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Oral history interview with Virginia Cuthbert,
1995 August 28

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Virginia Cuthbert on August 28, 1995. The interview took place in Buffalo, New York, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The sound quality for this interview is poor throughout, leading to an abnormally high number of inaudible sections. Due to a stroke in 1994, Cuthbert's voice is not clearly audible.

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

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: —Cuthbert Elliott at her home in Buffalo, New York. And this is August 28, 1995. Robert Brown, the interviewer. Now let's see how [ph]—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Virginia, we might just start talking about some of your, about your family. And could you tell a little bit about your family background? You were from the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, that's right. When I was very young, I loved painting. Even when I was only about six years old, I loved it. And I have been doing it ever since, all along.

ROBERT BROWN: Where would you have seen paintings when you were six years old?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, there were no places you could do it in those days.

ROBERT BROWN: But you remember, did your family have paintings?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: My father liked drawings very much. And my mother was a great musician, and a very good one. I loved to play the [inaudible]—

ROBERT BROWN: The piano and everything?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. Even when I was a very, very young girl. And the same thing with the painting. But, I guess in those days, I was about the same at both. I liked them both.

ROBERT BROWN: You liked both painting and music?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. My mother taught me how to play the piano when I was about five years old. And I've been playing ever since. But, at the same time, I liked the painting better. I loved to do drawing and things of that sort. Both, I did both. But the art came ahead of anything.

ROBERT BROWN: The art came ahead of music? [00:02:01]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh yes, much more.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, your father, was he in the steel business? Your father, was he in business?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: My father was a minister.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, your father was a minister.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, he was.

ROBERT BROWN: What denomination?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: My members of four families back, by four before me.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative], four generations?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. They're all from the church.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative], was it Methodist?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. But my father, my other father was very much in steel. In steel.

ROBERT BROWN: In steel.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he, I never knew him at all. He died very young, and so I don't know very much about it. Except he was very, very good at all of that, and worked in the sail, made his first sail, I mean from England. And was brought out from Carnegie.

ROBERT BROWN: He was brought over by Carnegie?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: So, your grandfather Cuthbert came from England.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right. He was very, he was from, was a Irish one.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. An Irishman, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And one of the great friends of the, oh, isn't that awful of me?

ROBERT BROWN: That's all right. Why don't I ask you about, you started painting when you were about five or six. [00:04:00]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You started drawing or painting. Did you go to classes?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, no way of doing anything.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you just, this was just at home?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. My, both my family liked very much to help me. And my father particularly loved to play with painting himself. He liked to do it. And so, we did together. And the other was the piano, was my mother. And so, between the two of them, I had both of them all the time.

ROBERT BROWN: I thought, did you go, ever go to the children's classes at the Carnegie Museum?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I didn't get there. You see, I lived in a small town of Washington.

ROBERT BROWN: Washington. That's some ways out of Pittsburgh, isn't it?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. And there was no going to school there or anything. Nobody ever heard of the thing, the art thing. And so, finally when I got into high school, my father and mother had to go to Pittsburgh in the factory [ph], you know what I mean?

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, at Carnegie, you went to classes there then?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, on a Saturday.

ROBERT BROWN: On Saturdays.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: A wonderful, wonderful day. Oh, what a wonderful day for me!

ROBERT BROWN: Was it?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I had no way of possibly of learning anything. I learned to draw my life, and did all that, and made all kinds of things. But no class at all, you see. And so, when I could go over to the Carnegie on Saturday, it was just heaven. And I could spend the whole afternoon at the Carnegie, and had a wonderful time there. [00:06:04] And they were all my friends, they all knew me. They all knew me as a young kid who liked art and all that. We had a wonderful time.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Well, do you recall who some of your teachers were at those Saturday classes?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, Tod. T-O-D.

ROBERT BROWN: The teacher was Tod then?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, that's right. Tod.

ROBERT BROWN: That was one you remember. Did you start out, did they have you, what did they have you draw in the beginning, at the Saturday classes?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I was only drawing with her all the time, drawing.

ROBERT BROWN: This was a woman. And what would you draw, would you go out and sketch?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, wonderful. They had a nurse face, we could paint her or somebody in the class. And it was just wonderful. Of course, to me it was just happy. I can't tell you how wonderful it was to be able to study with these wonderful people, that I thought they were wonderful, wonderful people. And I did very well. They thought I was doing very well. And, even when I went to Syracuse, I was able to get in because the works I had done with the girls in the Carnegie, I could get in to my art class and everything. And college, and I got—

ROBERT BROWN: You got credits for—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: For what you had done. You went to Syracuse in 1926, I believe. You went to Syracuse in that year, in 1926.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. Every year I write it on.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, and you told me that your family wanted you to get a college degree. You weren't too interested in college, I guess, but that your family wanted you to go. [00:08:03]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh yeah, I did everything. Of course, I was in the art, too, department, in the university. But I had to take classes in everything else, too. All that stuff, because my family decided we had to have. My father and mother both were very good. They'd been to college, my mother was in college, when she was a kid. And there weren't many girls in those days. They had girls going to college.

ROBERT BROWN: That's right.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he was, she was. And, of course, my father was, of course, too. And my grandfather all before that. They all had been very well to college and stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: Well educated, yeah. Did you like the other courses at Syracuse? Did you like things other than art?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, I had to take a lot of stuff, and I had some wonderful, I remember some very, very good men that were not in the art stuff. They were wonderful people, awful good. Some of them were wonderful, and some I couldn't like at all, because I just had to sit through them to do it. But some were wonderful. Ones were just terrible, and others fine.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh, you did have in art, you've mentioned you had courses with Irene Sargent in art history?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, I remember her.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you describe her a bit? What was she like?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: We had that class at eleven, and right at the middle of noon.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, midday you had this class, yeah. [00:09:58]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And the other classes that I don't suppose that she [ph], has different classes. We never got any farther than the Greece.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, really? Because she went into such detail, huh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. And so, everybody went to and that, and couldn't hear them anyway. And she just went on and on and on and on about it. We couldn't care less, because we didn't know much about Greece at all in those days. And finally she would say, we can turn off the gas, the gas. It meant that we could leave up and go out. We'd still think we were going even from the seals [ph], and see us, and her daz, D-A-Z. Because she never

thought of, or had sent it out, you know. And can't say it right now.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, but she said now you can, what? Now you can turn off the gas, you said?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Huh. That meant you could stop? That meant the class was over?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, but she gave long lectures.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And she probably was very good, but none of us ever heard it. And she was an old, old woman, a very old girl. Must have been about eighty at the time.

ROBERT BROWN: Was she rather, what was she like? Was she pleasant, or could you talk to her?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, she was very nice, a nice person. But we made it to it, and it was too bad, because we just went to sleep mostly.

ROBERT BROWN: You mention, you mentioned at least one other teacher, a man named Sharman. [00:11:57]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, you see, I went in and I was with a friend of mine. But he was in the D-A-I—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, design. He was in design, wasn't he?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right. And I was in the painting business. So I knew her very well, but I didn't have anything to do with her as a teacher at all. It was in a different.

ROBERT BROWN: But Sharman you did know. You knew Sharman quite well.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I knew him very well. But, again, he was not one of my teachers. He was not in that. I was in the painting, with the night [ph] painter guys.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative]. These people, you mentioned also a student life in Pittsburgh. What was, or I mean in Syracuse. Can you recall any highlights of your four years as a student there? The life as a student.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I remember the Kappa Theta Alpha, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: Kappa Theta Alpha?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: A sorority?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. And, of course, that was fun. And I had a fine time, and a wonderful time in school. I loved it. My times were very happy, and happy. But, after I got through with college, and I got away from school, college.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, when you got out of college, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: It was over. I mean, I've never been back even.

ROBERT BROWN: You've never been back?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: No. Because that part of my life, the college thing, were over. And the next, even that same day, I mean that year, I went to Europe to study. [00:14:02] And right there, my whole life again was into a whole different world of living, right into very important art stuff. I mean, no longer, my wonderful times in college were wonderful. But that was over.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, college was over.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: But, before we talk about Europe, you told me you also, I think in 1930 and maybe the next year as well were in a, in the summer you went to Provincetown and studied with Charles Hawthorne.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. Right after I left high school, I mean after going from college, I spend the afternoon and summer with—

ROBERT BROWN: Summer.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: With Hawthorne.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like? Can you, do you recall him?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he was a lovely man, and a wonderful lovely wife. They were very, very lovely, lovely people. And they wanted to stay on and live at her place after that summer thing was over there. But I said, "No, I can't do that." It was very nice to want me to come and live with her, she liked me so much.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, uh-huh [affirmative]. So, they thought you—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: But, no, I'm going to Europe.

ROBERT BROWN: So they must have thought you were pretty promising student.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, evidently. I just knew I would work as hard as I could, and I was very excited about it, in one word.

ROBERT BROWN: What did, what was the routine with Hawthorne? Did you have, did he teach every day, or would he tell you what to do and then leave you alone?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, he could come once a week to our class. And he mostly talked himself, talked. Then he would call everybody to put them up, what they had done for the week, and look at what they'd done. [00:16:00] And it was very happy to me, because he had said how well I had done, and very nice about it, you see. And that's why, even at the end of it, of the summer, they liked me so much that they wanted me to stay and live there longer with them, in their home. And it was very sweet of me.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you feel you learned from Charles Hawthorne in Provincetown? What did you learn in your painting? Did you learn new things?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, we only did paintings of our heads, just—

ROBERT BROWN: Heads, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I'd say not much in it. I mean, he was right. He was, didn't be kind of trying to paint me, making up snappy eyes or anything. His eyes just get kind of the impression of it, kind of the—

ROBERT BROWN: Get the impression.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: The feeling of a head.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: It was wonderful, and it was—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you work with brushes or what? Did you use brushes or palette knives, or do you recall?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I think we used a pen or whatever, and yes, that's right. And, you see, Lindsay or whatever his name is, you have it in there.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh yes. Henry Hensche.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he was in there, in class every day.

ROBERT BROWN: And he was the monitor.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Of the, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And so, I knew him very well, of course.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Was he pretty, quite helpful? Or, what was he like?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, I think so. I mean, in fact I never, never knew anything about him after I, after I saw him. I, he probably went on being important as a painter. [00:18:00] But I don't remember.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Well he mainly, he stayed on in Provincetown for many, many years.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. He worked, kind of worked with the class thing. And I know he did paintings himself, but I don't ever saw much of what he ever did. Never.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative]. Well now, you had then, you had a fellowship from Syracuse to go to Europe. The Augusta Hazard Fellowship, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, that wasn't—one thing has to be said that, as far as I know, that thing was the important thing it made in the whole college, and after the college.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was the most important prize.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you, was—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And even in, wasn't just about the painting at all. It was done up owning, if somebody was, some of the class was—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, design or?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Mine was better than, it was the highest one they had.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. What where, do you recall any of the teachers of painting at Syracuse? Do you know, can you talk about any of those teachers? People who taught painting at Syracuse.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, they were awful good ones. And there are a few that I know, I remember now. But they were very good, they were good artists. They were, they never had exhibitions out, like in New York or anyplace.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, they didn't? Hmm.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: They were very good, they had been at, very good people had studied in Europe and other places. But they never got out as important business around the world of art very much. Didn't seem to do much about it. [00:20:00]

ROBERT BROWN: Hmm. And you, you felt a need, did you, to get out into the wider world?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, you get in the morning.

ROBERT BROWN: And you wanted to go to Europe?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, sure.

ROBERT BROWN: And, in those days, going the chief place was Paris, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Is it Paris? You went to Paris?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: It still the most wonderful place. It's still a great one.

ROBERT BROWN: But that's where you went, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. And you went, you studied in Paris at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, but I didn't know much about that. I was there about a week or so. But I knew, ran into Caron, Canon.

ROBERT BROWN: Canon?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, we used his name, by the that name.

ROBERT BROWN: Steven Leroux [ph]?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. I rarely ever used his last name. It was Leon all the time. And he was working at the university, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: The University of Paris?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He was from all, from I don't mean in Paris. But in, in—

ROBERT BROWN: In the United States?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: No. He was the head of the France business, but also went up to Molay, no I can't.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. He was also where, in northern Europe, Scandinavia?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. He was there. And he worked for the Carnegie.

ROBERT BROWN: He worked for the Carnegie, that's right.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He was there.

ROBERT BROWN: He helped them with their exhibitions. And you told me that you were introduced to him by Homer Saint-Gaudens.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, I knew him better.

ROBERT BROWN: You knew Homer very well, did you?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, yes. He was wonderful, and he did great, wonderful things for me when I got to college. He was with my father, and I went over to talk to him about what we're going to do. [00:22:00] I should go, I was going to Europe, and I was going to do. Who I was going to speak with, or what I was going to do over there. And so, he was very good, a great help to me. And so I, the minute I got into France, the next day, the next day was around we're gone.

ROBERT BROWN: Ooh, was Homer there?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: He was there?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, right away.

ROBERT BROWN: And he was a very good friend of yours.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. That Homer was a wonderful man. And then, the second day I was there, I saw him the first day in Paris. The next one, I met Phil.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, you met Philip Elliott.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Who later became your husband.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And he was from Minneapolis.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. And he was the person that was in Paris whole part.

ROBERT BROWN: He was in—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: My husband's stuff, but his was a different, and art big thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Phil studying also? Was he studying in Paris, too?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he'd been there for, he was on a five year—

ROBERT BROWN: Five year, what, a fellowship?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Big one, bigger, big one. And I met Phil the second day I was in Paris, because Mr. Leroux had taken me.

ROBERT BROWN: Mr. Leroux. Leroux knew everybody, I suppose.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What was Leroux like? What was his personality, Gabon Leroux [ph]?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he was just a lovely person. And he was very interested in art, of course. But he was in to do about cheese. C-A—[00:24:02]

ROBERT BROWN: Wait, wait. Leroux was involved with cheese, you said?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That was his really big important thing.

ROBERT BROWN: That was his business.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: No, but he was really working for the Carnegie, too.

ROBERT BROWN: The Carnegie.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And, you see his, his father was a terrific friend of Degas.

ROBERT BROWN: Degas, yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And they're very good, they're very good artists. And, of course, Leroux loved art, too, and got very involved in it. I think he got in this cheese thing as a side thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And but, art was much more important to him, as cheese. But it was funny that it was very important.

ROBERT BROWN: But you told me that, that Leroux would take you around to galleries.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh yes. We went all around all the time. And we had a wonderful time, because I was very interested in the art and the new stuff, as well as the old that I loved. But we're meeting up new artists, too. And we would see them, and I'd see something that I thought was very good, and tell him about it. And he'd go up and see it again by somebody and, "Oh, that's good, too." And take it and send it to the Carnegie all the time. We had a lot of fun finding together.

ROBERT BROWN: You'd find things and then he'd recommend that they show them at the Carnegie.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right. We had lots of fun, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And then Homer Saint-Gaudens would come around now and then, wouldn't he?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. And, when I was in Florence, he was there, came up to see me in my big sky, way up in a tall thing. [00:26:04] He came to see me, and he was so glad to see me again, and thought I was doing so well. And saw all the paintings, and getting on very well, and doing all, and it was very exciting for me.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, yes.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Imagine to say, the things I'm doing, I'm doing so well.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Because he's the man who had, you and your father talked to before you left Pittsburgh, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, oh yes.

ROBERT BROWN: He was the director at the Carnegie, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. You see, I knew him before that, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah. Well now, you've mentioned that, for example, you saw paintings by Salvador Dali. And you said you encouraged Leroux to have them shown in the United States. Is that right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, that's right, that's right. Oh, yes. I saw him in France.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, did you get to meet Dali at that time?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. We had a nice time. And in a little town, I was in a very small frozen [ph] place, and it was from where he was.

ROBERT BROWN: You were near him.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And we had a very wonderful, great day, wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: A place where you ate?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And we would go to a place, and he would come here, too. We got to know him in doing that a lot.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like then? What was Dali like?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He didn't teach anything. We couldn't do it very well, because I didn't write Spanish.

ROBERT BROWN: You didn't know Spanish, and—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he, he was a France guy. And I didn't know any French stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: We had a very nice time, and we knew each other. We got together, but we didn't have a chance to talk very much about it, because. [00:28:00] Are you making any sense about what I'm trying to—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. What was his personality like, Dali?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh very, oh very strange and hairy.

ROBERT BROWN: Big moustaches and all, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, and all that. Very strange person. You would, you'd know anywhere in the world, you'd see him. I mean he was very strange.

ROBERT BROWN: You'd known him, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he was a kind of crazy, wonderful man. Grr.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you um, you said you also, you told me, you mentioned you went to Germany. You went to the Bauhaus to look at the Bauhaus.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you describe that experience?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, I had a terrible time.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, you did?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: In the first place, I went to, you know where I went.

ROBERT BROWN: You went to Munich?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You went to Munich.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, at that time with him.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you went to the city of Munich.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I think so.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. And what did you do there?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I had a terrible time. I won't get into that story. Terrible times, awful. Anyway—

ROBERT BROWN: Why were they so terrible? Were they—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I went out of Germany all by myself, of course. And I had just a terrible time, because nobody could talk me anything but German.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: They all could, but they wouldn't.

ROBERT BROWN: They wouldn't, huh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And in the bank there, I couldn't get any, any money or anything. They wouldn't say anything, they said it in German. They wouldn't, they weren't.

ROBERT BROWN: They refused to speak anything but German.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And, of course, I couldn't say anything about it.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. [00:30:00]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I had a terrible time, because my money, my money was coming down from France for me. I knew it was going to be there, they were wonderful about doing this. The banks did all this for me, doing it right. And I couldn't get it because this gang from the bank didn't talk in Germany.

ROBERT BROWN: This was the, this was about the beginning of the Nazis, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he was there.

ROBERT BROWN: The Nazis, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. And since, he was there.

ROBERT BROWN: You saw them when you—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. And I'd just come from Italy, and mono, muno [ph], was going on down there.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, Mussolini. Yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And things were getting worse. But anyway, I got into the guy we were talking about, and bern, bern [ph].

ROBERT BROWN: You went to the Bauhaus?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I got there. Nobody would speak any bit of a word of English.

ROBERT BROWN: Nobody could, would speak English. Were you allowed to look around and see what they were doing?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: So, I decided to, I paid up some little amount to do something. And so, I stayed about, about ten days. And I just went there, and they didn't paint to me. Nobody painted, and nobody spoke English at all. They wouldn't talk. And um, I just sat around and looked at what they were doing. And I was getting enough of what they were doing, marvelous stuff, that kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Design, and stuff? Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And um, I got a lot up out of it. But I couldn't say anything, because they wouldn't say a word. [00:32:02]

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: But found out that, you know, if you're here and doing there, you do it this way, this way,

you see. And if you do it this way, it goes this way, like this, bang.

ROBERT BROWN: You were showing, you mean different kinds of perspective and—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, a terrific summer. Even a point it gets to get these thinking this way, this is how, and it's bang.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, I see. Different—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Bang, bang.

ROBERT BROWN: Different types of perspective and composition, uh-huh [affirmative].

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And, and then, it gets into the matter of color.

ROBERT BROWN: Color.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I mean, doing this way, and this going this way, or if I want to go this way, but this way.

ROBERT BROWN: But color can—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That was it. I put a small but heavy red, red, R-E-D.

ROBERT BROWN: Red, yeah. Little red for an accent, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And it's a bigger bolder here. And then something comes in there, and it goes down.

ROBERT BROWN: Whose work was that, do you suppose? Who was teaching that?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I don't know.

ROBERT BROWN: No. But you saw them doing it. It was pretty impressive, was it?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, it was something. And I thought it was something good. I liked what they're doing. I knew that it's in our great art history that artists knew how to do that. They just figured it out. The guys were doing all the talking, and monitor [ph] and doing it. But certain artists felt it, like Cézanne was doing consciously made it.

ROBERT BROWN: Doing it consciously, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Without that thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Without talking about it.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Same thing.

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

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Even going back into earlier art, you find the same certain versions of absolutely how to do it. Very exciting.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative]. You could express motion and direction through color, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Right. And very, very lucky that, after we were married in Pittsburgh, Philip was, I'll have to give the name of it. I can't say it. Did you know Costello? In fact, I heard it. He was having, he'd just come from Europe.

ROBERT BROWN: This was when you went back to Pittsburgh in 1934. So, Alexander Costello—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned he'd just been in Germany, and he then taught you, worked on these Bauhaus methods.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, so then you really—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And my husband was with me, too. We both went to him. We were there, stayed there for

a whole year, studying with him, and that until. And he was a great friend of our—our friend too, you see. A great friend. But I got the idea in mar, mary [ph]—

ROBERT BROWN: When you were in Germany?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. But I couldn't get, I got the idea of what they're doing from going on, but I couldn't hear anything, because they didn't—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you couldn't understand what they were saying. But Costello—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he was wonderful, I got the idea. But it, it's a new idea, in spite of the fact that it made it now a name of it of stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: But it's an old idea, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, but certain artists saying it, they knew it, they feel it. They didn't, nobody told them or anything else. [00:36:00] They got it, somehow saw it. It was very exciting.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And, as for me, it was very, very important to me. I mean, I couldn't possibly doing it, do it so well. And now I don't even think about it. But I have an awful good artist painting that's good. And I'd say, "Oh, God." I'd see something and I'd think, "Oh, God." I mean, to me, I'd think myself.

ROBERT BROWN: To yourself.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: "Oh, gee. No, that has to be different, it has to go a different way."

ROBERT BROWN: I see. You do, so you're very sensitive to that when you see it.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: When you've seen it since then, yeah. Why did you, during this European trip, why did you go to Florence where you studied with Felice Carena, in Florence?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Which one?

ROBERT BROWN: Why did you go to Florence? You studied there with Felice Carena in Florence.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, well he wanted to do—

ROBERT BROWN: Is he somebody you knew, someone who was recommended to you?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I went out to study for him.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you knew about him.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he said, oh heck, I was too good. He didn't have any, wouldn't take me on, but he'd come around and see me, and come around and look at my things and look at them. They wouldn't let me, didn't make me do a class. And then he thought about, first time I went there, I was supposed to go, I suppose he's there. And had a great big studio, great big studio. There must have been about oh, 14 of those things around.

ROBERT BROWN: A great big studio.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And they had paintings on them, and it's him, his own paintings.

ROBERT BROWN: His paintings all around the studio.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Around, and one over here working, and very fine. And I, I got there to see him. He didn't speak anything but Italian. I didn't know any English. [00:38:00] I didn't know any Italian, either. I tried the college thing in college, but I didn't know well enough to get very much.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And um, I got to see him on his first day, to meet him. And he was a busy man on his own. And I sat there waiting to be—

ROBERT BROWN: You sat there waiting to be introduced, or, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And um, he's working, right? And he came out, and started taking myself.

ROBERT BROWN: He started taking—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I mean, if it had peddles on it, padlock, he was tying it down. What's going on with him? He turned around and—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, he started pulling on your blouse?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Or your shirt.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, I get that. "What is this girl doing here?"

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, what is this—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Just come to take it, come around and started taking it off more and—

ROBERT BROWN: Huh.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I, "What is heaven is he after, taking my clothes off?" Because I couldn't say it because I couldn't know the language either.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you didn't know enough Italian.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I finally said, "Ahh."

ROBERT BROWN: He thought you'd come to be a model.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. He thought I was a model, you see. And he said, "Bring her, and take her right here." It was very funny. He was always a terrible, terrible, terrible. Oh—

ROBERT BROWN: He apologized to you, profusely. [00:40:00]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I got to, we got to be very good friends, you know. And it was really funny, though. It was cute, it was. [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: You also on that trip, I guess, went to London and you—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And you went to Augustus, saw Augustus?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: Through Homer Saint-Gaudens, you saw Augustus John, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, John.

ROBERT BROWN: And what did he do? Did he, did he talk to you or look at your work?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, I wrote around, wrote to him and said—

ROBERT BROWN: You wrote him.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I'm an artist and I'd like to meet him. Can I talk to him?

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he answered back and said, "Yes, you can come." I said I was an artist. And I thought, I wondered what he thought. What in the hell does he care about it? But anyway, I took a couple of paintings of me to him. You see, I didn't know that he always, he used to have students all the time. But he didn't anymore.

ROBERT BROWN: He used to have students.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: No more.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: No. And I'd taken a couple of mine. And he was very nice, and oh, he was very, had a wonderful red—

ROBERT BROWN: A red beard?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. And very happy. And, "I'm sorry, I didn't know that you weren't an artist, or a teacher anymore."

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I got there and said, "I'm so sorry about that." And he said, "Oh, come on." And talked to him, and we talked for hours. [00:41:59] And we had a very nice time. And he said, oh, he brought in several drawings and, "Let me see what you have." And I said, "Oh well, I thought you were going to be my teacher." And, he said, "Oh, let's see what you have." And so I had about two or three drawings. And, "Oh, I like your paintings. Very nice, very, why you're very good. I like what you have." I was, we went around, had a very nice time, had very nice time. We had nice tea.

ROBERT BROWN: Tea?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, very nice, and sit around. "Oh," he said, "I'm sorry I can't take as a teacher anymore, I'm just not." I said, "I am doing very well, and I hope that I will see you again." And he was very, very nice. That was nice. And then I studied, you have it.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, Colin Gill.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, and he was very good. He saw me about two or three times, he came to see me. And again he said, "No use teaching. I can't teach you." He said, "You're doing very well. And just keep on what you want to do."

ROBERT BROWN: Did you know, did you know about Colin Gill before you met him? Or did Homer Saint-Gaudens —

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He was a very good person, very, very beautiful man. He had very exciting wife either.

ROBERT BROWN: He had an exciting what, wife you said?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. Very good writer. Writer. And I liked him very much. He was very fine and nice. [00:44:00] I saw her about four times, probably. And um, no use to do anything for me. I mean, he didn't have to teach me anything more. I'm doing very fine. He said, "I see what you're doing," you see. He came around several times, and saw what I was doing, and I was doing fine and stuff. He said he wasn't teaching me anything.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you doing more drawing than painting?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, no. I was doing big paintings by then.

ROBERT BROWN: Paintings.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What were they mostly? Figures, human figures?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, all kinds of stuff. A lot of stuff I have out here in the back room, that are stuff I did in Europe, and in London, and around. Because I was doing big paintings at that time, at that time, doing a lot. I mean, I look at them and think myself looking at them, "Well, it was pretty good, but good Lord, I wouldn't be thinking of doing that now."

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: But it was all right when I was doing it, it was all right. But so, he didn't do anything much for me other than be a very good friend. And we met some, we some interesting artists around in London. He knew me, and had me meet a lot of people.

ROBERT BROWN: Who, Gill introduced you to them?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And had a very nice time with them, lots of fun.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes. Who were some of those other artists?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, one, what's his name, Jefferson?

ROBERT BROWN: Chappers? [00:46:00]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: One was him, I think. If you name a couple of names of important ones, I'd tell you?

ROBERT BROWN: Nicholson? Nicholson? Was he around?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, I knew that name. This is a long time ago. That stuff is way back a long time ago. And it was just in, in the '30, '31.

ROBERT BROWN: '31 or so, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, I can't remember that.

ROBERT BROWN: You also, you said you took classes in, at the Chelsea Polytechnic Institute?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. I went there and did some, is it studying? Studying things during—

ROBERT BROWN: Women. So, at Chelsea Polytechnic you did printmaking.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right, I did a lot of that.

ROBERT BROWN: You did etchings.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, and you'd not, had you not done prints very much before then?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I didn't do anything, and not many afterwards. I mean, I loved doing it, and they were fun. I like doing it, but it wasn't my stuff. I had to paint.

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VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: —I was interested in it, and I liked it while I did it, but it wasn't mine. I did it perfectly well, the stuff was perfectly good. But it wasn't my best thing. I have to be in color, and color.

ROBERT BROWN: You wanted, you liked color?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Then the, and you returned—excuse me, please. And you returned to, from Europe in 1932, and you went to New York. Is that correct?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, maybe you can, what did you do that year in New York? You were there—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, I went down and seen, joe, joe—

ROBERT BROWN: You studied then with George Luks.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. Terrific.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you know him before that or did you just—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I knew him as a, I didn't know him, no.

ROBERT BROWN: But you knew his work.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I knew his work, oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And he was terrific, huh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. Wonderful, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh. He was crazy.

ROBERT BROWN: Crazy, huh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, boy. He was a wonderful man. He loved me. He'd get awfully drunk.

ROBERT BROWN: Awfully drunk, huh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And got blind for maybe three or five days.

ROBERT BROWN: Really? Sort of blind drunk.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he'd get hold of me to take me home, and I had to be up there. I had to hang around there. I lived there.

ROBERT BROWN: You lived there at his place?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I had to be there, I didn't do anything about it. But he had to have me. He'd say, "Ginny, you have to stay with me, you have to stay." He'd hold my hand. And he was, I loved him anyway, but he was crazy as a dog all the time. He'd get out and get drunk, and he'd work pretty well. [00:02:00] Then he'd get bad again. But he had a great thing about me. He just loved me sort of. I don't know. And I had to stay there with me. He never did a thing that would be wrong against me, but I had to be there. He had a hold on me. He'd call me, and he'd say, "Talk to me." I'd had to get there maybe sometimes three, and four, or five, or six days for that.

ROBERT BROWN: And stay there at his place.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. And there was a woman that would bring some food, and get him something to eat. And I had a room, I could sleep in it. I didn't want to live there, but I couldn't get away. He'd just say, "You have to stay." And I loved him anyway. I mean, he was a wonderful person, but oh, wild, wild, wild, crazy one. And his brother was a wonderful man. Wold, wold, W-I-L-L.

ROBERT BROWN: Will. Will, and he was a wonderful man.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: A wonderful man.

ROBERT BROWN: What did he do?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He was a doctor, doctor. He'd come up to see him and he, of course, would see me and he'd say, "How are you doing?" And I'd say, "How am I going to get out of here? I can't get out." And he'd say, "Try to help with George a little bit longer. It helps him an awful lot. He just needs you." And it was kind of a crazy thing, but I had a nice place. I had an own place to paint and to live for.

ROBERT BROWN: You had your own place, but he would make you stay there sometimes.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he teach you ever? Did he ever try to show you things, or did you ask him questions about things?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I always tried to steal a drawing, I thought I'd get a drawing or something. [00:04:00] And, no matter how drunk he'd get, he'd say, "No, you keep your hands out of that." Yeah, he'd know. He had portfolios all over the place.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, portfolios, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And drawings. I'd think, "I'll just take one." And he'd, "No, you're getting one."

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, keep your hands off them, huh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: But he was wonderful. And, of course, you know he was murdered.

ROBERT BROWN: Murdered, I think, yeah, yeah. A fight or something. Did he teach you anything, did you—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he was wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he teach a little bit about, what'd he teach you in painting? Do you recall?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He didn't know much about that. Only about five of us, or ten at the most, around. They were all good at, they were all writers and stuff. They were all good artists. They liked to be around with him. And he was wonderful. He had a fad, a fat.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, a flat? No.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: No. Um, mouse, mouse.

ROBERT BROWN: A mouse?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, that lived up there. That is right. And he would, he'd go, "Woo, woo, woo," and he'd come tearing out and do a little dance. And then he'd be mighty firm, out of firm [ph].

ROBERT BROWN: This was a mouse?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. He lives up there. And he'd call it. He'd go, "Woo, woo, woo, woo." He'd come in and do a little dance for him.

ROBERT BROWN: The little mouse would.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. And he was lots of fun. But the—

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think you learned anything from him?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he was a good. Oh, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you learn things from him?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, a great deal, fine. [00:06:00] When he wasn't drunk, he was a wonderful painter.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Wang, bang, wang, bang.

ROBERT BROWN: He could just turn them out, slash them out?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. And oh, it was wonderful stuff. But then he gets drunk.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. But did you think the example of the way he painted, very bold painter, wasn't he? Very bold. As a painter, he painted very boldly.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: Did that influence you?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, yes, in a way. Of course, because you just feel it that way. I did a thing, it's, the gallery has it. I did it, it's so good, that I did of him, of John. Down there, I did it in a half hour.

ROBERT BROWN: A sketch of him?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. And they have one. It's damn good, it's a marvelous sketch. It's damn fine. I don't think I could do it better now. It was very good. Because he just had a way of doing it so fast, that I got the idea from him.

ROBERT BROWN: You, too. You did it in about a half an hour, you said.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, it's only, he showed, he showed me for me. He said, "I'll do it for you." "I'll do it for you." And the gallery has it in their, in the painters' thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Did he enjoy having you paint him? Did he like that?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, he did. He really, he liked it, he liked it. He'd say, "It's all right, it's all right." He liked it, he liked it. And I wish you would see mine sometime.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, yes.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: You'd like it.

ROBERT BROWN: Um, you also met, you said, in that year in New York, you met the composer, Virgil Thompson. Did you meet him about that time?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Who?

ROBERT BROWN: Virgil Thompson.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Have you got the name written down here?

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, here. Virgil Thompson. [00:08:01]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, oh, I loved him.

ROBERT BROWN: You met him then?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. He spent a great time in my heart. I came out our house, and came up to stay at our house. And Phil loved him, too. We both just loved him.

ROBERT BROWN: But you got, you got the first, you first met him there in New York, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And then he came here to Buffalo.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: And stayed with you a lot.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I got him, I was the one who got him in there. He wouldn't take it at first, you see. They tried it, and a friend of his to start it first before him. And then, and he said, "I'll take it at the university there, too." He had another artist to try to do it at the gallery, at the university.

ROBERT BROWN: This is here in Buffalo?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. Yeah, another one, a wonderful guy. His name, I've forgotten him. Awful good guy. I knew him very well. And he said, "I don't see." And finally, he had the first year, the other guy. And then he said, "All right. I'll take the thing at the university." He came back then and did, oh, a great deal out here at the university.

ROBERT BROWN: What, teaching, or—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Mostly for just, oh, I guess you'd just say ideas. He didn't do much and stuff. He talked to them about it, about music and stuff, talking about that. But I was the one who got him here, you see. That's what I'm so tied up with it, the university. I'm very important with the university. They think I'm this wonderful one. [00:09:59] [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: At the University of Buffalo, that is.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, yeah. Because I've had an awful lot with them, and I have a lot to show when they get to it.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Here, I'll show you one now, just for fun, here.

ROBERT BROWN: In 1933, 1934, you went back to Pittsburgh and did graduate study in fine arts at the University of Pittsburgh.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And did you decide you needed more, more university training?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. I had already gotten FBA, and that is at a good university, and grant and stuff, to do more art history.

ROBERT BROWN: More art history? Okay.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. I did three and a half year, three and a half of that, whole thing. I ended up with the whole thing, the whole thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Why did you want to do more art history? Did you think you wanted to be a teacher?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: No, I love art.

ROBERT BROWN: And you wanted to do the history of art?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. All about it, wonderful

ROBERT BROWN: What was it like at the University of Pittsburgh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: I know you've mentioned Helen Clay Frick was the dominant person there.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, she was a great friend of mine. And she was very much into, in the art department. She was very much wonderful, a person that started, and she was of Phil's.

ROBERT BROWN: She was a good friend of Phil's?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: She was a very wonderful woman who wanted to get art things. And the thing is, Phil was working at the University of Pittsburgh, you see, at that time.

ROBERT BROWN: So, you met him again there, yes. Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. You see, I met him first, and then I was able to get him to the university. Because he was in Paris all the time. [00:12:03]

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, I see. And you were able to get him a job at the university.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Because he was not, he was not Pittsburgh. He was from Minnesota.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right. He was a, he had been, see, he had been three years of big charge stuff in Paris.

ROBERT BROWN: Right, right. You mentioned that.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And he had just gotten back, and just come back to USA. And I began working away, and I got the job, but he was at the university, you see?

ROBERT BROWN: Huh. Now, he was a, he was a good friend from Minneapolis of Hudson Walker.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Who then married a daughter of an old family friend.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: The Pittsburgh conductor, Harvey Gaul, right.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He was a great friend, yes. I knew him very well. I mean, see I was involved in an artist, and in music, all that stuff. And he was writing about the art stuff in the paper.

ROBERT BROWN: Who, Phil?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Gaul.

ROBERT BROWN: Gaul, Harvey Gaul was, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And so, of course, I was all tied up with them.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I knew him before Phil ever heard of him, you see. Because I lived in Pittsburgh, in that area. And so, I didn't know his, his daughter too much. I knew him better, but he was very important in art

stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, he was, he was. What about Helen Clay Frick, what was she like?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, she was an incredible woman, woman.

ROBERT BROWN: Was she pretty dominating?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Not too much.

ROBERT BROWN: No?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: She was in New York all the time, and she'd come in to see the department. [00:14:00] Oh God, it's the most wonderful department you could imagine.

ROBERT BROWN: Really?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: The, the lay of that thing, he gave everything to them. I mean, she did to that department. Or, she made the, she made the damn place.

ROBERT BROWN: She gave so much, a great deal of money there?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, she started the whole thing. Without it, there wouldn't be anything without her. She was the important thing. And the, and the art thing, was wonderful people, and oh, gosh. That's what it was so wonderful to me, you see. Imagine all that work.

ROBERT BROWN: Who were some of the people who taught the history of art at Pittsburgh. Do you remember some of the names?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. Dr. Losov, I can't say the name, but a great man. A Russian man. R-A-F-M. He was a niece, a niece—

ROBERT BROWN: A nephew, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Of the rest of.

ROBERT BROWN: So, this Russian was closely connected to the old czar's family. And his name was Arkhipov [ph], or something like that.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, it starts with A, Arkhipov.

ROBERT BROWN: And he was a very good teacher?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, of everything. He was the most, the most wonderful man I ever knew. The head of everything. He was, oh, he was a wonderful, wonderful man. And he got to, he got to USA by jumping out of a ship.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, he jumped ship and came to the United States, huh. [00:16:00]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh yes, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: Huh. And he got to the United States.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. And he became the head of the A, I can't—

ROBERT BROWN: Of the art department?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: At the university.

ROBERT BROWN: Art department, or at the University of Pittsburgh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He was the head of the whole thing, and he was the most wonderful man I ever knew. And he was my teacher who taught a special class, for me, for me. And he was simply wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: Huh.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Anyway, he was part of my wedding, and all that kind of stuff. And knew her. Oh, I just loved him, and he loved me.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, did you know Alexander Costello at that time?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, sure.

ROBERT BROWN: You got to know him, too?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: But that same year, you came back in '33 or so, you became engaged to Andrew Ritchie.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, I met him in college, in the graduate.

ROBERT BROWN: In Pittsburgh.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And you became engaged.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. You knew, I knew Phil very well in Paris. I left, and I had to come home. But he was still in this wonderful big scholarship he had.

ROBERT BROWN: He was still in Paris, yeah, on scholarship.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: So, I said, "Well, then bye-bye, sweetheart." And met Ray again.

ROBERT BROWN: Ritchie.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I loved him, too. I loved him, too. And I said, and he went to London and, after two years down there, I just said, "I've got to get back, Ray." And, by that point, just in time, Phil came back here. And I had already said to Andrew, "I love you, I love you very, very much. [00:18:00] But I have to tell you that I will always love Phil better, really. But I love you both." And so, I never thought I was going to see Phil again anyway. So, that was over. And we got to be very good friends. He came to Buffalo to, and to a guy from, I mean Andrew came.

ROBERT BROWN: Came to—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: So we were great friends.

ROBERT BROWN: He'd come to Buffalo, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, and Phil met him right away, and said, "Oh, fine." And they loved each other, too. It was all very nice.

ROBERT BROWN: So, he and Phil became good, good friends, too.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Now Phil came to Pittsburg, and to the University, and taught what you call a studio course, a laboratory course. And you said it was one of the first laboratory studio courses. The course that Phil Elliott taught at Pittsburgh.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I have to see what you're writing.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you wrote, he had a studio laboratory course. It was one of the first. Let's see.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Again, I have to see everything, anything about people.

ROBERT BROWN: It was a certain—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, Andrew was not a painting person.

ROBERT BROWN: No, Andrew wasn't, but Philip, Phil was.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And he taught a studio course.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. But this was, this was, this whole thing was very important time, very important stuff that he did for there.

ROBERT BROWN: So, we've talked a bit about your husband-to-be, Philip Elliott, teaching at the University of Pittsburgh. You said that one of his students was Aline Louchheim, who was a cousin of Edgar Kauffman. [00:20:02] You knew Edgar Kauffmann, I guess.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. Very well.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you know, they were, they had a big department store. But they were also very interested in art and design, weren't they?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes, a great deal. There are all kinds of things about Edgar Kauffmann. When I first came back from Europe, oh no, after I'd been with New York, came home. I was still at home. I wasn't been worried at all. I'd get up at night on the week, in the evening, couple times a week. I'd go down to a place in the big part of the city, in Pittsburgh, of big, big house that they had. The Kaufmanns come—

ROBERT BROWN: The Kauffmanns.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: They were teaching all kinds of things. People painting, stewings [ph] and reds and that. And they had an art department there. And I could come out from the night stuff thing.

ROBERT BROWN: You could go there at night and paint?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, it wasn't a class at all. Somebody there would help anybody if they wanted help or anything. But I'd do it, I used to in Paris, I'd do that all the time.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you mean you'd go someplace and work.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. And see, as if I were a model or something, you see. And um, so, I lived right outside, way up from town, or I did. [00:22:05] But I'd go out at night to study there, and just have a chance, because I loved to do it all by myself. And one of the first days I went, I saw a young man who was about my age that didn't look like a resident, came off of this people.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, he didn't? Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And um, he came up to say his name was doctor, dodger.

ROBERT BROWN: Dodger? What was that?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Dodger, dodge.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Was he taking these classes with Edgar Kauffmann?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, he gave me his name. And it was only the big places. Her husband filled the whole thing in this big area. People in for night and daytime, too. And he came over, and he said his name was Dodger Munkin [ph], I can't talk.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it Edgar Kauffmann?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He said, "I know you don't know me, but I know about you." And I said, "Oh?" Well, I had gotten some projects and things. And he said, "I know you." And I said, "Well, what are you, what are you doing here around this class?" He said, "I like to try. I'm not very good at it." His name is Doctor Munkin [ph]. And I said, "Well, great fun. Nice fun." [00:24:00] And we got to be very, very good friends.

ROBERT BROWN: So—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I would, after class would over at night, we would go out with Edgar and have a drink someplace. And talk a lot, and have a silly face [ph]. And we got to be very, very good friends, lots of fun. And we got to be very good friends, and met all his family, and all that. And Edgar was a wonderful person, because he really was a very fine person, and very much interested in orchestra, orchestra.

ROBERT BROWN: The orchestra?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. And, of course, he said, "I'm never going to be any good at being a drawing man. But I like to do it." And um, I'd say, "Well, you're doing a little bit better. You're coming along. You're getting better." And he'd say, "Well, you know, I'm not any good, I'll never be any good at all. But I, I like to do it." And I thought

it was funny that he'd come with this very important family, very, to get down to the house, and people from all around the area working there. It didn't look like very Kauffmann exactly knew.

ROBERT BROWN: And was this—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I was there because I wanted to be.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, and he went down there, too. And this place where you painted or drew was in a fairly poor area of the city?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh yeah, exactly, exactly, you see. Way up in an area called up in the hill.

ROBERT BROWN: Up in the hill?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, that was the name of it. [00:25:58] That was the area of it. It's a very bad part of the, part of Pittsburgh, or at least it used to be. And kind of very way down. It was the thing that her father had made into a big place to help people, help in the area.

ROBERT BROWN: Who was the person, who did this? What was the man's name who provided this building? Who did you say the family was? What was the name of the family that provided this building in Pittsburgh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: You meant—

ROBERT BROWN: Supplied the building. Who owned the building where you did this?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: It was Munkin, Munkin.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, Kauffmann?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, the Kauffmanns had, owned the building?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right. And the whole thing of it is to turn it into like a thing from the south, helping the area.

ROBERT BROWN: I see.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Kind of a home there thing, see, what I mean?

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And it was the only place where you could go and take some drawings for me. I was very fond of doctor, dodger [ph] would come out there to even bother with it. But he was interested in art to do it. And he even did it. Are you getting the idea of what I'm talking?

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, I did, I did. You'd also, did you, were you aware at that time, that was about the time that the family were having Frank Lloyd Wright design their country house.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh no, they hadn't ever. That was long before that, no.

ROBERT BROWN: Not yet, long before that.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: They had a big, a big house out in the part called Whittingham [ph].

ROBERT BROWN: But he had another house, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Big, big area out from.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Well, you know, I wanted to ask next, after that year at Pittsburgh, then you did graduate work at Carnegie in 1934 and '35. And your main teacher there, I guess, was Alexander Costello [ph], right? Your main teacher there. [00:28:00]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And is this, had you, did you go there because he was teaching? Was he a very well thought of teacher, Costello? Is that why you went to Carnegie?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: My day and my drawings are art.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, but you went to, did you know Alexander Costello pretty well?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh yes, because we were great friends, got to be great friends.

ROBERT BROWN: Became good friends.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes, wonderful. And we got on very well, and my wedding and everything of mine.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, because that same year, you married Philip Elliott, right?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And we met all these people by that time. See, the only way had been ended at USC [ph] for almost a whole year, and studying in New York, doing, working different things. And in art, and in, and in. And art, and painting, carrying painting.

ROBERT BROWN: He was painting in New York for about a year.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Before you were married.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And so, happy to see me every week when, week one or two.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, he'd come to Pittsburgh to see you.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, yeah. So, I got in, a lot of my friends had been, to make friends, met Phil, and a lot of my friends. I gave him Kauffmann at my wedding.

ROBERT BROWN: Edgar Kauffmann, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, they were all part of my friends. I had a lot of these friends, and then Phil came back to see me, and he met all these friends of mine, you see. [00:30:01]

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah. What was, um, can you describe Alexander Costello? What was he like? What was his personality?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, he was a wonderful guy. A very, very brilliant, became a very, very important family in furna, furna, perna—

ROBERT BROWN: In Persia?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. Very important person. And very smart man, and very good. He was a good artist, he was a very good artist, too, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: What did he teach you? What did Costello teach you?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, that stuff I was talking about.

ROBERT BROWN: The Bauhaus method?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Because he'd been there, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: You see, they got it, he got it from them out in Munich, Munich.

ROBERT BROWN: In Munich, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I heard it just average from class, though. After I found, as soon as he came—

ROBERT BROWN: Then you, then he made it very clear to you, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: That's right. We got to be very, very, very good friends. Marvelous, and wonderful. And he had a lovely wife, a wonderful one, a very, very fine artist, too. And we had a great friends.

ROBERT BROWN: Um, then in the later '30s, you and Phil took a trip to Europe, didn't you?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. I think it was in uh, '39. Was it?

ROBERT BROWN: Could have been, something like that. Is that when you went to—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: We went by, by boat.

ROBERT BROWN: Boat, sure. [00:31:59]

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And we went all over, a lot, a lot, all over the place.

ROBERT BROWN: You went many different places.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: In Europe.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: In Europe.

ROBERT BROWN: Is that the time you also then went to Spain?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: During, during the civil war.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. That was the very place.

ROBERT BROWN: Maybe you could tell about that a bit.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Well, we'd just come in to France, to, to France, to Spain, France. It's out there, and there's that odd group, I think that place out to pick up a cash. I mean, get some money.

ROBERT BROWN: Get some money, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Looks like it'd be like one, I think it's what it is. He didn't know enough about any more than I did in France at that point. And I said, "All right." And we went there, and men were walking around. "Isn't it funny everybody's men around here?"

ROBERT BROWN: They were only men around, huh?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: This was just—

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He said they're going to get some tank [ph] or something, to get a bag. Funny that no, no man, no women.

ROBERT BROWN: No women, just men. This was where? In Spain, or still in France?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Just over the, just over the border.

ROBERT BROWN: On the border.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: In Spain, but just over.

ROBERT BROWN: Just on the border, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I thought, well, I didn't talk to anybody. And I'd imagine that all the women have to be home at work. "Where the hell is, where is he, anyway? Where the hell is Phil doing?"

ROBERT BROWN: You were waiting and waiting.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. It got to be an hour, and I thought, "What the hell is he doing?" [00:34:00] Finally

went in there, and didn't speak any stuff either.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you didn't, did you speak Spanish?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: And I said, finally I got somebody who looked like an American, like a man even.

ROBERT BROWN: Might be an American.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I said, "Hey, you an agent?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, I can't find out what happened to him. My mother was around here someplace. I can't find where he is." He said, "For God sakes, is this a person or place all getting into the big farm, farm?" I didn't try to get a check of that, yes. He said, "Oh, for God sakes, he's going to actual war."

ROBERT BROWN: So, he was, what was it?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: "Where the hell is he?" And he said, "Well, he walked in that door." My God, he's going into—

ROBERT BROWN: Into the war?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So, it was a recruiting office. Is that what it was? A recruiting office?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: He'd gone through it, yes, gotten in, "Get ready to go in." He tried to get out, but they really shoved him in there, and then to the point of putting him in the tank to put him in there. He's trying to get out, and they wouldn't let him.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, and they wouldn't let him out.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: I finally got him out. And good God, he was going to war. I got him just in time. I mean, he would've gotten home all right, but I wouldn't know where we were to go next to, or what the hell was going on. [00:36:00]

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: It was an awful mess. I just about had a fit. About an hour and a half, working out, trying to get hold of him.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, once you got him out of that recruiting office, did you go further into Spain?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Oh, yes. We went all over.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, you did?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Even during, even though it was wartime, you went.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: It was all right, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: It was all right, huh? What, did you go to Spain to look at paintings mainly?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. That's what we did. And we didn't go all over the, it's so long, I've forgotten. We went to all the big stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: The big museums?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yes. Not the big ones north, but lower places. And then we saw them and we loved them, especially in the beta, San Sepeda, San Mulado [ph], or something.

ROBERT BROWN: San Sebastian, or?

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: No. And in all the time, all along around here, right here.

ROBERT BROWN: Around Barcelona.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Right here, around here.

ROBERT BROWN: I see.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Made a lot of drawings all around this area. I mean, wonderful. Now, we didn't like any around here. Other than that, we loved this part around here.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Around Barcelona and south, southern France.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah, beautiful, wonderful. Wonderful time. And we loved it. Right down in here. Made a lot, a lot of drawings.

ROBERT BROWN: A lot of drawings.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Yeah. I've got to find them. It was wonderful. I loved this part. It's like a different world. It's just wonderful, as compared to present here.

ROBERT BROWN: Much different, yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA CUTHBERT: Wonderful.

ROBERT BROWN: Let me—

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]