, but I had already been a year or two in art school. I didn't know him well, but he did paint some people in my family, and I met him then. And such a fine person. But I never met the others.

MR. BROWN: You said in the summers you continued to paint as a young girl, as well.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes, I did. I used to have private lessons with people on the Vineyard, with a Miss Jackson.

MR. BROWN: Was she an art school product herself?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, she was. I think she was either Scotch or English. And she lived on the Vineyard and she had classes. And I used to go down from West Chop to Vineyard Haven on my bicycle. I probably was about 10 or 11.

MR. BROWN: Was that watercolors?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, that was all pencil, which was very good discipline. And I enjoyed it, too.

MR. BROWN: Would she again take you out to draw?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, no, we went out. I can remember going down by the steamboat wharf and Seamen's Bethel and down in that area and doing one skiff drawn up on the beach. And there's nothing harder to draw than a skiff, in perspective -- very good discipline.

MR. BROWN: And was she quite exacting as a teacher?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I don't remember too much about her criticism. She was -- yes, I would say her standards were quite high. But I don't remember her being very severe or anything.

MR. BROWN: Would this art education continue winters as well? Or were you simply in a regular [inaudible]?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I went to the Windsor School after I was 12 years old and graduated from there. But they had a very good art department. And at that time, there was a Miss Alice Morse, who used to take us to the museum one afternoon a week to draw. And we could choose anything we wanted. And of course, the museum was a much quieter, less hectic place than it is now -- very peaceful.

And I did a lot of things from the textiles. We took our crayons. We usually, everybody took colored crayons and really worked hard and really studied those animals and birds on the various textiles, you know. Well, then, Miss Morse, when she left Windsor, finally went to the Museum School and taught in the design department.

MR. BROWN: Was the aim of your studying textiles to learn good design?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I don't think so. I think it was just pure pleasure in finding something that you really wanted to draw and carry out in colored crayons.

MR. BROWN: Would you work in a rather large format?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No. No. We used to -- there were about five of us that went. And we worked mostly on one of those 12-by-18 drawing cards. Got our little stool. We used to walk from Windsor over to the museum in the afternoon after lunch. No buildings in the Fenway -- nothing but high reeds as tall as our shoulders. Not allowed to go alone, through all those reeds. And of course, there was no hospital, there was no -- is that the Notre Dame school, Catholic school, on the corner of --

MR. BROWN: Manuel?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Manuel -- maybe that -- that wasn't there. You didn't find anything until you got to Simmons College.

MR. BROWN: Windsor was more or less by itself then, at that point.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, it was. So you went a sort of cross-country over to the museum.

MR. BROWN: And you remember copying or drawing from textiles. Did you draw also possibly from the plaster casts?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Not until I was in the Museum School.

MR. BROWN: That came later?

MS. SALTONSTALL: That came later, yes. But I think I may have done a little of that in my later years at Windsor, because I had some casts. And after Miss Morse left, there was a really very fine teacher at Windsor, Miss Mary Gaye. And she was a whole education in herself.

MR. BROWN: Was she?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: In what way do you mean?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Both in painting and in history of art and -- well, she'd traveled a great deal. And she was just a walking supply of work and humor and wisdom. She was a wonderful lady.

MR. BROWN: Was she possibly from the family of the painter?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I think she was. I'm not sure about that. And I don't think it was direct. She had a brother, who I think was quite an outstanding professor at Harvard. And she would -- her brother-in-law was Charles Bittinger, whom you may have heard of. He was very well known for doing interiors.

MR. BROWN: Did you, at Windsor, do any oil painting?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, a little bit.

MR. BROWN: What about sculpture? Did they have you do some modeling?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, they didn't have it. They didn't have it there. I did do a year of sculpture at the Museum School, because I had -- let's see. I went to France for a year in 1920. I had had one year at the Museum School, drawing from casts only, which is not what they do now. So then after a year in Paris and doing a lot of drawing, I didn't seem to want to come back to a second year of drawing from casts. In those days, they drew two years sometimes, from casts. So I went into the sculpture class. And I had Charles Grafly and William -- I guess he's William Allen. He was awfully good.

MR. BROWN: Frederick Allen?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Frederick Allen, yeah.

MR. BROWN: He was very good?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, he was very good and very kind. Mr. Grafly was, of course, awfully good, too, but scary.

MR. BROWN: I've heard that. Was he gruff?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, quite severe and quite gruff. And he would come from Philadelphia, I think only about once a month. And we had Mr. Allen once a week, in between times.

MR. BROWN: When you were through at Windsor, were you pretty much set on going to the Museum School thereafter?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I was. But the war was still going on, World War I. And I think Ms. Windsor felt I was too young to go to the Museum School, which I would now say was crazy. But in those days, I guess it was right.

MR. BROWN: Did she think you needed more travel or further education?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No. I don't know what she thought. But anyhow, I felt myself that, with the war still going on, I should do something to prepare myself to do some kind of reconstruction work, hopefully. And Ms. Windsor had started a small school called the Windsor Training School. And it was there in Longwood near the present Deaconess Hospital. The building is torn down now. But all sorts of subjects were taught, which might be useful in reconstruction work such as teaching English to foreigners, sociology. We had one very fine course at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], and that I liked.

MR. BROWN: What was that in?

MS. SALTONSTALL: That was in biology with old Professor Sedgewick, who of course was a very distinguished person. And then we had home nursing and domestic.

MR. BROWN: Were these fields that you thought you might apply here in the States or in Europe after the war?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I hadn't got that far in my thinking, of course. The war was almost over, not quite. It got over while I was there. And I hated every minute of that school -- hated it. It just wasn't up my alley at all.

MR. BROWN: By then you did know?

MS. SALTONSTALL: By then I knew I wanted to go to the Museum School. I remember coming home one night from that school and sitting down at the dinner table and saying that I was not going back to that school. And my father, who was a very wise and very gentle person, said, "All right. Don't." Well, of course I went back the next morning. But the next year I went to the Museum School.

MR. BROWN: Was it very large? How big was it when you came the first year? Can you describe it a little bit.

MS. SALTONSTALL: The Museum School? Oh, nothing, nothing like it is now. It was built around the two courtyards. It was the old building, and built around two courtyards with the studios all giving out on the sort of walkway. And it was a very friendly kind of place. People would emerge from the studio and have a little smoke and a little chat with somebody across the courtyard. And people ate their lunches in odd places. It was a very - the atmosphere was nice.

MR. BROWN: You saw teachers and students intermingle very easily?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Not much with the teachers.

MR. BROWN: Not much?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No. And some teachers -- but some teachers were very natural, easier to talk to, than some of the others. There was one named Ralph McClellan, who taught the drawing from casts. And he was a very, very understanding person. I've never forgotten how nice he was to me because I never drew easily.

What would like, another pillow? There are an awful lot of them there. Stuff them out.

I never drew easily at all. And I must have had some conversation to that effect with him, because he said, "Well, Frank Benson didn't draw easily either," and at that time Frank Benson was pretty well known, and I felt much better.

MR. BROWN: [LAUGHTER] Was McClellan -- how did he go about teaching this? Would he spend a lot of time with each pupil? Or give you a little leave, let you work on your own for a day or two?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, of course he, like the others, only came -- he may have come -- they may have come twice a week and not --

MR. BROWN: I see. They set up things for you to do and then --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, of course, I only had him in the casts drawing. I don't remember doing anything like a set-up still life in the Museum School. I might have for a bit of homework or practice, but that wasn't the way it was done.

MR. BROWN: So much of the first year was doing cast drawings?

MS. SALTONSTALL: It was all doing cast drawing, and sometimes for two years. I didn't do it for two years, but I think there were those who did.

MR. BROWN: Did you find it fairly tedious drawing from a cast, in the beginning at least?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, no, because I was -- I cared sufficiently about doing it and getting ahead. So I didn't find it tedious. But I think after my year in Paris I would have, because there I drew from models.

MR. BROWN: Who did you study with in Paris?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, that year I studied with a very fine painter, but she certainly wasn't -- she wouldn't be well known in this country at all. Her name was Louise Saint, S-a-i-n-t. And she had her own studio and she had three pupils -- myself, a French woman, and an English girl. And she always had a model. And it was, again, a very personal sort of thing.

MR. BROWN: Was this painting in oil?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, that was largely drawing, drawing from life.

MR. BROWN: Drawing.

MS. SALTONSTALL: There wasn't any painting in oils. And the latter part of that year -- I forget why I had to change. Either she went to the country or something. But then I went to the Julienne Studio, which was another matter entirely.

MR. BROWN: Yes, I would think so -- fairly larger.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Much, much larger. You sank or swam as best you could. And it was difficult because there were two different teachers who taught the drawing, life drawing, with pretty different ideas. And I don't remember whether one came one week and one the next, but I think they must have; I don't know how I would have had them, otherwise.

MR. BROWN: Do you remember who they were?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. One was Ari Royer, R-o-y-e-r. And he, I would think, because I remember his own work was a little more of what you might call the Boston tradition -- rather exact and quite beautiful in technique; whereas Gillone [phonetic], I would think, was a much freer approach to drawing. But I was really pretty well mixed up, between the two.

MR. BROWN: This was a fairly frustrating time for that reason? Or were you very excited by the different approach?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I didn't feel frustrated, but I think I felt worried.

MR. BROWN: Uncertain.

MS. SALTONSTALL: There was an old model there that we had had at Mademoiselle Saint's, and she was a very old, old timer. And I've forgotten some of the outstanding people she had posed for. But I think one day she knew I was kind of upset and in trouble, so she came over and put her hand on my shoulder and told me not to worry. Her name was Carmen, and she was very well known as a model -- pretty old, I think, as we had her.

MR. BROWN: Well, most of the students at Julienne were men, young men?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I'm just trying to think.

MR. BROWN: Quite a few Americans had gone there, and were still going to Julienne, weren't they?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Funny, I don't remember. No, I would say -- see, it was pretty much after the war. And some of the men, I think, probably were not around so much; I don't know. There were men there, and girls. And then I used to go to the sketch class in the evening at -- I think I went to Carlo Rossi (phonetic). Of course, the Grande Chaumière was going, too. But I think I went to Carlo Rossi. And there, you just worked on your own.

MR. BROWN: At Louise Saint, was there daily criticism or did you go there every day?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, I went every day.

MR. BROWN: And would she be there all the time?

MS. SALTONSTALL: She was always there.

MR. BROWN: So that was quite a contrast from what you'd experienced at the Museum School?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes, quite a contrast.

MR. BROWN: Was she very gentle in her suggestions?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, she was. She was very gentle, and it was all very frank. She had a funny little pug dog, and she had an elderly mother, and she'd have her copper teakettle on the stove and produce a hot drink in the middle of the morning. Oh, dear, I went there, I'm not quite sure, I believe 1967. And I hadn't been back for over 30 years, and the whole building had been torn down. Everything was gone.

MR. BROWN: At Julienne, were there weekly criticisms from Royer?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I think it was weekly. I don't think it was twice a week. At that time, Madame Julienne was still alive. And she used to sail in sometimes and see how everything was going.

MR. BROWN: Did she come in as a business manager or an active part?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I remember her as being quite old. And I think she just probably kept her interest in it. I don't know whether she was managing it in any way.

MR. BROWN: Now, the criticisms at Julienne, would your work be tacked up?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No.

MR. BROWN: Did they display any bit of it?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No. I've never been in a French studio where they did that. Usually, everybody gathered around the person that was criticizing, in order to benefit by everybody's criticism. Funnily enough, I don't remember that at Julienne. I remember that at André Lhote's several years later.

MR. BROWN: He would move from one person's --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah, and the whole crowd would move with him.

MR. BROWN: That could be rather daunting, couldn't it, when the day came?

MS. SALTONSTALL: It was simply terrible, terrible, especially as he did not like Americans. And Americans were out of favor that year because our exchange was very favorable. So I have a lot of French friends and have been very fond of individual French people. But I have quite a few experiences that were disappointing with French people over there. But André Lhote really disliked the Americans. And I didn't make any French friends in that studio. I made friends with other nationalities, but I don't remember making any French friends that year.

MR. BROWN: Your earlier year there was a different matter?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, quite different.

MR. BROWN: What was student life like after hours? Did you go to museums?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was it very convivial?

MS. SALTONSTALL: You mean in 1920?

MR. BROWN: Yes, when you went.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I didn't have any real student life then. I knew people there. I was with a friend who was studying music and singing. So we did things together. But I was also concentrating, really concentrating with a lesson every day on French diction. And I had a perfectly marvelous teacher, who became really like my French mother. She was a wonderful woman. And she was an actress who was a great friend of Raizenne [phonetic] and had acted with her in a good many plays.

And after Raizenne died, Susannah really became -- she was a member of the Schez Ditric [phonetic] company in Paris. And I went to Belgium with her when she played in Brussels. And she became a very, very close friend, as well as my diction teacher. And I went to her for one hour every afternoon, so there wasn't too much time. And I had quite a lot of French to study in between.

And of course, I keep wishing, at that age, I was only 20. And I didn't know anything about -- or not enough about Picasso and Matisse. They weren't so well known then. Of course, I was practically around the corner from Gertrude Stein. But people didn't -- she wasn't as well known to a person my age, certainly, at that time.

MR. BROWN: Do you remember any exhibitions or any other things that did happen during that year?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, dear, I don't. And I probably could refresh my mind a good deal with the big kind of scrapbook I kept. I don't remember. I've been to so many exhibitions since, I'm afraid I don't.

MR. BROWN: Then you came back for the fall of 1920 or so?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, 1921 -- I didn't come back till the summer of '21.

MR. BROWN: It was the end of school?

MS. SALTONSTALL: That was when I think I went into the sculpture class at the Museum School.

MR. BROWN: What other courses would you have that year at the Museum School?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I would have been in Henry Hunt Clarke's design class. And I was in his class for a number of years. And I think he was one of the very best teachers I had there. In fact, the things I learned with him have stayed with me longer than a good many other things I got there.

MR. BROWN: What, briefly, did he teach you?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, he taught a lot about color and design in itself. But then I think, either for one or two years after I got out of the Museum School, I went back to him. He had a class in composition. And it was a wonderful class. And there you did tack up what you had done, and you worked in between classes. And he usually gave you some subject, and I really learned a great deal from him.

MR. BROWN: What were the principles, if you might call them that -- in design and composition -- that he stressed, as you recall?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I think it was all the perfectly usual things of the best possible use of space, and values, lights and darks, balance, all those things that would come into good composition.

MR. BROWN: And then color?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Color, yes. And that was where Ms. Morse did a lot with Mr. Clarke, on color. He would give you color problems, using certain combinations of color in certain ways.

MR. BROWN: Did you work from setups and still life?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, never.

MR. BROWN: This was just from memory?

MS. SALTONSTALL: It was really memory or abstract design. But the word "abstract" didn't come into it much in those days. But it would be an abstract design.

MR. BROWN: But in fact it was?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, of designing something in a certain shaped area like a circle or rectangle, so forth.

MR. BROWN: And did you find it pretty engrossing?



MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I did. And that certainly is something that has stayed with me.

MR. BROWN: And what was his technique of teaching? Leaving you on your own for a bit, setting up a project and then, until it came time for criticism, you would be on your own more?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. Yes, you were pretty much on your own.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. For how long would you have had design with him at the school, for a year or two?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. I would say a year or two in the school, because I think probably I did not do that when I was in the oil painting portrait class.

MR. BROWN: Did that come in the third year?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes. That came in the third or fourth year. And I also, in order to get my Museum School diploma, I had to do some dreadful things like two years of perspective with Anson K. Cross. That was not one of my favorite things.

[LAUGHTER]

MR. BROWN: Two years, huh?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I shortened it down to one year. I was perhaps a little cagey. I think the first year of it would have been the year I was in France. So then I went into the second year of it knowing nothing and being pretty much lost. And I remember he looked down at me from the stage of the auditorium in the museum, and he said, "Were you in this class last year?" And I said, "No, I wasn't." He let it go at that, but I got one of the oldest, other students to tutor me so that I caught up on year one without going to Mr. Cross for two years.

MR. BROWN: Was that in part a lecture?

MS. SALTONSTALL: It was a lecture with awful things to do, with a ruler and measures and so forth, in between times.

MR. BROWN: Gosh. As you think about it, what do you suppose the purpose of it was?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I suppose if you wanted to go into drawing architecture -- and I wish I could. I'm a very bad hand at it now. But I don't know what it was.

MR. BROWN: But most of those students there were going to be painters or illustrators, no?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, you couldn't get your diploma if you hadn't taken that.

MR. BROWN: Oh. Was it known --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, he invented a dreadful glass with two little glass eyes at the top that you looked through. And I've forgotten what those two things were supposed to do.

[LAUGHTER]

MS. SALTONSTALL: But anyway, it was not my favorite class.

MR. BROWN: What was he like? Was he a friendly person? Or was he rather severe, formal?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, he was a real old pedagogue.

MR. BROWN: You had to bear with that?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yep.

MR. BROWN: But you did then in third or fourth year begin oil portrait painting.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And how was that done?

MS. SALTONSTALL: One redeeming feature of Anson K. Cross was that I think in the spring he did want you to do a few landscapes in oil. So I remember going out in the Fenway and doing a few. But that was all. But then I went into the portrait class.

MR. BROWN: Who had that? Who taught that?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, wait a minute -- Mr. James.

MR. BROWN: Alexander James?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. It's William does the really fine portraits, isn't it?

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, this was his brother Alexander.

MR. BROWN: Did you take to that?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I liked painting the portraits, yes. He was sort of difficult to talk to. He was rather stiff. I think he was a pretty good teacher, but he wasn't the easiest person. At some point along the line, I was in Mr. Hale's life class. I must have been in that the year after I did the sculpture.

MR. BROWN: And how was he as a teacher?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, he was something else again. He was a character.

MR. BROWN: What do you mean?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, he was a law unto himself. Has anyone ever described his looks to you?

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, he looked like a big, old, gentle walrus, sort of lumbering. And he wore spectacles. He was always kind of looking over at you. And he was quite scary. I remember him saying to one rather timid girl, "Do you have to close your eyes when you look at the model?" And she'd say, "Yes." And he said, "Well, don't." Just like that.

[LAUGHTER]

MS. SALTONSTALL: But of course, his style of teaching -- and I think it wasn't his alone in those days -- emphasized technique, very heavily. So that for a person like me, who might set up a drawing that was rather badly done, and then to try to work it up into a beautiful technique, as I think back on it now, was not good. But I think it was probably the way people taught in those days.

But you sharpened your charcoal to a pinpoint, and then you tickled the shadow and tickled it and tickled it until it turned over into the light. And it took hours. And there really wasn't any way of learning -- deep down, the way of drawing, from life, when you did that.

MR. BROWN: Because you were so absorbed that --

MS. SALTONSTALL: You were so absorbed in technique that you didn't think about the real essentials, and took - I think maybe still I'm learning that.

MR. BROWN: This was Hale's method?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. It was. And I'm sure there were other people that would have taught that way, too. Mr. Leslie P. Thompson taught the other group. And I think his teaching was pretty much the same.

MR. BROWN: Now, this as yet was not painting. This was --

MS. SALTONSTALL: This was still drawing, but drawing from life.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. What about quick sketches from life? Did either of them -- or did Mr. Hale teach that at all, the 10-minute sketch?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, I don't remember anything of that. And it should have been. There should have been.

MR. BROWN: That's what you mean by the overall.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: In France, did you have that?

MS. SALTONSTALL: In France, you see, I had that at Carlo Rossi's with no teaching. But at least I had it.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MS. SALTONSTALL: But I had to seek it out myself.

MR. BROWN: Whereas under Hale, it was so detailed that you sort of worked inch by inch?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, you did.

MR. BROWN: Did you do an overall rough sketch first?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, of course, you did do an overall drawing of the figure. But some of mine were pretty bad. The people that drew easily and were much more gifted than I was would have a pretty good setup first on which to put all this technique. But I was very weak in drawing, and it was not, I think, the way that I should have been taught.

MR. BROWN: When did you move into painting, into oil painting? About this same time?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, about the same time. I'd always played with it a little bit in the summer. And I didn't really move into serious oil painting, I guess, until the year I was in the portrait class.

MR. BROWN: Did you like oil painting?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, very much. But I would not want to be a portrait painter. It's too many -- too many difficulties, perimeter difficulties with the people. And I would always be worried about my model being tired. And I don't think I would want to do it.

MR. BROWN: Did you have to carry the portrait paintings to a very high degree of finishing?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, you did. You did. Again, it was sort of a carryover from the drawing class. Well, I think the model changed each week. But you had to really -- I think it changed every week. But you had to really do as finished a job as you could.

MR. BROWN: And how was the teaching of portrait painting? How effective do you think it was? How did the teacher go about it? Was that Hale?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, that was James.

MR. BROWN: James, okay.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah. There was somebody else in there, too. Bosley -- Frederick Bosley. He was the one that I started with. I think it was pretty good, but not inspiring.

MR. BROWN: You've mentioned summers. During your summers at this time, did you study with any particular people?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, just with a friend. I studied with Don Mayer [phonetic] at West Charlton and on the Vineyard with Grace Badjern [phonetic] who finally married a person in Treadwell. And she was a very good artist. She lived down there at West Charlton, and she went to New York, and she made quite a name for herself. She was quite good. So she took me on, I guess, when I was about 15 -- 14 or 15. And I used to paint with her.

MR. BROWN: And this continued while you were at the Museum School?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. I always did a little on my own in oils.

MR. BROWN: Would you and she go out and paint?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, yes, um-hm.

MR. BROWN: That was quite a contrast, then, from being in a studio in a classroom at the Museum School.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, it was. I did a little outdoor painting in Paris with a man named Efbac [phonetic]. And he would take us down by the Seine, along with all the old critters down there under the bridges.

[LAUGHTER]

MS. SALTONSTALL: When people used to lean over the parapet walls and talk to us. And, oh dear, I wish I had known then a lot more to bring to those experiences.

MR. BROWN: They were pretty vivid, at least?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Well, your Museum School training -- you were one year in portrait painting or two years in portrait painting and oil painting?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I think I was two years.

MR. BROWN: And would that be the culmination of your education at the school, the oil painting?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I think so. But while I was in the Museum School, you see, I started teaching two days a week over at the Windsor School. And I remember feeling very embarrassed because Mr. Hale's daughter was then a pupil in the Windsor School. Fortunately, I did not teach her over there, but I would have felt mortified, where I was not his best pupil by a long shot, to be over there teaching his daughter, Nancy Hale.

But I taught with Ms. Gaye. And again, she was better than any teacher's college I could go to. And the other person over there I taught with was also -- I've just been so lucky with the people that I've had to do with -- was May Sutton, the poet's mother, Mrs. Mabel Sutton. And she was a wonderful person, too. And I learned a lot from her in the way of design and crafts, which I never really kept up much. But I did learn a lot with her and had to take over her classes when she took a sabbatical.

But Ms. Gaye -- I taught with her and profited by the way she went at teaching, which was certainly very personal and very creative. I learned a lot from André Lhote how not to teach.

MR. BROWN: And Lhote you went to after the Museum School?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes. I went to Lhote the second year I was in Paris, which was 1926 and '07.

MR. BROWN: And what did you learn not to do from him?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I learned not to rake my students over the coals; that you can get much more by being understanding and kind than you can by simply pulling down everything and not giving you anything to go by, which is what he did. Anything I got, I got from his criticisms of other people, not really from what he said to me.

MR. BROWN: It was very -- it was like a cold rain, was it, his harshness?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I'll tell you how harsh he was to me. He saw my easel with my painting down in the middle of the room. He might have been right up close, you know, and everybody in front had caught his eye. And he say, "*Ah! Qui e le miserable, qui a fait ca?*" That's no way to teach. And that's what I said. "*C'est moi, Monsieur.*" And then I don't remember what he said, but I guess he probably lambasted it.

MR. BROWN: Yep.

[END OF TAPE, SIDE A]

MS. SALTONSTALL: Because I have given you a side of him that was sort of gruff and funny but he was really a very kind person and he wrote me the nicest letter once; the year, I think the year that I was in his class. He didn't write me at the time. But that spring, a Dutch friend of mine came over to stay with me, and she was an art student, too. So I wrote to him and asked him if I might bring her to the class while she was staying with me. And at that time he wrote me a terribly nice letter, mentioning my father and so forth. And I saw that really very, very nice side of him, very tender.

MR. BROWN: But in class, he was very direct.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, he -- yes, very direct.

MR. BROWN: Would you go so far as to say just possibly he was eccentric at all?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Maybe a little bit. I remember somebody at the back of the room sent up an address of a hairdresser or a barber or something, and asked everybody to push it along till it got to him. Well, he fooled them. He didn't pay any attention.

MR. BROWN: [LAUGHTER]

MS. SALTONSTALL: But I remember one of his sayings that keeps coming back to me. "Lights fat, shadows flat." That was one of his pet sayings: "Lights fat, shadows flat."

MR. BROWN: Very good.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Um-hm. Little things like that do come back to you.

MR. BROWN: So you were a teacher then, even before you graduated.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Teaching each year at Windsor?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And what were you given to teach at the beginning? Did you assist the other teachers?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I think I was more or less an assistant with Ms. Gaye. She had the students drawing from costumed models. And so we did quite a lot of that. And what else?

MR. BROWN: Were many of the girls apt to go on to art school?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I wouldn't say many, but I think some. And I had quite a number from my teaching days at Milton Academy who went on. Wendy Snider McNeil is one of them.

MR. BROWN: Did you stay at Windsor, teach there at all, for some years?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I taught there for four years. And then I -- what you might call defected over to Milton Academy. They asked me to come. They were their prime rival, of course. And I went to Milton thinking I'd stay two years, and I stayed 37.

[LAUGHTER]

MR. BROWN: Was there an art instruction department there when you went?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, but it wasn't much.

MR. BROWN: It didn't compare with Windsor at that time?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, I don't really think it did. I think it had moments of being quite good, but not much in the girls' school. They had a little bit more in the boys' school.

MR. BROWN: So you perhaps were brought in to strengthen them?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I don't think that was their idea. I think they brought me in to fill in for somebody that gave out. And that person -- well, I think she may have stayed one year after I got there, because I only went out two days a week then. But then I went three days a week for the rest of the time I was there. But I went so much that they finally considered me full-time, because I went a lot of extra time, and I never left till nearly six, and I had a lot of extras.

So by the time I left, it was I who had the assistants to help me; rather than the other way around. And the art department grew a lot.

MR. BROWN: Did you -- fairly early on, you mentioned studying with André Lhote and how harsh he was.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And so very early on you had learned to be gentle and coaxing?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I really did.

MR. BROWN: And praising where you could?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, absolutely. And I think it's terribly important. Once in awhile you'll find somebody that needs to be taken down a little bit. But very rarely. I think if you just have a friendly personal caring approach, you get so much more.

MR. BROWN: What would you do in cases of incompetence? Very gently lead them away from --

MS. SALTONSTALL: From doing anything?

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. Or just bearing with them as they were --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, in the younger classes you just had to bear with them. But I only remember clearly one boy that I think was hopeless. A perfectly nice kid, but he just sat there. And I really think he was sort of hopeless. But in all those years that I taught there, I can't think of anybody else that I couldn't get something from. But of course, in the older classes, I didn't have them unless they really cared about coming. And so that's an advantage.

MR. BROWN: But this was when? About when did you go to Milton?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I went to Milton in 1928. And I stayed until 1965.

MR. BROWN: Did you continue during these years in the '20s going abroad to Europe?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I did. I went quite a few times in the summer.

MR. BROWN: To paint?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. Well, I took the biggest amount of luggage you could imagine. I wouldn't dream of it now. But I used to lug canvas and stretchers and everything. And I had a great friend who was a painter, too. She lived in New York. So she and I would set forth. And we went to Corsica one winter. And halfway up the mountains, the car broke down. And this funny little old man took all the insides of the car out and laid them on the road. And I remember our looking at each other and thinking, "Here we are, these two of us, not knowing very much, coming all this way to paint, with the car taken apart on the top of a Corsican mountain. Well, we got ourselves together.

MR. BROWN: You were very adventuresome. You were willing, searching to paint anywhere.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, actually, it's kind of interesting the way I went to Corsica because in those days people didn't go there very much. It wasn't until after the war when it was used as a rest area for the -- for our troops that it became so well known. And of course, when I went, the Maquis were still supposed to be hiding behind the bushes. I never saw one, but it was John Whorf who really said, "You ought to go to Corsica." And so he had been there. He was in the Museum School at the same time I was, but not in the same class. And he used to paint pictures behind the model's screen, and I think they made it easy for him to depart. I don't know about that, really.

MR. BROWN: They made him [inaudible]?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I think he -- well, I don't believe he wanted to stay there very much, anyway.

MR. BROWN: Was he a free spirit?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, he was kind of a free spirit. There were quite a lot of free spirits around there.

MR. BROWN: Did you get to know John Whorf?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I knew him fairly well. And we had fun. And he suggested the Corsican idea. And I just thought it would be fun to do it.

MR. BROWN: Maybe here's the point where I could ask about some of your fellow pupils at the school.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Who were some of those that particularly you know or you continue to --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I was thinking about that a little bit last night. And I seem to have gotten involved with some quite interesting, but quite difficult characters. And there must have been people there that have since gone on. But these are the people that I got so involved with, it seemed to take up my time.

And one was a woman named Sonya Masel [phonetic]. You won't see anything of hers now. She was really gifted, I think. With a very difficult life -- she was Russian, and really no money. I don't know how she ever went to the Museum School. And I'm afraid she is now either in a state institution or else she's died. But she really went off the deep end after awhile.

Then the other person I knew really pretty well was an interesting man named Joe Presser [phonetic]. I don't know if anybody has spoken to you about him. He became quite a protégé of a professor at Smith College, whose name I cannot remember.

MR. BROWN: A man in the arts, at Smith?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, he was. A much older man. And Joe was a really very -- quite a powerful artist. And I think after he left -- he again was what you might call a free spirit and a kind of difficult character, but fun, too. And I saw something of him in Europe, because he finally went over to Europe to live and study and paint on his own. And he was in Belgium the summer that I was in Bruges. And I remember going on some sketching trips with him. We would take a third class train and go off into the country and paint -- draw, usually.

But he did some really very powerful drawings of those characters that I was mentioning, along the Seine. And somewhere I've got some of those.

MR. BROWN: Did he continue then to paint?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Then he continued. And he taught. I don't remember where he taught. He taught both in New York and, I think, in either Baltimore or Philadelphia. I think then he went back to Paris, and I'm sorry to say I think he committed suicide at the end.

MR. BROWN: This would be in the '30s or the '40s?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, it was probably just before World War II. I lost track of him then. But I really had quite a good deal to do with him. Then I was -- I knew very well Blanche Brink. And she was one of the teachers at the Museum School in the education department, and a very fine person, with never enough time, money, or physical energy to do much of her own work. But she was gifted. She did a great deal of teaching. And I shared a studio with her for a good many years. Not a living studio -- she lived there, and I went in from here at Saint Botolf Street in the old studios that were pulled down to make the more new highway. They were wonderful studios.

It's interesting that my mother thinks that she posed for this portrait up here for an Italian who was here one winter only in one of those studios. Margaret McKean Sargent had one of them, and George Luks used to come in. They'd have a jolly old time. I used to hear them, but I didn't know them.

MR. BROWN: You didn't know either of them at that time?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, I just knew Margaret Sargent to say hello to. But I never met George Luks. And the other person there was Ms. Mary Bownik [phonetic] who was a good sculptor. And then Leonard Klaus [phonetic] was downstairs.

MR. BROWN: For years you and Ms. Brink had --

MS. SALTONSTALL: She and I, yes. But we fixed it so we didn't really work together because she was teaching in several different places. So she was out all day. And I was away three days a week at Milton. But I used the studio constantly.

MR. BROWN: What would you use it for, finishing up oil paintings?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I did some oils there. And for awhile I had my lithographs down there and did several lithographs during the winters while I was there.

MR. BROWN: Now, approximately when were you at the Saint Botolf Street studio? In the '30s, the '40s?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I think I took it the year I came back from France, after that year with André Lhote. And I think I took that studio in 1927, the fall of 1927. And I gave it up -- let me see. I must have given it up around 1941 or '42. And Ms. Brink, she became ill and she had to give it up, too. So then I just fixed up a room in the house over here, which -- where I lived.

MR. BROWN: And thereafter you didn't bother with the Boston studio?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, I didn't.

MR. BROWN: We talked one other time about your going to Europe with your cousin Nathaniel Saltonstall.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. I did.

MR. BROWN: Was he already -- became, of course, a collector and so forth. Was he already by 1931 collecting or very involved in the arts?

MS. SALTONSTALL: He was not doing much collecting then. But he was very involved because, you see, he went to the MIT architectural school. And I can't remember what year he graduated from that, but I think he must have already graduated in '31.

MR. BROWN: Well, I would think so. Did the two of you share an awful lot of ideas?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. We did. A lot. That was the fun of it. And we always said that we went over to paint for me, and to look at architecture for him. But we sort of did it together. I don't think he did any sketching. But I can't remember what he did while I sketched, because we did everything pretty much together. He may have made some small sketches.

MR. BROWN: You said to me that he was perhaps your biggest inspiration.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, he was. There was no doubt about that. He was so full of enthusiasm.

MR. BROWN: What were some examples of things he inspired you with?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, I don't know. He just made me feel I'd better keep at it. But I remember one day he came out here. And I pulled out a whole set of toadstool watercolors that I had done on the Vineyard. And he kept saying, "Why, I've never seen these! Why haven't you shown me these? Why, you ought to show these." And you know, he would go on like that and it all ended in my having them framed and having a show. I had two shows of it. But that was the kind of thing, he'd sort of push you and needle you, you know.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MS. SALTONSTALL: And he might say some awful old thing was good, and then you'd think, well, maybe it was good.

MR. BROWN: Did you trust his judgment?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I did. I really did. Yes, he had a very fine eye. And he wouldn't have said anything he didn't really feel.

MR. BROWN: Did you begin exhibiting in Boston in the '30s or so?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I think I did. I know I used to exhibit with the Boston Independence.

MR. BROWN: Were they a fairly loosely structured group? I've heard about them.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, they had quite a good board of directors. And no, I don't think it was very loosely structured. They didn't have -- they just had one big show a year. But as far as their organization was concerned, I think it was very well structured. I was on the board of it for quite awhile.

MR. BROWN: Would you submit work to a jury or how did it go?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, it was a free-for-all. So that their shows of course were quite big, and they hung them alphabetically. I always used to be hung next to Margaret Sargent, and my work was so different. But I don't know when. Let's see. I must have -- well, I painted in Ireland in the summer of 1935. And pretty soon after that, I had a one-man show at the Grace Horn Gallery. So I guess I would have begun exhibiting in the 1930s.

MR. BROWN: The Grace Horn Gallery was a very forward-looking one, wasn't it? It was modernist.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. It was an awfully good gallery. Grace herself was so interested in all our artists. And then Gayton Whitmore, who worked with her, was so -- he was awfully nice, too. And of course, he ran the gallery and had his -- it was really his own gallery with her name after she died. And he moved over to Newberry Street. She used to be in the old Trinity Court building.

MR. BROWN: Both of them had -- knew art. They had good eyes?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes, they sure did.

MR. BROWN: The Society of Independent Artists -- you would have exhibited there at the beginning of the '30s, too?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I did. I have to go into the public library and try to help them identify some for them.



But all of that seems like something on another planet now.

MR. BROWN: Where were their exhibitions held, different places? Or did they have --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, they were in different places. The one that -- the one I think they started with was in the old barn on Joy Street. You could still know the horses had been there.

[LAUGHTER]

MS. SALTONSTALL: It was quite an aroma. Then I think at one time they may have been in the old Boston Art Club. I'm not awfully certain about that, but I think so.

MR. BROWN: Were the Society's exhibitions quite well covered by the press?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was this considered a rather important event?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, it was. I've got quite a lot of clippings from that. Oh, I'm not sure that we didn't finally end up in Jordan Nash [phonetic]. But I may be mixing that with the Jordan Nash show.

MR. BROWN: It sounds as though in the '30s that there were quite a lot of exhibitions of these up-and-coming artists. But on the other hand, you've told me when you went abroad with your cousin in '31, you were particularly talking about what became the Institute of Modern Art. [Inaudible]

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, it was in that -- yeah, it was in that -- some of it, we began talking about how that should happen.

MR. BROWN: He felt there was still plenty of room for exhibition of contemporary things.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Despite the fact there was a Society of Independent Artists and a couple of galleries.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: It wasn't nearly enough, in his opinion.

MS. SALTONSTALL: It wasn't nearly enough. And I think that -- the first building that I remember, the Institute of Contemporary Art, whose name was not that to begin with --

MR. BROWN: Modern Art, I think it was, or something.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah. And I think they felt they were sort of an offshoot of the New York one, when the branch was started. The first building I remember was in Nat's mother's house, which she gave to him to be used for the museum, when she moved out of it, on Beacon Street. But I think there was a show in Cambridge at the Fogg Museum before that, that Nat was really instrumental in. Now, that's where I'm so scared of saying something that isn't --

MR. BROWN: Well, people could find that out by -- what do you recall his saying to you in Europe? What does it boil down to? What did he have in mind?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I'm not sure that it had gelled to that state.

MR. BROWN: But he had some ideas that he was talking about all the time?

MS. SALTONSTALL: We just threw ideas back and forth. And I don't think it had really gelled. But in that Cambridge show, of course, there were -- well, there were people like Gauguin and Van Gogh and the French painters that hadn't been shown really as much around here.

MR. BROWN: Did he and you feel that Boston really needed much more of a showing than it was getting?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I think so. I think so.

MR. BROWN: Was he a bit annoyed by the conservatism?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I don't think he was annoyed. But I think quite often he was rather interested in -- I think his tastes were really quite wide, quite catholic in taste. I just think he felt there was room for something more.

MR. BROWN: So this was by no means a rebellion or anything on his part?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No.

MR. BROWN: Or on that of the others?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, I don't think so. I think it was more building up. And I think that he was really very interested in backing the younger people if he could, as he quite quickly developed into a collector. I think he cared a lot about backing younger people.

MR. BROWN: Did you follow him in that respect at all? Or you were aware of what he was doing?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I was aware, certainly, of what he was doing, yes. And I couldn't be a collector myself, but I was always terribly interested in what he got and people that he was backing.

MR. BROWN: Who were some of those that you knew of and that he backed, or that he encouraged in their careers? Do you recall some of the people?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, the people that come to my mind right off are people that were not even painters. So I'm not sure. I don't feel as if I were quite at liberty to mention them. But perhaps -- how confidential is this? Do you think it's all right to mention?

MR. BROWN: Certainly.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, I think he did a lot for Bernstein. And Boatwright [phonetic], I think, is it Henry, the singer?

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MS. SALTONSTALL: I think he did a lot for him, too. But he never would have told me that. But I just know it.

MR. BROWN: But individual painters that might be represented in his collection -- he would have in that fashion helped them, too, right? I would think. [Inaudible]

MS. SALTONSTALL: I would think so, too. He would collect them, but I don't know -- he would help them certainly the way he helped me, with tremendous enthusiasm.

MR. BROWN: Now, on the other hand, the Institute of Modern Art, I guess, is never to have had a collection. Did he discuss that, whether it was going to collect or simply exhibit? As we looked at it, we realized it had no collection. It simply exhibited.

MS. SALTONSTALL: I don't remember discussing it with him. But I don't think he felt that they would have a collection. I don't know whether he felt that it would get so big that it would be out of hand in collecting and space-wise and money-wise. I don't think he would have gone into that.

MR. BROWN: As you saw it developing, what would be your comment on its impact on Boston, say, when it began in the mid-1930s?

MS. SALTONSTALL: On his?

MR. BROWN: In Boston, in art circles. Did it have quite an impact, the Institute of Modern Art? Did it get a lot of attention?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, I think it did, probably somewhat limited because you know, Boston is pretty conservative, or was. I think it's grown out of it a lot. And I think the years that it moved out into that building that Nat designed, I'm sorry to say it's not one of his best -- out there on the --

MR. BROWN: On the Charles.

MS. SALTONSTALL: -- along the Charles. I think that the Institute really lost some ground out there because people couldn't get out there easily. I think you had some quite interesting shows, but I think that was not one of its high periods.

MR. BROWN: Were you ever in any way formally involved with the Institute or with any --

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, I never was formally involved with the Institute. I just kept along with it. I never was formally involved with it.

MR. BROWN: Now, while these 37 years you were teaching at Milton Academy, would this give you -- did you still have a bit of time for your own work?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, it did. And that's why I liked it -- the terrific push of the three days out there, because then I had two or three days for myself. And in those days I think I always sort of worked best when I had that kind of challenge. And then I was doing lithography, you see, and that was something that I could go back into more easily than the wet-oil painting.

MR. BROWN: When did you take up lithography? Or had you always been doing it since school?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, no, I took that up very special. I took that up the year after I had been to Europe with Nat. And over there I made a lot of charcoal drawings. I didn't try to paint that year. I took all my drawing materials, and I made a lot of charcoal drawings in Norway. I loved doing it. And then the following summer, I had a lot of trouble with my back, so I went on with that kind of thing in Nantucket.

Then I thought, "Well, if I'm doing all this drawing, why not take -- do one of the graphic mediums where I can really develop it on a plate?" And I didn't know a thing about lithography. And I picked out from the back of the *Art Digest* an advertisement of the George Pierce Ennis School in Eastport with Stow Wengenroth teaching lithography. I'd never heard of Stow Wengenroth. I didn't know anything about anything. But I thought "That's what I'll do."

So I hired a little house up there in Eastport with a friend of mine that had traveled. We took it. And there I was, starting lithography with Stow Wengenroth, who probably even then was one of the best lithographers in the country. It was the only summer he taught, and it was a wonderful summer.

MR. BROWN: Did he have a pretty good setup there?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, we did not have a lithographic press. We had an etching press. So the pressure wasn't quite right. And there were only five of us doing it. It was myself and Bessie Crayton, who is no longer living. A man named Ed Shultneck [phonetic].

MR. BROWN: Yes, Edmund Shultneck.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Do you know him?

MR. BROWN: Yes, I know of him.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Do you? Is he still living in Eastport?

MR. BROWN: I don't think so.

MS. SALTONSTALL: I thought somebody told me that he had gone up there, of all godforsaken places. And the other person that was there, that I know much better, and his name has gone right out of my head. Yes, Steve Dehanis [phonetic], whom I'm sure you know of.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SALTONSTALL: And another man named Arthur Heldbeg [phonetic], and I never heard of him afterwards.

MR. BROWN: And Wengenroth?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Wengenroth was teaching us.

MR. BROWN: And what would you do? Would you go out and draw from nature?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah, draw from nature and then come back and learn how to transfer my drawing, do whatever I want on the plate. And we did not have stones. We learned on a zinc plate. And then we would run the thing through the press, and learned all the steps of what you do before you print, with all the acids and so forth. Well, it was a wonderful summer.

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

MS. SALTONSTALL: Perfectly delightful. Didn't say too much, but delightful and went right to the point. He knew just exactly what you should do, a great help in the printing. And he'd run the thing through the press and look like a poker-face before he'd pull up your print. People always do, you know. It's such a breathtaking moment when you pull your print up off the plate.

[LAUGHTER]

MS. SALTONSTALL: But he was great fun, too. And I kept up with him until he died a year or two ago.

MR. BROWN: Was he a very gregarious person? I didn't meet him.

MS. SALTONSTALL: I wouldn't call him gregarious, no.

MR. BROWN: Did he have many interests, or was he more interested in --

MS. SALTONSTALL: He was pretty bound up in lithography, I think. But I think he would have always loved anything in nature. He did some beautiful, very exact paintings of flowers and birds just before he died. He had a show at Darlem Richards [phonetic], I think. I was astounded because I had never seen anything like that of his. And his lithographs, I think are just outstanding.

MR. BROWN: And this was about '32 or so?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. That was 1932. And after that I was really hooked on lithography.

MR. BROWN: Did you get a lithography press?

MS. SALTONSTALL: I never owned a press. So I used to get my stone in New York from George Miller, which is where Stow Wengenroth got his. And then I would send my stone by railway express to New York and go myself so as to be there with George when he printed. And I did that up to two or three years ago, because George Miller's son, Bernard, took over the studio. And Bernard Miller's son is working with him.

MR. BROWN: So it continues.

MS. SALTONSTALL: So it's quite a nice family thing.

MR. BROWN: You would do several stones or a stone?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, it took me all winter to do one stone, the way I work.

MR. BROWN: And then you would take some rubbings from it as you went along?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, no, I --

MR. BROWN: Until you found it just the way you wanted?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No, I didn't have to do that. I made such a careful working drawing before I started that I knew pretty well where I was going.

MR. BROWN: By then you were getting into exacting drawing.

MS. SALTONSTALL: I certainly was. I was going back to the Museum School days.

MR. BROWN: The very thing that you had not liked or that at least had been your weak point when you were in school.

MS. SALTONSTALL: That's right. The only thing is that I had everything pretty well nailed down. I had the composition that I wanted, and I had all the details that I needed, so that I was well supplied.

MR. BROWN: So you practically could predict the outcome when you got --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Almost, yes. The last few lithographs I did, I didn't do quite that way. I did a little more freely in my thinking, and didn't have such an exact working drawing. So I could make more changes. I'd like -- now I wish I could work more freely because I can't see to do it anymore. You see, I've got this trouble with my eyes, so I had to give it up, which I'm very sad about. I suppose if I worked in a splashy way with touche ink or something like that, I could do it.

MR. BROWN: Was Miller a good person to -- did he take very close interest --

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, marvelous, yeah. And sometimes I would actually work on the stone after I got there. And he would give you -- he would never tell you what to do. But somehow, you knew from something he said it would be a good idea to do it.

MR. BROWN: But that's critical, isn't it, in printmaking? The technician, such as Miller, to advise the artist -- is

that very important?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Because they know things, the behavior of the medium?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yeah. It's helpful. And that's why I'm glad I learned to print with Stow. Of course, you don't print well until you've done thousands of them. But at least I learned how to do it. I couldn't do it now. I mean, it's quite a complicated thing.

MR. BROWN: But you did do it [along with painting].

MS. SALTONSTALL: I did do it that summer -- yes, I did. Um-hm.

MR. BROWN: What in painting was your main forte, watercolor?

MS. SALTONSTALL: No. I've done watercolors, and I sort of like what I do. But I really prefer oils. I like it.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned earlier John Whorf. Was he a classmate, more or less, at school with whom you kept in touch to some degree?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes. He never painted in the same class I was in. I only remember him doing his own thing behind the screen. But I used to see him quite a bit, and I saw him outside and at the Grace Horn Gallery because, of course, he showed there a great deal.

MR. BROWN: The reason I asked is because, wasn't he quite -- had quite a prominent career?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes, he did. He certainly did.

MR. BROWN: He was very prolific, wasn't he?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, he was very prolific. And of course, he was very much criticized because his work, every now and then, resembled somewhat Winslow Homer or resembled -- who were the other two?

MR. BROWN: Sargent perhaps?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes, Sargent. I suppose you would call him a mimic. And yet, he would fight that off, that criticism.

MR. BROWN: What was your opinion of his work?

MS. SALTONSTALL: Well, you couldn't help being sort of excited about it. It was so vibrant. It really was strong and vibrant. I own one of his, which I'm sorry to say is in the cellar, which I think was his own way of working. It's a very dark thing of Paris -- a Paris street with a gaslight. I mean, if I had it on the wall here, it's really awfully dark. So I really should do something with it, I guess. But it's not a copy of anybody else's way of working. I mean, he had his own way.

Another painter that I had one very brief criticism from was Jonas Lee. And he came out here to Chestnut Hill to my aunt's. And she asked me to come down and meet him and to bring something that I had done. So I did. I don't remember what it was; I guess it was a landscape. I think he very tactfully suggested that she get out of the way, that we be alone. She may have withdrawn on her own, but I have a memory that he made it sort of plain that he would like to see me by myself.

And I remember quite distinctly his saying that a landscape was like a chord of music. And that there was a bass and a middle tone and an upper tone. And he likened the landscape to that, the foreground as the base, and the middle and the upper tones, the distance. And that's something that stayed with me.

MR. BROWN: That's a very vivid -- made things very vivid.

MS. SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: When would that have been? When you were starting out?

MS. SALTONSTALL: While I was pretty much starting out. I worked in the summers a lot. And I should mention this because it's very important with Frank Swift Chase. And I'm not sure that you would know about him. But he had a class for a great many years in Nantucket. And he lived in Woodstock, New York, in the winter.

And he was really a splendid teacher, just splendid. Kind and vigorous and to the point. And I worked with him

quite a few summers. In fact, that's the reason I went to Nantucket. Again, I picked him out of an ad. The two best things I ever did, I picked out of ads. Frank Chase and Stow Wengenroth. Well, Frank -- I don't know what I was going to say. I was going to say something. But with him was when I saw Jonas Lee. But I think I must have just had a year or two with Frank.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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