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Oral history interview with James Hubbell,
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Contact Information

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with James Hubbell on July 31, 2012. The interview took place in Santa Ysabel, California, and was conducted by Jo Lauria for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

James Hubbell has reviewed the transcript and has made heavy corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

JO LAURIA: This is Jo Lauria recording for the Archives of American Art, interviewing James Hubbell. Today is Tuesday, July 31 [misspoke and said 30] and we are doing the interview at the compound of James Hubbell, Orchard Lane in Santa Ysabel [California].

So, Jim — as everybody calls you informally — we will start where we always start, at the beginning. So will you tell us where and when you were born, and describe your childhood and your family background for us?

JAMES HUBBELL: Well, I was born in Mineola, New York on Long Island.

Is that coming out?

MS. LAURIA: Yes.

MR. HUBBELL: And my mother was fairly restless so we moved a lot.

MS. LAURIA: And that was in 1931?

MR. HUBBELL: Nineteen thirty-one. And so I think we lived a little bit in New York City and then in Connecticut. I actually went to 13 schools in the first 12 years of school.

MS. LAURIA: My goodness. Why was your mother restless, just because that was her personality or —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it might have been partly her personality. Her mother and father died in the flu epidemic when she was 7, I think, so I think she was trying to find a world of home and security, you know, and she never could.

So I had five fathers. And we lived in different places in Connecticut a little bit, and Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Mexico and California. And so it was a fairly erratic childhood.

MS. LAURIA: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

MR. HUBBELL: I have one brother younger, who is an artist in Japan. He's lived in Japan for the last 30 or 40 years. And then one sister who is a dancer. She's a year or so older. And she worked for about 20 years as a jazz dancer. And she got into astrology. Yeah, I'm sort of the normal one of the family.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.] So it sounds like you all gravitated towards creative careers. Would you say that's a fair assessment?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Yes. I think one thing that I think was an influence on all of us, my mother would buy a house that was not fixed up and then fix it, and then she'd get tired of it and move to another house and fix it up. So I think that process of seeing things being transformed was really part of the beginning.

The other thing which I think is relevant is that my grandfather on my mother's side used to collect art. And he was a friend of — he was from Kansas. So he knew [William] Blakelock and he knew — I have a portrait of my mother by Childe Hassam [*Ada*]. And he knew a lot of painters and artists from his period.

MS. LAURIA: Well, how wonderful. So do you think that your parents were interested in art, or it was more your grandparents?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I think my grandfather was very much, but he died so I never knew him.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And, like, my mother had — and my aunts have a big collection of my grandfather's, you know, and all of those people. And my mother basically traded them all for English painters, which was —

MS. LAURIA: Interesting.

MR. HUBBELL: — you know. Anyway, I'm not sure — I have also — when my mother married — my mother's sister married into the Findlay family, which had an art gallery in Kansas. The Findlays, there was a Wally family in Chicago and then David Findlay in New York. And he specialized in American Western painters, Remington and Russell. And now there's these two Findlay Galleries in New York City.

So I was kind of exposed to that — you know, I would see all those at their place when we would visit, and we still have one of the paintings from — the portrait, de Forest Brush, that's in the living room.

MS. LAURIA: So you were more or less encouraged or supported in our art endeavors from a young age.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, more or less exposed.

MS. LAURIA: Exposed, okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And do you think you had an interest in art when you were a young man?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, the first thing I remember is I did a picture in first grade of a red fire truck. So that's the first thing. The second thing, it must have been during the beginning of the war, the Second World War, I did a poster which — about a ship being sunk by a submarine, in Sunday School.

So those were the first things, and I think I was — I wasn't much into athletics or competitive sports, but I did get very involved with horses. And basically probably because of them I wanted to — I collected pictures of them and then I finally began drawing them.

MS. LAURIA: And this is around high school?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, probably early high school.

MS. LAURIA: And you were still living on the East Coast?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, we moved out West. We moved to — when I was probably about — see, the war started in 1940?

MS. LAURIA: Forty-one.

MR. HUBBELL: Forty-one. Probably in '40, which I would have been about 9, we lived for a while in North Carolina. And then we moved to New Mexico, Santa Fe, and we lived there. And I was there when the war started. And I think that was the influence, particularly in my architecture. I'm pretty sure that's where the adobe comes from, because we lived in an old adobe house, which I really liked.

MS. LAURIA: That's wonderful. So is your mother remarried to somebody —

MR. HUBBELL: They just kept changing.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. [Laughs.] So you had a new father that she moved out West with.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, he was a reporter and he had a job on the newspaper in Santa Fe, so we moved there. And then I think we moved back East again, lived there during the war. And then when I was in high school she moved back to California, but I stayed because at that point, well — so I was — in high school, because I was interested in horses, I went to Valley Forge Military Academy because they had a cavalry.

MS. LAURIA: Oh. It seems awful structured for you to go to a military school.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it was the horses.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: It was very structured. You know, actually when you graduated from high school you graduated as a second lieutenant in the Army. So it was pretty much like — it was very structured.

MS. LAURIA: It must have been very difficult for you, coming from a lifestyle that had so much fluidity to — you

know, considering that you had moved so much, it seemed like you came from a very unstructured lifestyle.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, my mother was very organized.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I mean, she was very smart. And one of her problems was she would marry people she thought she could help, you know. They were alcoholics or something, and she would help them with their business and pretty soon she was running the business and they were drinking more. [They laugh.]

MS. LAURIA: So she was a real organizer.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, but she had a drinking problem too.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: So at Valley Forge I remember I took art, and I still have the painting, I think. It's a still life of a helmet that you wore. And then after that I went to Choate, which is a prep school. And they had — you could major in art there. And that meant that you had two days — two periods a day, which is really — I mean, kids now don't even get a half a period a week, you know?

MS. LAURIA: Wow.

MR. HUBBELL: But you could do — and so there was five of us that sort of majored in it. And you could also — during the weekend you could go to the studio and work whenever you want. So that kind of — and also because there was also guys — because at that point it was just a boys' school — that were sort of serious about art. I think that kind of was important.

MS. LAURIA: That was a real turning point for you then.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I think it — well, in a sense, everything that happened leads to something. But I think that was important.

MS. LAURIA: Choate is very expensive, though, isn't it? It's a very expensive private school, so did your family have the means to send you or did you go on scholarship?

MR. HUBBELL: No, my grandfather, he actually was the person I sort of identify with. You know, he went to Harvard, worked as a reporter to earn his way through it, and studied with William James. So he was interested in philosophy and art. His brother was an engineer.

And apparently they were driving back to Kansas, because they were from Independence, Kansas, and his brother said, that hill there looks like there's oil there. So they got out of the car and ran around it and then went and borrowed money from all of their relatives and leased the hill. And that was the beginning of the oil in Kansas.

MS. LAURIA: How fortuitous.

MR. HUBBELL: So my mother had a trust, and that trust is really — it's not a lot but it really was the thing that let me do what I could — I couldn't have built this on what I earned as — but it's not — you know, it was enough so that I didn't have to think, we're not going to eat if we don't —

MS. LAURIA: Right. So it allowed you to go to Choate too. It was —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, well, my mother was paying for it at that time.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: But it allowed us also to not be sort of hamstrung. So Without that we were —

MR. HUBBELL: It gave you the independence that you needed —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — to do what you wanted to do in life —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — without having to work at a menial job —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — while you did your art.

MR. HUBBELL: You know, like after — well, let me finish telling —

MS. LAURIA: Go ahead.

MR. HUBBELL: The teacher I had there was Art Koch.

MS. LAURIA: K-O-C-H?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. He had actually worked for Disney. But he was more of a traditional artist. One of his best friends was Stevan Dohanos.

MS. LAURIA: Are you saying Johannes?

MR. HUBBELL: Stevan Dohanos.

MS. LAURIA: Dohanos.

MR. HUBBELL: Who at that time — I think it was Norman Rockwell, and he was the other person that did the covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: So I could easily have gone into —

MS. LAURIA: Illustration.

MR. HUBBELL: — illustration. I could easily have done it. Also at Choate I read a little book about watercolors and started doing watercolors.

I'm thinking if there's other things that happened.

MS. LAURIA: So you found that you had a real affinity and passion for the arts while you were there.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, the other thing which I was — I probably am dyslexic. I can't spell very well and I'm a slow reader. So I could do the art; I couldn't do the other stuff.

MS. LAURIA: Do you think you're slightly dyslexic?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, I'm pretty sure I am. So it was kind of — the art was kind of like the horses. It was an escape.

MS. LAURIA: Well, it was rewarding too because —

MR. HUBBELL: It was rewarding.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: And I think in a sense, because I couldn't do the other things very well, my mother was happy that I was doing something.

MS. LAURIA: Well, and you were getting praise for doing something very well, so you felt rewarded by it.

Did you enter any exhibitions at school? Did you get any awards for your drawings or recognition while you were at Choate? Did your teachers encourage you?

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, yes, I mean, but I don't think there was any major thing like that.

MS. LAURIA: But did your teachers say you should go to college and major in art?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, what happened was I'd really had a sort of a very fortunate — I mean, things kind of happened without my knowing where they're going — I used to hitchhike a lot. I mean, a really lot. I hitchhiked back and forth across the country three times. And at one point when I was at Choate, I — we would get two or three weeks of vacation — hitchhiked to Florida, worked in a carnival.

I came back to New York. And my sister was a dancer and I was waiting for her on her doorstep, and the two guys across the hall said, "Why don't you wait in here?" And in the morning I wanted to go to an art museum. So

I must have been starting to be interested in art. And I thought I needed a jacket, so I knocked on the door.

Neither of them were there but another guy was there and I asked him if I could borrow a jacket. And he said, "Sure. Come in and pick one out." He kind of talked to me a while and he said, "You know, last year I went to Africa and I took a movie. Would you like to come see it?" So in the afternoon I did. And eventually he asked me, he said, "I'm going to Africa again." This was 12th grade. "I'm going to Africa in the summer. Would you like to go?" So I end up going to Africa with him almost a year. And he was Darwin's great-great-grandson —

MS. LAURIA: Oh, how wonderful.

MR. HUBBELL: — which — to jump ahead — so I went to Africa with him and I did a lot of watercolors. And I think that was the first time I had any published. There was a magazine in South Africa that published probably these four of the watercolors.

MR. HUBBELL: What was he shooting a film on?

MS. LAURIA: Well, he had done some work for the National Geographic. He was interested in the Bushmen. He was interested in — he was trying to find the Quagga. It was — which I believe an extinct zebra. And so we went everywhere south of the Belgian Congo — Angola and the Rhodesias, Mozambique, Botswana.

MS. LAURIA: So you were — were you helping him like as a production assistant or anything, or just a traveling companion?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, part of the trip there was a number of other college kids the first two months, but the last probably six months I was just with him. And we had a boy who would ride on top of the truck.

And I wasn't a photography assistant but, you know, we would make camp and I would help do that. When we were in bush country and it was raining, I would walk in one track and the boy would walk in the other looking for holes. So, yeah.

MS. LAURIA: Did you miss 12th grade then?

MR. HUBBELL: No, this was — I had just graduated.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, okay, so it was after graduation.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. So —

MS. LAURIA: Quite an opportunity.

MR. HUBBELL: A huge opportunity. I'll come back to him.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: The other thing which happened at Choate which I think was important — I went there three years. The first two years they kept — it's a prep school. The last year they decided I wasn't college material, so they let me take classes like history and — that I kind of liked.

So I think what happened the last year, I really began loving to learn things, history and English and — I had just amazing teachers. I got very poor grades, mostly because of spelling, but I think that was a critical thing because it opened sort of the whole world of thinking. It became something fascinating to me.

MS. LAURIA: So you learned that you loved to learn.

MR. HUBBELL: That I loved thinking about things, because it's easy for a young person to shut that world off.

So on the way back from Africa we went from Angola to Lisbon, and Quentin went to England because his parents were there.

MS. LAURIA: Quentin was the one —

MR. HUBBELL: Quentin Keynes.

MS. LAURIA: Keynes?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: I just didn't — you hadn't mentioned what his name was. He was the one who was the great-great-

great —

MR. HUBBELL: I also — well, I spent — I got off at Lisbon and then I went to wander around. And Quentin — when I got to England, which was about two or three months later, I went to visit Quentin's parents, who lived near Cambridge. And Quentin's dad had been knighted as a doctor, but he was also the guy that wrote the catalogue for the Tate for William Blake.

MS. LAURIA: Oh.

MR. HUBBELL: So I remember — now, I'm 18, you know — having dinner with them. And Siegfried Sassoon, do you know who he is?

MS. LAURIA: No, not exactly. I know "Sassoon" is a famous name of a dealer for art, but I don't know if it's the same person.

MR. HUBBELL: No. Siegfried Sassoon is one of the two or three major poets of the —

MS. LAURIA: Okay, not the same person.

MR. HUBBELL: — of the First World War.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: He wrote about the trenches and everything. But he was having dinner with Sir Geoffrey Keynes, and they started pulling out Blake's drawings, because he had a big collection of them. So I spent the evening listening to them talking about Blake. And for some reason Blake sort of stuck with — I keep finding people that that's their world. There's some connection between —

MS. LAURIA: You're only 18 years old and you're plopped down into this very rarified world.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. No, you know, I mean, it's just really strange, the things that happen to you. Actually Siegfried was driving to London the next day and he had this, like, 1909 green racing car, and he drove me to London. [They laugh.]

So on that trip, you know, that's where I went across the Pyrenees and met those people and went to Capri —

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: — and then went back to Paris. And I think also that trip I was hitchhiking near Fontainebleau, and this old Citroën car came, the kind that sort of come apart. And there were three big guys in it and they were all doctors in this — it was like a chateau for ancient people. So they invited me to come and have lunch there. And his brother was studying to be an architect.

So when I went to Paris I went and visited his brother, and his brother became one of my best friends. His brother did the science — the big Science Museum in Paris, and he specializes in hospitals and art museums.

MS. LAURIA: And you met him on this trip when you were 18 years old and you're still friends?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: How lovely.

MR. HUBBELL: And when he got married, they came and stayed here.

But I think also when I was in — I think I was in Notre Dame Cathedral, and I'm pretty — I went three times to Europe, but I think it's this first time that I saw the windows in Chartres. Not Chartres — Notre Dame. And it wasn't the windows that got me interested but it was the light, the way the light would fall in the room. And that was a big thing. I think that's where I started being curious about doing windows.

MS. LAURIA: Right. So that of course would be the experience —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — of being in that church and the light coming down as you're walking through.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: The Rose Window, I think.

MR. HUBBELL: So I think Gothic architecture really interests me.

MS. LAURIA: Well, that's the mother of all — Gothic architecture — isn't it?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, there's a couple of things about it — I digress.

MS. LAURIA: No, go ahead.

MR. HUBBELL: If you think about most of the contemporary architecture, a lot of it's very flat. You know, it looks like it could have been put on with a roller.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.]

MR. HUBBELL: There's not shadows. Gothic architecture, half of it's shadows. So it probably means that the Gothics were comfortable with mystery but we're not. So when we begin doing architecture that has shadows, it will probably mean that we're beginning to take mystery as not a scary thing.

MS. LAURIA: And it's because of the columns and the way that the columns cast the shadows and the —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. I think, you know, they have the saying, "Form follows function." It doesn't make sense. Form follows ideas. It's what you think, is what you do. And if you think functionally, then that's an idea and that's what you do. But if you think unfunctionally, you do unfunctional things. [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: Say that again? I didn't catch it all. If you think what you do —

MR. HUBBELL: If you think functionally — you know, a function is — then you do architecture that is basically functional. But if you — depending on how you think about things is what you do. And so if you want to know what a culture is doing, you look at what they do. You don't look at what they say, you know?

MS. LAURIA: And yesterday too you mentioned about — maybe we're not there yet — about your teacher at the Whitney School.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. No, we're not there yet.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: We're almost there.

MS. LAURIA: But let's not forget about what he said —

[Cross talk.]

MS. LAURIA: — Okay — about his principles too.

So this was your first trip to Europe, and that's when you saw, at Notre Dame —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — and the way that the light impacted you experientially.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And that was — so it made such a great impact on you and you began to think about that —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — and also the Gothic architecture —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — and about the mystery of the —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I don't think I understood that at that point.

MS. LAURIA: No, but you remembered it.

MR. HUBBELL: That's something that came much later.

Well, okay, so I came back and I went to Whitney. It was partly that —

MS. LAURIA: But you weren't college material. That's what they said. So you didn't believe that.

MR. HUBBELL: No, it was an art school. It wasn't a college.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Whitney was an art school. No, I wasn't college material.

MS. LAURIA: So an art school is different then. You could go to an art school.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, to jump ahead, when I went to Cranbrook they had a history of art — you know, you took history of art.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: I was supposed to write a paper about Byzantine. I knew I wasn't good at spelling so I had somebody correct it. Then I recorrected it. I got it back and it had written on it, "Congratulation, Mr. Hubbell, for spelling your name right. This is a masterpiece of illiteracy." [They laugh.]

Now, this is an art school. Two weeks later the teacher came over and said, "I'm so sorry I wrote that. I thought you were kidding." [They laugh.] So I wasn't — that's why I married a school teacher.

MS. LAURIA: Well, today you wouldn't have to worry about it because now they have spell check.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I don't know if it would have helped.

But the art school, I think the teacher from Choate kind of knew the people.

MS. LAURIA: Well, I'm confused. When did you go to Cranbrook?

MR. HUBBELL: After. Later.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: We're not there yet.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. All right, so Whitney is in New Haven.

MR. HUBBELL: Whitney is after Africa.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. All right.

MR. HUBBELL: Whitney was — Albers had taken over the art department at Yale. Remember, the Bauhaus people were moving into the country.

MS. LAURIA: Yes.

MR. HUBBELL: He took over everything. And all these teachers — there was about three or four of them either were fired or just left and started this little school. It was in an old big house. And I think partly — there were a lot of people with GI Bills, and so a lot of them didn't work too hard. You know, they were just going to school.

So Lou York — there's maybe two people and he's one of the really pivotal people. He taught design. And, you know, up until then I thought abstract stuff was you took a body and took it apart and scattered it around. [They laugh.] I didn't know what it was about.

So we started with four straight lines and 20 straight lines and you'd do a drawing. And it would take me half a day to do it so I was happy with it.

MS. LAURIA: And Lou York was head of the school, Whitney?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, he was a teacher.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And that was in New Haven at the time.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and I —

MS. LAURIA: And what year are we talking about?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I got back from Africa in '51, so it would have been probably '51, '52. I just went one year.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, then, you know — I don't know if you've seen it, but, you know, you do four curved lines and 20 curved lines, four squares, you know?

MS. LAURIA: They're exercises.

MR. HUBBELL: Exercises.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And then you do — eventually you choose a still life and you do the still life in complete flat tone and outline ideographics system, which is a Renaissance system; you know, completely realism.

And then eventually surrealistic — you do a surrealist, and then do as an abstract. So by the time you got through with his class, he had given you the whole — you had — you could do whatever you wanted because you knew where it fit.

MS. LAURIA: Right. It was like sort of the foundation.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And in a sense that's kind of ruined me, because most art people want to know what you do, and they can't get a hold of what I do because I kind of move around. I kind of pick what I'm doing by what the subject is, not because I — do you know what I mean?

MS. LAURIA: You mean they want to categorize you.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, if you can name it, it exists. If you can't name it, it doesn't exist. So it sort of liberated me but it also set me aside from what was "supposed" to be done.

MS. LAURIA: Right, because you don't just work in one discipline.

MR. HUBBELL: No.

MS. LAURIA: You work cross-disciplinary.

MR. HUBBELL: Cross-discipline, yes, not only material-wise and, you know, architecture and jewelry and the whole thing, but —

MS. LAURIA: Stylistically.

MR. HUBBELL: — stylistically. They're all stuff I can use. I mean, I can do what I want with it.

MS. LAURIA: Well, that's a gift.

MR. HUBBELL: It's a huge gift, but it's not — it doesn't — it sets you on a path that is different.

MS. LAURIA: Right, because — you're saying it makes it different for the art world to understand you because they can't put you into a slot.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. As we go a little further you'll get more of an idea what I'm talking about.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. So this was a year that you spent at the Whitney School.

MR. HUBBELL: The Whitney.

MS. LAURIA: Was it called the Whitney School of Art?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I don't know if it had any connection — there was a guy that taught realism who is — and he taught perspective who's somebody you see in museums all the time. I can't remember his name. There were about three teachers I had there. Then somebody taught life drawing.

I'm not positive — see, a lot of this stuff is in here.

MS. LAURIA: "In here" meaning —

MR. HUBBELL: The dates.

MS. LAURIA: The dates. Oh, in your book called *James Hubbell*: —

MR. HUBBELL: The retrospective —

MS. LAURIA: — *the Retrospective*, from the Oceanside Museum of Art. And you're going to give a copy of that to the Archives.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: So you can always check me. [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: Okay, right.

MR. HUBBELL: Because this is probably right.

MS. LAURIA: All right, the retrospective essay then.

MR. HUBBELL: I kind of think I went back to Europe again and mostly hitchhiked around. And then I might have just gone into the Army. And I think I went to Europe because I — well, I got drafted and I went to Korea. And there's another thing that happened. I went into the Army with the idea I would do the best I can. I didn't want to do it.

MS. LAURIA: So you weren't a pacifist or anything.

MR. HUBBELL: I was, but I didn't —

MS. LAURIA: You didn't act on it.

MR. HUBBELL: — act on it. And then —

MS. LAURIA: It's interesting. I was just going to ask you, you're not a Quaker or anything, because it seems like you would have, you know, had that's sort of leaning. I've interviewed other artists who were Quakers and decided, you know, to play that card and not to go into the service.

MR. HUBBELL: No, I think I was fairly accepting of life.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: There is one thing that I didn't tell you. My mother — during the Second World War my uncle had gone into the Navy and was graduating from — I think it was Annapolis. My mother took me to his graduation. And so I would have been about 9 or 10. And they went to an old Victorian house for sort of a party, you know. And it was all blacked out because it was on the beach, you know, so there was no lights.

They left me sitting in this big wicker chair on the porch for a couple of hours. And I remember seeing these guys with their girlfriends come out and kiss and talk. And I knew a lot of these guys weren't going to live. And so it was kind of moving and I kind of told myself that I hope — I wanted to do what I did. I wanted to find beauty and I wanted to do it for the good stuff. And that's something that has stayed with me. That's probably why we do these conversations on beauty now.

MS. LAURIA: The symposiums that you have —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — at different venues, at museums and such.

MR. HUBBELL: So that comes really early. And I also told myself I never wanted to know what it was.

MS. LAURIA: What what was?

MR. HUBBELL: Beauty was.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, you don't want to really define it.

MR. HUBBELL: I know that if you define something, it dies.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: As soon as you've named it, it's dead.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: It can't move.

MS. LAURIA: You just want to keep discussing it but you don't really want to beat it to death.

MR. HUBBELL: It's sort of like you set a goal. The goal takes you somewhere. You don't have to know where you're going. And with my work, what I find often is that I'll do something, it doesn't seem beautiful. In two or three years I'll go back and it is. So I kind of think the work leads you. You don't lead it.

But that's probably — there's about four things like that. Another thing that happened when I was a young person is — you know, I won't tell you the whole thing, but —

MS. LAURIA: Well, the place on the beach, that was a revelation for you.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it wasn't a revelation. It was something I decided.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. Right then when you were 9 years old?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And then also in that same time my mother used to have these parties and there would be a lot of drinking and things. But at one point I just decided, you know, adults really don't know what they're doing. [They laugh.] You're going to have to find out what life's about.

And there's a picture in here. This burned up, but this one — this is one I did at Whitney.

MS. LAURIA: And Whitney. Okay, you're referring to a drawing that's in this catalogue for the Oceanside Museum retrospective, and it's a drawing and it is *Self-Portrait* from the Whitney Art School. And it's an egg tempera and it's a big —

MR. HUBBELL: It was fairly small. It was about that big.

MS. LAURIA: Right, but I mean, it's a bigger face on top of a smaller face —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — that looks like it's in a ruin in a decayed area, and trees are decimated and —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and there's —

MS. LAURIA: Oh, and then there's another face that looks like it's drowning.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, I think it's [Stalin ?] or something. But this is me, and the head's busted. And this God, and the head's busted.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And I kind of figured out later that what it's about, I've realized I had to find out where it was going; what's in God's head and what's in my head.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, right, and God is — he's leaning on top of your head.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Now, that burned up in the fire.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, that drawing, right.

MR. HUBBELL: No, the painting.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, the painting. Oh, that's a painting. Okay, sorry. That's egg tempera, right.

MR. HUBBELL: Egg tempera.

MS. LAURIA: Which, just to digress a moment, the fire happened here you said in, like, 2004?

MR. HUBBELL: Three.

MS. LAURIA: Three. And we'll get to that, but that was a huge, huge loss of the property and almost all of your artwork at that time, correct?

MR. HUBBELL: No, no, but —

MS. LAURIA: But a lot of it.

MR. HUBBELL: — a lot.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, so we're back to you got drafted. And that was for the Korean War, so that must have been in the '50s, right?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And I was in Korea seven months before — while the fighting was still going on, and seven months after.

But what happened was that I got drafted, got through basic training, and they took about seven of us and were going to send us to G2 school, which is intelligence. And so they flew us up to Alameda in San Francisco. And part of the thing was a lie detector test.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. When you get drafted, how long is that for? Is that two years?

MR. HUBBELL: Two years.

MS. LAURIA: Two years, okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And there was a lie detector test. And I had been reading *Plato's Dialogues*, and I didn't have anybody to talk to so I started talking to the psychiatrist. I don't know if it was that, but he put me back in the infantry.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, no. [They laugh.]

MR. HUBBELL: Well, you know, everything sort of does what it does. So it was the most depressing thing I'd ever — because, you know, everybody was going to go to Korea.

It was a very strange time, but one of the things I decided there too is that you couldn't let other people tell you — you couldn't just do what other people wanted. You had to do what you thought was best. So it was really a critical time. That was one of those turning points.

And so while I was at the base and on the troop ship going over to Korea, I would work on these sketchbooks, which I still have, doing realism, cartoons, portraits, just trying to show what I could do. So when I was in Tokyo at the — I would take it around to offices: "Do you need an artist?" And nothing happened.

They divided the people that — there was let's say 200 — in half, and half of them are going to go to Korea and half are going to go to chemical warfare. And I was with the chemical warfare. [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: I can't think of anything more devastating for you to be in that line.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, what happened is that I happened to take the book into an office, and there was a civilian there and he said, "Well, I know a colonel that's looking for an artist." So I went to that — took me off orders there.

I went to Tokyo, showed it to the colonel. He said, no, he didn't need one, but he had a friend in Korea that needed an artist. So I got — I was in the Headquarters Company and Troop Information Education. And I did posters, charts —

MS. LAURIA: Oh, thank goodness.

MR. HUBBELL: — delivered the newspaper and *Time* magazine. When the general was having cocktail parties, I would make the invitation.

MS. LAURIA: Much better than chemical warfare.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, but see — you know, and I became really good friends with Koreans and I would paint — I did a lot of painting, because it wasn't like the war now. I could go anywhere. Daegu was in the middle of Korea and all the fighting was up on the line, the 48th Parallel, so I could wander around and paint.

And then what I started doing was doing murals. You know, like in the officers' mess there was a wall that was about 35 feet by 10 feet, and I just painted huge murals.

MS. LAURIA: And did you take any photographs of them?

MR. HUBBELL: I either have photographs of some of them or I have —

MS. LAURIA: Sketches?

MR. HUBBELL: — some of the sketches, not all of them.

But the other thing that happened there is that I did a lot of work in the NCO Club, and that burnt down a week after I finished.

MS. LAURIA: Oh.

MR. HUBBELL: But wait. [They laugh.]

MS. LAURIA: Fire has been following you.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, not too much.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: But that I just — I was really crushed, and then I told myself: This is ridiculous. If you really like what you're doing, you should do it because you like doing it. If you're going to be miserable and everything, stop doing it.

So that was really good for me, you know. I mean, it helps a lot because a lot of things have been lost and people destroy them or lose them or — so you really — I'll get back to that one when we get to the fire.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. So you were able to go through the war by being an artist —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — for the remainder of your service contract time.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

[End of disc.]

MS. LAURIA: This is tape number two, recording for the Archives of American Art. Interviewer Jo Lauria interviewing James Hubbell at his home studio on Tuesday, July 31st.

So, Jim, we will continue on. We were discussing you being back in California in the mid-1950s.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And —

MR. HUBBELL: Okay, so Anne and I sort of courted one summer. And then I had planned to go to Europe for a year, so I went to Europe.

I tried to get a Fulbright but I didn't, but I had a whole bunch of friends from Cranbrook that did. So, like, one of them was studying bronze casting in Florence, so I went and slept in his kitchen. So I would work at the foundry. I knew — somewhere I met a lady sculptress in Rome, so I kind of worked in her studio.

So I went and — well, I had that friend in Paris. So I just wandered. I went down to almost all the cathedrals.

MS. LAURIA: And very early on would you say you were extremely hands-on with materials?

MR. HUBBELL: Absolutely.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. You were always a maker. I mean, you always wanted to get in there and work with the materials. It wasn't observation. You really wanted to —

MR. HUBBELL: No, I absolutely love materials.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: You know, I love what happens when you take a piece of iron and twist it, what the metal does.

Also at that point, that early period, I was interested in learning all the technical things. So if there was a new way of doing glass, I'd try it. Almost everything, I would just try it. So I developed a big vocabulary of what I could do and couldn't, you know.

MS. LAURIA: And so you were traveling around and you had a sketchbook, I assume, with you — many sketchbooks — and you were visiting cathedrals.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and museums and friends that I knew. And I didn't — I was hitchhiking. You know, like, I went to Spain and I lived on a month on a farm.

MS. LAURIA: Were you very frugal? I mean, is that what —

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, I could live for nothing.

MS. LAURIA: Right. So the hitchhiking wasn't only a philosophical thing; it was also a monetary choice.

MR. HUBBELL: Probably. I mean —

MS. LAURIA: I mean, I know a lot of young people at that time, when hitchhiking wasn't verboten like it is now because it's dangerous, but then it was also a community. People would hitchhike to meet other people. It was considered to be, you know, something that you would go around because it was an opportunity. You know, a lot of people did it but, I mean, we don't do it anymore. I mean, what was — the choice was then because —

MR. HUBBELL: I don't know. It never entered my head to do it any other way. [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: Any other way. I mean, now you take trains when you go to Europe, but then people did hitchhike around.

MR. HUBBELL: It wasn't that usual. I mean, actually in Europe what you found is that the people at the hostels were either a lot of Australians — they would come for two or three years — a lot of South Africans, a lot of Californians — nobody from any of the other states — and then on holidays the Germans, you know.

MS. LAURIA: So when you hitchhiked, who picked you up?

MR. HUBBELL: People.

MS. LAURIA: Who had the cars?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I mean, like one of the things was I was hitchhiking during the Suez crisis, so there wasn't a lot of oil, gas. And in France you'd wait a long time. You got across the border to Holland and they'd practically race to get you. [They laugh.] So I don't know. It's just —

MS. LAURIA: It was different times.

MR. HUBBELL: I think the one thing that it did for me is that it made me comfortable with being by myself. You know, you're standing in the rain in Kansas for 12 hours waiting for somebody to pick you up, you learn to sort of live in your mind and you don't have to be stimulated. So I think in some ways it taught me that, you know.

MS. LAURIA: And you probably carried a book with you everywhere, one or two or three.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, but you can't read it while you're —

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.] Having your thumb out? Okay. So you're hitchhiking through Europe.

MR. HUBBELL: A couple of the things — one of the big things which was a big influence was I went to Vence in the South of France where Matisse did his chapel.

MS. LAURIA: Yes.

MR. HUBBELL: Have you seen it?

MS. LAURIA: No.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I went to early morning mass there before anybody — it's a Dominican chapel, so the nuns wear black and white. And the priest had been a missionary. He had a white beard and had a bright orange robe — Matisse. And the building is very simple but really nice. And then the sun came up. Well, the minister gave the service as if he was just talking to God. And the sun came up and the light came through.

So probably that and early impressions of Notre Dame were two of the big — and I think that's why when I do windows, I don't — I really like the color and I like the line. I can do all of the tricky things but it's really the line and the color. For me it doesn't need all of this other stuff.

MS. LAURIA: So when you were there, when the minister was giving the service, it was early in the morning so it was the —

MR. HUBBELL: It was still dark.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, so when the morning light came in, it was that impact —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — that really made an impact on you.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: It must have been wonderful. It was still dark? It was like at 6:00 a.m. in the morning or something?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it was probably winter.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, okay. So you sought these places out. You had read about them and —

MR. HUBBELL: Or somebody told me.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: I think the other thing which was a huge influence was at the academy in Florence they have the unfinished — what they call the unfinished sculptures by Michelangelo. I think —

MS. LAURIA: The slaves?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, they call them different things. But I —

MS. LAURIA: The barbarians, I think they call them that too.

MR. HUBBELL: I think they're the best things he did.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, me too. I love them, the energy.

MR. HUBBELL: But what I discovered — because I went back to it about three times just because I couldn't figure them out, and I discovered you'd walk around them and they would — at one point they would twist. And you'd go a little while and they would sort of reach out, and then they'd go — and they would change. You couldn't tell what was happening on the back from what was happening on the front, where the *David* is like a telephone. You know what the back is like without going to the back.

MS. LAURIA: Why is that like a telephone?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, a telephone, you know, you know what's on the other side. You don't have to go look at it.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.]

MR. HUBBELL: So I just think he —

MS. LAURIA: It's very static, you mean. The *David* is very static.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. As he grew older and more — he just got better.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, I think the slaves, or the barbarians, or whatever you want to call them, they are really

masterful because they are so distorted.

MR. HUBBELL: And the way he would use the finished and the partially finished and completely unfinished, and play with the whole — you know —

MS. LAURIA: The rough against the smooth.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. You know, at the beginning, this whole story of the stone and the — I think that was a huge influence, his work.

MS. LAURIA: Have you done anything similar in your work?

MR. HUBBELL: Probably nothing as good. [They laugh.] I think this building actually has some of that. I mean, I don't think you can really tell what's going to happen. But I have no idea how you do it, you know.

It's like one of those things you can kind of comprehend what's happening but how do you — you know, like I think one of our problems is that we have the saying, "In the beginning was the Word," and don't think it means that, but it has come to mean that if you can explain it, it's real. And I kind of think that maybe in the beginning was the pattern or the rhythm, and that things really — so, like in my life it's kind of like you're living within this musical thing.

MS. LAURIA: Well, this is a good time, because you already talked about the Whitney and about your teacher, York —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — but you didn't talk about music and what he said about work. And now you're talking about rhythm, and you should tell us about his philosophy of work, what you told me last night, what he said, if work —

MR. HUBBELL: That's not exactly — it was just a way of explaining — York said that if you do something really realistic, it's like a dictionary. If you have a chair and you want to tell about that it belonged to your grandmother, it's like a novel. If you're interested in the chair but in the rhythm and the pattern, you're doing poetry. If you take the chair and take the forms and use them abstractly, it's music. And that you have — he was trying to say that you have the choice. You can do any of these things.

MS. LAURIA: Right. So the way that you choose to work with your materials and your techniques, you have this open field.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: You can do it any of those ways.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and unless you want to, you don't need to be sort of tied to another.

MS. LAURIA: Right, which is why you say that the art world sometimes has a difficulty of categorizing you because you have those choices.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: You can be as literal, as representational, or as abstract as —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, or mix them up if you want to.

MS. LAURIA: Right, or intermix them, or mash them up any way that you choose.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, so now I — oh, so you're traveling in Europe and you're looking at cathedrals, and you see the light. You go to see in Provence —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, Provence.

MS. LAURIA: So you might be thinking to yourself, you know, this might be something that I want to aspire to.

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, I had already started doing windows.

MS. LAURIA: That's right, because you had done some windows at that point.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and I actually did a little commission in Cranbrook —

MS. LAURIA: Oh.

MR. HUBBELL: — a restaurant I did some windows for.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, so you're already maybe sketching out some windows.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and I — when I was hitchhiking across the United States I would go see studios. You know, like there used to be a studio in — somewhere in Texas, I think, Frye [ph] Studio, and they had — they had, like, five or six artists and a number of craftsmen. So the artists would take a job and the craftsmen would build it. So it wasn't one artist.

And they were doing — there was kind of a renaissance of glass. You know, like in Germany it was — the studios were doing it. And there were a lot of good things. In France, the government had hired some priest to get the artists to do all of the windows to — restoring. Léger and Chagall and a lot of the major artists did windows in those churches. So there were churches you could go see that — some of them bigger and some smaller that were good. In England it was really the students that were doing the exciting work.

MS. LAURIA: In California there were the Judson Studios in Pasadena. Did you go to visit them?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Well, I didn't — there was another studio in Pasadena, Wallace [ph] Studio or something. It wasn't as big as the Judson's. And I actually spent a summer working with them.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, to learn their techniques?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. You know, I don't know if I did designer — what I was doing. So I kind of hung around. And there weren't any schools teaching it at that time.

MS. LAURIA: Right. I don't think there still is any real schools that teach this kind of stained glass at this level.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Well, it's interesting because, like, you know, they would say back then that stained glass was dead. I don't know. And basically what they were saying is that the glass was all over-painted, so it really died. [They laugh.] But it wasn't that stained glass was dead; it was just that people were afraid of the light.

MS. LAURIA: So were you starting to build a clientele by this time and people were starting to contact you to do commissions?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, that was really Bruce.

MS. LAURIA: Through Bruce Richards.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So when he would get a commission to build a house or remodel, he would call you up and say, "I want you to do this window for me."

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And then you would do a drawing?

MR. HUBBELL: Or I would do — I did carve columns, I did fireplaces, I did swimming pools. I worked with the gunite guys. I'd work with the stone guys, with the tiling guys. I'd do doors and —

MS. LAURIA: So it wasn't just the stained glass.

MR. HUBBELL: No.

MS. LAURIA: You were also doing — explain some of the other types of projects you would do with Bruce.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, almost anything.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, "almost anything" included what? Stonework?

MR. HUBBELL: Doors, stonework. I'd work with a mason. I'd work with the gunite guys.

MS. LAURIA: You would work also with iron, doing custom —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and I was doing that. We were doing that.

Let's see, when and where are we now?

MS. LAURIA: Well, I think we're still in the '50s.

MR. HUBBELL: We're in Europe still.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, well, we were in Europe and then you jumped back to when you were working with Bruce here in California.

[End of disc.]

MS. LAURIA: So we were back — continuing the tape — in Korea. When did you get discharged from —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, there was a couple of things that happened.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, go ahead.

MR. HUBBELL: Because I was at the Headquarters Company we kind of knew things that were happening that the colonels didn't know. And I got one leave and two 15-day leaves.

So I not only got to see a lot of Japan, because I would sort of wander around, but I learned how to do woodblock printing one of the times. And then I made friends with a guy and learned how to do lacquer painting. I would go to his home. And he and his mother and father and brother did their — all did lacquer painting.

MS. LAURIA: Was he Japanese?

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, yeah.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And I don't know — you know, lacquer is like working with poison ivy, so you break out. They thought it was very funny. [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: Oh, I didn't know that. So you had a terrible allergic reaction to it?

MR. HUBBELL: Almost everybody does.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, right.

MR. HUBBELL: But that was — so I kind of got — I haven't done any of that for a long time, either the woodblock printing or the — then when I found out that if you enrolled in a university you could get out in 21 months and one day. So I did that, and I wound up going to San Diego State and taking philosophy one summer.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, you mean after you got out of —

MR. HUBBELL: Of the Army.

MS. LAURIA: — out of the Army. You could get out on the GI Bill, you mean?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Well, you could get out if you were going to a university.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: So I took philosophy, really great teacher. And we would go to the classroom twice a week. And then on Sundays we would go to his backyard and sit under the arbor, drink coffee and talk about Plato and Socrates. And there was, like, eight people in the class.

MS. LAURIA: Do you remember his name?

MR. HUBBELL: I could find it.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: While I was at State, I would go over to the art department. And Mrs. Ruocco — do you know Lloyd Ruocco?

MS. LAURIA: No. R-O-C-K-O?

MR. HUBBELL: I'm not sure.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: But there was about three or four good artists in San Diego— they never were really famous, but really good architects, and Lloyd was one of them. And his wife taught there and also the lady that started Mingei Museum.

MS. LAURIA: Martha Longenecker.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, they were there, so I met them. And kind of through them I met — began to meet people in Allied Craftsmen.

MS. LAURIA: The Allied Craftsmen Guild, Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: You know, and different people. So that kind of was the beginning of my connecting with San Diego.

MS. LAURIA: Martha Longenecker was teaching ceramics —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — at San Diego State University, right? And the Allied Craftsmen Association was the — well, it was a big organization here in the '50s, '60s.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, this would have been in the '50s.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Probably '55 or something.

MS. LAURIA: Right. All right.

MR. HUBBELL: The other thing, I had met somebody in Korea who suggested going to Cranbrook, so I applied to Cranbrook. And the painting department was filled so I had to take sculpture.

So these are sort of things that — you know, like the horses leading to drawing. The things kind of all fit. It's not like you decided to do something that the world decides for you that this is — so that opened a whole new world.

And I don't know; there's a picture in my studio of — have you been to Cranbrook?

MS. LAURIA: I have been to Cranbrook, yes.

MR. HUBBELL: You know the bull, their Europa?

MS. LAURIA: The bull, yes. *The Rape of Europa*.

MR. HUBBELL: My studio for two years was, like, 30 feet from that.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, how wonderful.

MR. HUBBELL: It looked right out at it in the snow and everything. And I was downstairs in the basement. There were, like, seven or eight different cubicles.

MS. LAURIA: Who was head of the sculpture department at that time?

MR. HUBBELL: I could probably find it, but I — Glen Chamberlain.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: The teachers were good but they weren't great.

MS. LAURIA: And we're talking about 1955?

MR. HUBBELL: Probably '6.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, 1956.

MR. HUBBELL: I went two years there.

MS. LAURIA: It wasn't the graduate program.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, except I didn't have any college.

MS. LAURIA: Well, you had San Diego State.

MR. HUBBELL: You know, one summer.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, just one semester?

MR. HUBBELL: I don't think they required it.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: You know, there was a boy there that was 17 and there was a lady that was — a nun that was 65.

And it was really interesting because almost all the people had more experience than I did, so I could walk down the hall, watch somebody doing a large figure, see how they corrected it. So you were — it was like watching a piece of corn grow.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.]

MR. HUBBELL: You know, it wasn't lectures.

MS. LAURIA: It was more like an atelier set up.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And, you know, like the guy that — I could find these names, but there was a guy that had studied bronze casting in Italy, where you would help them two or three times with the same — and you knew how to do bronze casting.

So there weren't kind of formal lectures. You just sort of learned from everybody. Actually, the metalsmithing was the most formal. He would give you problems.

MS. LAURIA: Was that Dick Thomas?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Richard Thomas?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: That was the — [inaudible]. So I took painting and sculpture.

But, like, you know, I was, let's say, doing two different kinds of paintings, and one of the teachers would — [Glen] Chamberlain, I think — I think he was — that was — he would come down and say, "Jim, these are really good but I don't think you should bother with this stuff." The next teacher would come down and say exactly the opposite — [they laugh] — which was fine. You listened to what they say and then you have to decide.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: You can't depend — so it's good to find out that nobody can tell you what you're supposed to do. You have to — either you do it or you don't.

MS. LAURIA: Right. And what was your personal life like at this time? Did you have girlfriends, relationships? Or did you sort of say, I'm on a career path now and I'm not interested? I mean, did your relationship with Anne come later in life?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. I was pretty inhibited because of my mother, you know. And I was very skeptical of a wedding, a marriage. And I kind of almost told myself, if you hold a girl's hand, you had to marry her. [They laugh.]

But I did have some friends. I mean, actually one of the — I knew a girl, a lady artist in Korea, and we still actually write to each other. It was never a girlfriend. I had some friends at Cranbrook that once in a while we would go to a play or something, but they weren't girlfriends.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: You know, pretty much I would get up in the morning, I'd go for a walk, I'd work all morning, have lunch. I think I'd go for a walk, then work on sculpture all afternoon, have dinner, do painting. About 10:00 or 11:00, I would go for a walk at night.

So a huge amount of what I learned was just being there, you know. I mean, how to place things, what to do with space, why things work, why they don't. You know, just being — it's not just the building and it's not just the sculpture. It's the grounds and it's the way they're put together. You can almost learn everything you need from just being there.

MS. LAURIA: Right. Well, Cranbrook, it's a beautiful location and environment because a lot of it was orchestrated by Saarinen, by the father and the son.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, and also —

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: — the landscape guy, whoever did the landscape.

MS. LAURIA: Right. Carl Milles's sculptures are everywhere on the property.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: It is really a magical place.

MR. HUBBELL: So it was a huge — and I think also people were really serious about what they're doing.

MS. LAURIA: And you got to see everybody in the different disciplines, right? You saw the — was Maija Grotell teaching there in ceramics?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And the lady was — the weaving —

MS. LAURIA: Was it probably — oh, what's her name? It will come to me, the Scandinavian woman. Anyway —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And, you know, I had friends in all those departments. And I actually did a number of projects with some of the guys in the architectural department. You know, a guy from Australia, we designed a cathedral together. And there wasn't anything to be built but we did it together.

So I kind of — but I was pretty much a loner, you know. I had friends but I didn't really — I pretty much — I didn't talk much.

MS. LAURIA: Well, did you stay the summers there too, or did you come — I mean, where was your base at that point? Were you living in California?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Yes. We moved — my mother moved in '47, but actually I didn't really move probably until '55 because I was in the Army and traveling. And then it would almost have been later, almost '58, because after we got married — and then I was the executor to my mother's estate and stuff, so — she had a hotel. But that will wait.

MS. LAURIA: So the years that you were at Cranbrook, the two years, are —

MR. HUBBELL: She was out here.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, she moved out here when I was in 11th grade in Choate.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. So did you graduate from Cranbrook?

MR. HUBBELL: No, I went two years.

MS. LAURIA: And was it a three-year program?

MR. HUBBELL: I think for a graduate student it was two.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: But I never bothered to find out. [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: Okay, so you just left after the two years and figured that —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I wasn't the only one that was doing that. I don't know if it's that way anymore. I mean, I can't imagine that they do the same thing at Choate anymore. Why they let me stay there —

MS. LAURIA: No, no, I mean did you graduate Cranbrook? Did you get your MFA?

MR. HUBBELL: No.

MS. LAURIA: No. Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I would have had to have two years of college.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, okay. But so they let you go to the program, and then after the two years at Cranbrook you left?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And then did you come back to California, or did you travel more?

MR. HUBBELL: I think I came back. I would come back for a while sort of. And one of the things which had happened when I was in the Army — or at basic training I met a guy named James Hulbert [ph].

MS. LAURIA: Hulbert [ph], H-U-B-E-R-T [sic]?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And he was interested in art. He actually wound up teaching art at Palomar College and also philosophy. So we got to be friends. Well, he was sent to the front. When I got back — my mother lived in Rancho Santa Fe, and he went to a church, Questhaven, which is kind of in between San Marcos and Rancho Santa Fe.

So I walked over the hills one day to meet Jim — and I got to be friends with some of the people there. And one time they were all going to the beach and we were going to meet at the parking lot. And Anne and I were the only ones that showed up. So another friend said, "Well, you guys could go." So we went.

MS. LAURIA: So Jim Hulbert —

MR. HUBBELL: Jim Hulbert.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, but you and he and Anne were the only ones who went?

MR. HUBBELL: No, he didn't go.

MS. LAURIA: He didn't go.

MR. HUBBELL: It was just Anne and me. So we went to the beach, and then we went to dinner and we went to see *Moby Dick*. [They laugh.] So it's kind of — you know, like if I hadn't been drafted, if I'd been in the — a half-hour later I would have been into different company.

MS. LAURIA: Right. And you wouldn't have met Anne. That's how you met Anne.

MR. HUBBELL: Which is probably one of the biggies.

MS. LAURIA: I see. So that's how you met Anne, because she was the only one who showed up too.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And you showed up. And subsequently you married Anne.

MR. HUBBELL: Not quite that quick —

MS. LAURIA: No, no, but I mean that's how you first met.

MR. HUBBELL: — because I was still pretty cautious.

MS. LAURIA: Right, but that's how you first met her.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And what was what year?

MR. HUBBELL: Probably '57.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Probably '57.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. So you're back now in California. You've had this whole evolution of — wherever you've done, whatever you've done, there's always been some art involved, even when it was in the military. Or in the military you've actually had a lot of art because —

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, I had a lot.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, you've had a lot, because you learned lacquer, you learned woodblock, you did murals.

MR. HUBBELL: I had huge walls to paint —

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: — but nobody would ever give them to you.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: But they didn't mind what I'd end up —

MS. LAURIA: And then you had philosophy class at San Diego State. And then you got to know the people at the Allied Craftsmen. And then you went to Cranbrook. And now you're living in California.

MR. HUBBELL: Kind of.

MS. LAURIA: Kind of. Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Like, at that point I'd also met — I probably was more involved with — starting to be involved with the Allied Craftsmen.

MS. LAURIA: Right. Well, I forgot to ask you, but when you were at Cranbrook, were Charles and Ray Eames still there?

MR. HUBBELL: No.

MS. LAURIA: They had already left.

MR. HUBBELL: They'd left.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: The other person that I met — I think it was through my mother. My mother had a good friend that lived in Del Mar, and she — I think her name was Mrs. [Helen] Esling. She had a house designed by Bruce Richards, so I did some windows for it. Now, probably Lou York and Bruce are the kind of — besides Anne — the most important people.

Bruce had studied with Frank Lloyd Wright. He had been a weaver at Berkeley, and Frank Lloyd Wright had invited him to come to Taliesin.

MS. LAURIA: Taliesin West?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, he went to both.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, he went to both. Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And he was kind of Frank Lloyd Wright's houseboy during part of the '30s. And he did really nice, very fine things that suggest Frank Lloyd Wright but also suggest Japan, mainly wooden cedar buildings.

And he was — what I find is that the people that are kind of playful, almost kids, just get such a kick out of building, they're the most fun to work with. So Bruce didn't mind having me do things. So probably for 20, maybe 25 years, almost every building Bruce did, I did work for.

MS. LAURIA: This is Bruce Sim Richards.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

We're going to stop this tape here because I think we're running out of time, and we're going to change. End of tape one.

[End of disc.]

So when you were working with Bruce Sim Richards, you said he was playful. So he would ask you to do different parts of commissions for houses that he was working on. And you work in all different kinds of materials and different kinds of — you know, well, you do different things. You do bronze casting, you do metal works, you do stained glass, you do tile work, beautiful tile work. So can you describe some of the things that you would do with Bruce?

JAMES HUBBELL: All those things.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, all those things.

MR. HUBBELL: I think one of the things that was — a couple of things that were good for me was, one is I was working with good craftspeople. You know, like I would work with a brick mason. I'd work with Bruce. And I have been a brick mason for 40 years. So I learned a lot just being on the sites.

The other thing, Bruce is the kind of guy that he would only do probably one or two buildings at a time. He hardly ever had anybody working for him. He mostly did it himself. He was really good with clients. You know, like, if a client had one of Bruce's houses and they wanted to have a party 10 or 15 years later, they would invite all of the people that had Bruce's houses. They thought they were his family. And I think that relationship to people was really good for me to see how he did that.

MS. LAURIA: Now, I might be jumping ahead a bit, but when did you start thinking about this compound here where you live?

MR. HUBBELL: You're getting close.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: This is kind of a complex period. So I'm trying to do it so that it has some kind of order — because Bruce was one person. Ken Kellogg — do you know Ken?

MS. LAURIA: I do know who he is.

MR. HUBBELL: Ken worked for Bruce.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. He was also a fairly well-known architect.

MS. LAURIA: Ken is probably as good as anybody in the country but he doesn't get any work. He's very eccentric. Ken is one year younger than I am. So we're kind of — we're really good friends. I did some work for Ken's buildings in the beginning. And our kids grew up together.

MS. LAURIA: Ken is still living but Bruce is not.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Ken lives in Pauma Valley. So I think Ken, like Toza, who is also from this kind of period —

MS. LAURIA: Toza Radakovich.

MR. HUBBELL: — Radakovich — were probably — they were probably big influences, probably on both ways. You know, I'm not sure, but I think some of the materials, like using resin and things, or some of the things that Toza did, I was doing, and some of the things he was doing. So we kind of — and his kids were the same age as our kids.

MS. LAURIA: Right. And "Toza" is a nickname for Svetozar. His wife was Ruth, so it was Svetozar and Ruth Radakovich. And they live in Encinitas, right?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Yes. And then Allied Craftsmen sort of was that part, so I used to go to the meetings.

Now, when I came back from Europe, eventually Anne and I got back together. And we got married Easter of '58, and we bought 10 acres up here for \$350 an acre.

MS. LAURIA: And that's in Santa Ysabel.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, it's basically — yes, that's fine. Yes, don't complicate it.

And I had done a little studio at my mother's property. It was very simple. And I kind of wanted to build. Anne sort of wanted to build. She was a school teacher. And so we started with the first room. And in the beginning we used to do — have parties and people would make cement and find stones and help, but basically we did it ourselves.

MS. LAURIA: And you would say the structure is primarily influenced by adobe.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I think the adobe probably comes because I was — and adobe was being used at that time. There was actually a place in Escondido that made it. I think partly because I'm — the first building is kind of square. And what I think is it's kind of the — it doesn't have much windows. I think what I was trying to do is anchor myself.

The second building is the most one influenced by Bruce. You know, the way the roof goes up and the clarestories, a lot of the details come from Bruce.

MS. LAURIA: And would you say it looks more Japanese inflected?

MR. HUBBELL: You could see it but it's not obvious. After that everything is steel and concrete in the structure. And I began thinking of them as sculptures.

MS. LAURIA: Sculptures for living.

MR. HUBBELL: That's what Anne said.

I am aware of Gaudi. I did see his work. The thing of his work which I found the most interesting is he did a crypt. It was part of a little church called Colonia Güell Chapel. Have you been there?

MS. LAURIA: I've been to Barcelona and I've seen Gaudi but I don't remember this chapel. I'm sorry.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it's outside of Barcelona.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. So no, I have not seen that.

MR. HUBBELL: And it's the one that has these great rock columns that are tipped and things. It's the only one in my mind that's really sculptural. Most of the other things he does are facades. You know, they're —

MS. LAURIA: Looked like it's laid on —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — to an already fabricated architecture.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. So I think in a sense that gave me the right to think of it as sculpture.

But there were other things — there was a show they had in New York during that period of architecture that hadn't been built. And there was this model that was about — a 10- or 12-foot plaster model of what was called the *Endless House* by someone named [Frederick] Kiesler. And I seemed to be interested in that stuff. I also was aware — and Noguchi was somebody I really liked.

MS. LAURIA: And I think the artist Rudofsky did a show about architecture — natural architecture that you might have seen about land forms, African and Moroccan.

MR. HUBBELL: I think that's later.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, that was later. Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And then there was that book, *Architecture Without Architects* [by Bernard Rudofsky].

MS. LAURIA: Yes.

MR. HUBBELL: That's more in the '70s or something.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And what year did you buy this property? I'm sorry; what year did you start?

MR. HUBBELL: Fifty-eight.

MS. LAURIA: 1958. So you started building the first building.

MR. HUBBELL: Almost right away.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And it took about two years between each of those buildings.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: We were living partly in Rancho Santa Fe at my mother's, partly here. I spent about a third of the time working building, about a third on commissions, and then a third down there.

MS. LAURIA: A third down there where?

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, doing my own work.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And we actually — I got some interesting commissions. But —

MS. LAURIA: Well, what would you say at this period in time, working for Bruce? What sticks out in your mind as one of the most interesting commissions that you worked with him? Was it a pool? Was it a window? I mean, if you could just cite one thing that really was memorable.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I kind of think one of the best collaborations is a house he did in Ramona.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And Rhoda Lopez did a lot of it.

MS. LAURIA: Rhoda Lopez was a ceramic artist.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, she had studied at Cranbrook too. But I think the way her work and my work and Bruce's work fits together there is really nice.

MS. LAURIA: And what did you collaborate on? What was your part of the collaboration?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I think the main thing was the front door, but I did a whole lot. I would sometimes do the door, two or three columns, the windows, skylights —

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: — maybe the bathroom. [They laugh.]

MS. LAURIA: You were working in wood and tile, concrete, steel, all of those things?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And it seemed like a lot of the clients I had would sort of adopt you.

MS. LAURIA: Does that house still exist?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Like there's a client that we — probably it was at least 30 years ago when Bruce did the first part. I'm still doing stuff for them.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, great.

MR. HUBBELL: So they probably have 50 pieces built into the building.

MS. LAURIA: Has that house been photographed in some publication?

MR. HUBBELL: It's actually in the PBS — it's the one they entered there.

MS. LAURIA: The PBS documentary on —

MR. HUBBELL: Do you have that?

MS. LAURIA: I don't know which one — oh, the one that Marianne —

MR. HUBBELL: Marianne Gerdes.

MS. LAURIA: — Gerdes did, okay. So we should let the Archives have a copy of that.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. There's two PBS documentaries.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, there's two PBS documentaries. Okay, so if we could give that to the Archives —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — so they could have a copy. Okay, great.

So that was the most — that one stands out in your mind.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it's just the first one I can —

MS. LAURIA: Right, think of, right. But it was a great collaboration because you got to do so many different things with these other two people, Bruce being the architect and Rhoda being another artist, that it seemed to work. The synergy, the dynamic was really good.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I think the other —

MS. LAURIA: Have there been other architects — now, you were talking about Kellogg. You were going to bring up that he was also somebody that you enjoyed working with, or that was a very interesting — did you collaborate with him on —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and I think some of it was quite successful.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I think Ken's kind of a lone dog.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And actually most architects don't use artists. You know, like they just don't. And it's kind of this word "decoration," which I don't use. I don't think it exists. I mean, I don't think I do decoration anymore than an eyebrow is a decoration.

MS. LAURIA: That's an interesting way of looking at it. You think that what you do is more integral structurally than what we think of as the definition of "decoration" is something that's laid on afterwards.

MR. HUBBELL: No, I think what I try to do is make it look like if you took it off, the building wouldn't be finished.

MS. LAURIA: Right, but it's part of the structure.

MR. HUBBELL: It's part of the idea of the building and the concept. And it's harder — the other thing — you know, like when you talk about art, the way you can place art, which is the way we usually do. Say you place — you have the building and you place the art. The best example of that that I've ever seen was a chateau in France. And they had the chateau, they had a bridge, and then they had a figure on a horse.

And what it did when you looked at it, it was like a fulcrum. The bridge acted like the pivot point and the placing of the sculpture balanced the whole thing. So, you know, what Frank Lloyd Wright did was he would work on a

triangle, so that the artwork was variations of triangles.

And that's like some of the things that the Mexicans did. Traditionally there's — the thing which Gothic architecture does is that you have the structure, you have the sculpture, which plays off the structure, but it doesn't repeat it, and the windows do the same thing.

So it's like if you have a really — it's like you have the building — and what I like to have happen is a conversation. Like, what I do is not exactly what the architecture — what we're doing is almost arguing. But together it's more exciting than if you took it apart.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. So it's a dialogue.

MR. HUBBELL: It's a dialogue.

MS. LAURIA: And we're now, like, sort of approaching the '60s.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, so you're beginning to get some recognition in this area. Obviously people are looking at your houses here up on this 10 acres and they're beginning to think, what's going on up there? This is unusual. I mean, it's different. I mean, the way that you're structuring your living, it is becoming a compound. There are different houses for different things.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it is beginning to be that way. The timing, I'm not exactly sure. And because of the buildings, somebody asked me to do a restaurant. So that was the first commission. It was called the Greenery, and it was down on Pacific Beach.

MS. LAURIA: But they knew you were — you're not a licensed architect, correct?

MR. HUBBELL: No. No. Actually there was a point I was hiring more architects than they were hiring me — [they laugh] — you know, to get permits. So that was the first one. And so the building here sort of opened that door.

The other thing that happened, we did a fountain for First Unitarian Church on Front Street, and it had these great big boulders, you know, like 10-foot boulders and stuff.

MS. LAURIA: Front Street in Ramona or —

MR. HUBBELL: San Diego.

And I wanted to tile the base of it, the bottom of the pool, but they didn't have enough money so I trained five of the ladies to do it.

MS. LAURIA: That were part of the parish?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. So that really was — introduced the possibility if when you didn't have money, you could work with a community. So there's been a section of what I do that's about — that is — you know, it's kind of almost like people didn't hire me to do what I wanted to do, so I had to find a way to do it.

MS. LAURIA: Right, and I know you've had a long history of working with community, and we'll get into that when you talk about the parks that you've done that have all been community involvement —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — but I don't want to interrupt you now.

Now, you did this Unitarian church.

MR. HUBBELL: That was kind of the beginning of that.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: It's another of these things that almost would happen to me and led me to where I should go.

MS. LAURIA: But when you say that you wanted to tile the bottom of the fountain, I've noticed that being on your property, and all the other things that I've seen — imagery in your book and iconography — that certain themes keep coming up. And I think maybe this is a good time to talk about that.

We have, like, the four elements: water, air, fire — what's the fourth element, wind?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: They seem to circulate throughout your drawings, throughout your tile work, throughout your property. Do you want to talk a little bit about that, and also the birds, the phoenix? They pop up.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, water is a big one.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: They're probably all there, but water is something that I think about all the time. And when I'm working with — you know, like here what I would do is I would do the main parts and —

MS. LAURIA: But wait. "Here" is — you're referencing — we are sitting actually in what you call the boys' house —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — because it was a house built for your sons. And you're pointing to the floor, which is a beautiful tiled floor. You can explain what it is.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it's tile and glass. But when I was working with somebody — because I would do the lead part, and then I would say, if they'd ask me, "Make it like water. If it feels like water, it's good." And I use that all the time. I also use the term "music."

The other curious thing is I've noticed a lot of things I do have two elements that are broken together, you know, that — and I'm trying to figure out what that's about. [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: Broken together?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it's not — they're separate. I think what I — when I talk about the foundations, I use the term "bridging" all the time. So I think that's another thing.

MS. LAURIA: So they're two separate —

MR. HUBBELL: Separate things. How do you bring them together?

MS. LAURIA: Together.

Okay, but this — what I should have continued to say is that this has a bird theme of a phoenix. They're a beautiful bird, and a bird appears a lot in many of your drawings and many of your tile works, and maybe just because of, you know, the phoenix represents rebirth, coming back from the ashes, but also birds are beautiful, you know, motifs, obviously, and for tile work especially, because of their feathers.

But I did notice that in some of your drawings, in many of your drawings, there seems to be flames. And maybe that's just — they could be rays of the sun; they could be flames from the fire. Again, they're —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I think that's true.

MS. LAURIA: You know, and these are very, you know, primal elements, you know, that hark back to our — the elements of the Earth, or of life.

MR. HUBBELL: No, I think that's — the other — because you're really — this is a lot of stuff, but I really believe — I'm very interested in symbols. You know, I know this artist who did a lot of his paintings on shapes like footballs. And I asked, "Why do you do that?" And, "I just like the football. I like that shape."

I looked it up — I happened to look it up in a symbol and it's the symbol of heaven and earth together. And I think that we use these things — and I find I do — all the time, but we don't know we're using them. They're sort of in us. Like, when I talk about rhythm, it's kind of if you trust that rhythm that's in life, then that will take you where you're supposed to be. You don't have to know where you're supposed to be.

MS. LAURIA: So do you think you work from an intuitive sense? But I know you do drawings and so it's — you do plan things out, but do you think a lot of your sense of color is intuitive?

MR. HUBBELL: You know, I believe in discipline. I think it's important to be able to put your hand where — but discipline can't take you anywhere. It's only — like if you look at, like, some of Botticelli's drawings and Matisse's drawings, the proportions aren't right. But when they do the drawing, they do it as if they believe in it, as if God told them to do it, so it's right. It's that sense that you trust your hand. Then you don't have to know. Do you

know?

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: It doesn't have to be the way it's supposed to be.

MS. LAURIA: That somehow it's not perfection in the sense of formalist perfection. It's the way that it's perceived, that the eye perceives it as being correct somehow.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Perfection is a problem that Plato gave us.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.] Yes, well —

MR. HUBBELL: You know?

MS. LAURIA: Well, you also say — I love this quote on the back of your book, which says, "A healthy architecture, just like birth and love, comes from the belly, not from the head."

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Which is the same idea, which is that you have to feel it; you don't have to think it.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Actually the mind gets in the way.

MS. LAURIA: Right, which is Plato's fault.

Okay, so let's go on. I was trying to make the point that you start — it should become a known presence here —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — in this San Diego County area, because now — I'm sure you're being written up as — because you've got this odd sculptural shelter up here that you're living in, and people are taking note of it.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, actually I had, quite early, a nice article in I think it's *House Beautiful*, the one in New York?

MS. LAURIA: Yes.

MR. HUBBELL: It was mostly the bedroom.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. Did Elizabeth Gordon come out here and visit you? She was the —

MR. HUBBELL: I don't know. It was a long time ago.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I don't think she did. And then there were some articles in *San Diego Magazine*. Jim Britton was one of the people that started *San Diego Magazine*. He was a good friend, and probably one of the few critics that I really learned from. He was very — so there's just a lot of layers at this point.

MS. LAURIA: Right, but people are beginning to take note.

MR. HUBBELL: And I'm kind of beginning to find people that are thinking — you know, like Lloyd Ruocco, who I mentioned helped, started an organization called C3, Citizens for Century 3, which is still existing. And it was to make the city better.

And Bruce and Jim Britton and — you know, we were trying to do things together to get people to think about — it was kind of going on towards the end of the time when the Allied Craftsmen was, but they were all people that were in that sort of — because the Allied Craftsmen, the craftsmen — it wasn't just an art of crafting. It was a social, political —

MS. LAURIA: Right, it was more of an activist thing as well.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And were you beginning to think ecological —

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, yeah.

MS. LAURIA: — things as well? Right. Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Now, there was a lot of thought about ecology — but it gets so complicated here. So the other thing is — I'm trying not to lose track of what was happening at the same — there was an art school in La Jolla at the La Jolla Art Museum.

They recently had a little show of it at Oceanside. I taught there but not legally. Because I didn't have a degree, the board didn't want to hire me. And I also had a show there, which was one of the first sort of successful shows, and I sold quite a few pieces. And I also had a show at what was a movie theater in which Jim Britton used to put them on, and he wrote a really nice article for *San Diego Magazine* about that show.

So there was a certain amount of kind of things like that happening.

MS. LAURIA: Right, recognition.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And the La Jolla Art Museum, most of those guys were really good artists. So that was another group that I kind of knew. I didn't go to bars, so I didn't ever get really buddies with them. [They laugh.]

MS. LAURIA: And what kind of art did you show at La Jolla Art Museum? Was it a whole range, a whole spectrum of your work?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, it was in a little room probably as big as this, upstairs.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, like 250 square feet?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: But I mean, did you show your —

MR. HUBBELL: It was pastels and maybe watercolors and sculpture. I don't think there was any windows, but I'm not sure.

MS. LAURIA: Any ironwork or bronze casting?

MR. HUBBELL: Probably.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, I started bronze casting at Cranbrook.

MS. LAURIA: And what year?

MR. HUBBELL: I started the iron there too.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, and what year was the show at La Jolla?

MR. HUBBELL: It's in the book.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. All right, so —

MR. HUBBELL: But that's early.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: It's pretty early.

MS. LAURIA: And so you have this great community going on now, and you have a community of other artists that you're with.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, more than most things, because what kind of — as our family began to grow —

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: — I think I didn't — and as we moved up here more, we were not — you know, not connected to my mother's place — because I was the executor of her estate.

MS. LAURIA: Your mother had died now.

MR. HUBBELL: She had died, and she had a hotel in Rancho Santa Fe. So I had to kind of manage it for a while,

while trying to sell it. So that was sort of a transition period.

MS. LAURIA: And had your brother moved to Japan at this point, or —

MR. HUBBELL: My brother moved to Japan, came back. He lived here in Santa Fe for maybe two years. I've got about 800 of his pieces.

MS. LAURIA: He was working in clay, right?

MR. HUBBELL: In clay.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: Kind of primitive things. Yes, he had a show in L.A. during that period at a gallery on Westwood. And it used to show only Pre-Columbian and African things, but the owner liked my brother's stuff so much that he had a show, and Bert got really good write-ups, and he was compared with Lipchitz. But he's very eccentric. Then he moved back, and he — I don't think he's been back in about 35 years.

MS. LAURIA: And you don't hear from him much?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, he writes about twice a year.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, okay. Great. And then when did you have your first son? You adopted your first son, correct?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, probably the early '60s — Torrey.

MS. LAURIA: Torrey. And then you had three sons after that?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, the first three were in the first — Drew came quite a bit close to Torrey. And then Lauren was a year-and-a-half later, and then Brennan was about five or six years later.

MS. LAURIA: And Drew is the one who became the architect that you now — he and you worked together.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. And Brennan, I work with him. I mean, I'll have a job where we're doing tiling and then he'll help me.

MS. LAURIA: So he's an artist.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And your younger son is an actor/performer who lives —

MR. HUBBELL: The one in between Torrey and Brennan. Lauren.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: Brennan's the youngest.

MS. LAURIA: All right. So, sorry; we got off track a little bit.

So you were working with Bruce Sim Richards and you were working a little bit with Ken Kellogg once in a while. And you're up here. And you had the second building built and then you kept continuing on. And the buildings became more sculptural as you continued, and they were concrete and steel.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Yes, and I used to — we did most of the building ourselves. We didn't usually do the electric panel but we did all the rough electric.

MS. LAURIA: And all of your children were here when you were building. Did they help out?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, they all learned how to mix cement. And then I — about halfway through our bedroom, a young boy came, a college student from Berkeley, and since then there's — well, things like when we did the doors, there was probably 10 people. Usually there's three to four people.

MS. LAURIA: Come to work here?

MR. HUBBELL: That work here.

MS. LAURIA: And they apprentice themselves or they —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I pay them.

MS. LAURIA: Right. So do they live on the property or —

MR. HUBBELL: No.

MS. LAURIA: No, but they come and they work in the buildings. Like I know now you have John. Can you explain who works here now?

MR. HUBBELL: John does basically iron, but a whole lot of other things. Mostly it's ironwork.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And his last name is?

MR. HUBBELL: Wheelock.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, John Wheelock.

MR. HUBBELL: And Anne Fagan. She does the glass. And Tulay Ekin, she did most of the retiling. But she does finishing metal and mostly smaller pieces, but she also mixes cement and other things.

Then there's a boy — usually somebody that's an architect intern who does drafting and stuff like that.

MS. LAURIA: So they're here, like, Tuesday through Friday, or something?

MR. HUBBELL: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Three days a week.

MS. LAURIA: All right, and then you also have an office for the foundation of Ilan-Lael?

MR. HUBBELL: Ilan-Lael. So we're getting to — I think — oh, I forgot.

MS. LAURIA: And that's I-L —

MR. HUBBELL: You have to do it.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. We'll just take it from the book, or we'll write it out for the Archives, because I never know how to spell that, Ilan-Lael.

So go ahead. So you're now showing work at La Jolla. Was it called the La Jolla Art Museum then?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: But it no longer exists, correct?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, it's the modern.

MS. LAURIA: It's now the La Jolla contemporary museum.

MR. HUBBELL: Contemporary, yeah. Athenaeum Music.

MS. LAURIA: After you were showing there and you're working here — and you have other people who are now coming to be part of this whole life here. This is like a kind of an artists' community.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So do you have enough work up here to sustain all these people?

MR. HUBBELL: I don't pay them a lot.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.] But, I mean, what kind of things are you doing? When do you get involved in the — how do you generate the commissions?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, you know, a lot of it comes through friends. And because of working with Bruce, you got to know people. We often would turn out one or two things a week almost.

MS. LAURIA: Wow.

MR. HUBBELL: You know? I think we also began to do — we did a house in Alpine, a small one, and then we did

one in Del Mar. This was all during the '70s or early '80s. And then we did another one up here. Some of the more interesting things I did was in the early period. I think people were a lot more experimental —

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: — you know, during that period.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, we talked about this earlier, that the world seems to have gotten more conservative.

MR. HUBBELL: Absolutely.

MS. LAURIA: We don't know why.

MR. HUBBELL: I don't either.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.]

MR. HUBBELL: And then I think Ilan-Lael happened. It almost seemed like it happened when Allied Craftsmen sort of began to disappear. And I think there was a group of friends that kind of wanted to get art to be more part of the community. And so in the beginning, or the first 10 or 15 years, we would do shows. We did ones on furniture. We did shows with the Art Center in Tijuana. We did the first sculpture show in about 20 years that had been done in San Diego.

And it was not only to get the artists to have shows, but to get the artists to meet people that were business people and political people at openings.

MS. LAURIA: Right. And also you told me that you were working for many years with a school in Tijuana.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And was that at the same time or is that later?

MR. HUBBELL: I think it's a little bit later. That probably started about 22 or 23 years ago.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And that also is about community involvement, that you would go down once a month?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, in the beginning I went twice a week.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, twice a week.

MR. HUBBELL: And then I went once a week and we would take volunteers. I kept thinking that San Diego and Tijuana were really one city, but I didn't know it. And so it was a chance — it was one of those excuses I could build something and nobody would pay me to do it so I just did it.

MS. LAURIA: So was it a girls' school?

MR. HUBBELL: No, it was a lady who had started the school. She wanted to adopt a little Mexican girl, and the mother didn't want her to adopt it so she adopted the community.

And she started with a little hospital. And then the mother said, "We really would want a kindergarten," because the ladies, mostly their husbands were working in other parts of Mexico or in the United States. And they didn't have any big family, so if they went to work at the Mequiladoras they'd have to tie their kids to the bed.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, how horrible.

MR. HUBBELL: So if there was a kindergarten, they'd have somewhere to take the kids. So she started a kindergarten, and she's been there over 25 years. And she now has a high school.

So we would be involved somewhat with the building but a lot with all the finish work, tons of tiling, and it was mostly — you know, we'd take down maybe 15 or 20 people from sometimes all over the world and they'd go down and tile.

MS. LAURIA: And spend, like, a week or —

MR. HUBBELL: No, usually it was just a day.

MS. LAURIA: Just a day. Okay. But you'd get a lot done with that many people in a day.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Yes. So that was the big — I don't know how I did it. [They laugh.]

MS. LAURIA: Well, it says here, in 1982 that the foundation was organized. And it's spelled: The Ilan-Lael Foundation — capital I-L-A-N — dash — capital L-A-E-L Foundation.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and it means a tree that belongs to God.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, so that was in 1982.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and I think next [last] year is our 30th anniversary.

MS. LAURIA: All right. So this book is wonderful, the Oceanside Museum of Art, the *James Hubbel Retrospective*, because in the back there's this whole chronology.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And I wonder if — since we're kind of, you know, maybe just moving around a little bit right now, but I wanted to — I don't want to forget to ask you about those wonderful 18 doors that you did for the sheikh in Abu Dhabi, because you showed me that book last night, and what an outstanding commission and opportunity that was.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Each door was different. And if you could just talk a little bit about how that commission came your way.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it probably is —

MS. LAURIA: That was the same time. It was 1982, wasn't it?

MR. HUBBELL: It's close to the same time. This friend of mine, Otto Rigan, had written a book, *From the Earth Up: Art and Vison of James Hubbell*. It might have been 25, 30 — something like that. And the architect was Lebanese. He'd seen the book at his brother's, and then he came down and asked me if I'd like to do the doors.

MS. LAURIA: Right. It says in here, just for clarification, that it was 1981. "Design and installation of 18 leaded glass doors, palace doors, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia."

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So go ahead and talk about them.

MR. HUBBELL: So it took about seven months to get them to approve the drawings, and then we built them in seven months.

MS. LAURIA: And they were just exquisite. Each one was different. Each one was carved with leaded glass.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. No, it was one of those really special jobs.

The other thing that happened during that time was the chapel at Sea Ranch.

MS. LAURIA: At Sea Ranch.

MR. HUBBELL: The Buffum's [Robert and Betty] commissioning.

MS. LAURIA: You didn't tell me about that one, so go ahead.

MR. HUBBELL: There's probably a picture. That's probably the best-known of the architecture I did.

MS. LAURIA: I wonder if it's in the index. Go ahead.

MR. HUBBELL: The Buffum's had property at Sea Ranch. There was no sort of religious space there so they decided they would commission one.

MS. LAURIA: I see it. It's in the catalogue and the essay that's called *Nature at the Core*. Sea Ranch Meditation Chapel was built in 1984.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Because they had a lot of earthquake requirements, we couldn't go with masonry above a certain height. So the bottom is masonry and everything above it is wood. And it's kind of — there's a whole lot

of stories about this stuff. We could go on forever.

MS. LAURIA: Well, are these steel spires that are jetting out of the top?

MR. HUBBELL: No, they're bronze pipe — forged piping.

MS. LAURIA: Wonderful. They look like they're rays of sun coming out of the chapel.

MR. HUBBELL: I had gone up before — the first time and stayed with some friends of the Buffum's, and they had — their son, who had been a pilot in the Navy, had recently died, and his artwork was on the bed next to where I was sleeping. And he had done these really fine drawings of shells and of birds' wings.

So I — it's like when you're doing a job, there's things that happens to you, and I knew the building had something do with this young man. So that's why it has that sense of flight. It's from him.

MS. LAURIA: Right. So one of the series of questions on this questionnaire is under "career development" — and I know we're never going to be able to answer this in any short way because all of what you talk about is the answer to this, but what is your definition of — do you associate yourself with any particular movement or style, and what's your definition of the style? And I know —

MR. HUBBELL: Actually, I can answer that.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. All right.

MR. HUBBELL: Roughly speaking, I think the human mind divides the world into — thinks about life in two different — one is to organize it, and we call that classical. The other is to celebrate it, and we call that romantic. And, you know, they had that really nice show of art and craft movement in L.A. about five or six year ago, maybe longer.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And it was really nice and it had a really good catalogue. It was about what the Finnish had done with arts and crafts. But in it they had a list of the things which the arts and crafts people — you know, major materials. Every one of those things I would — were exactly what I would — so I relate to that period.

Frank Lloyd Wright is really right in the middle of it. Without the arts and crafts movement, he wouldn't exist. But I also think Beethoven and all them are part of that. I feel closer to the Romantic period. And I'm kind of hoping it's coming back. [They laugh.]

MS. LAURIA: So you think that you relate to the style of Romanticism.

MR. HUBBELL: Now, I don't use the term "style."

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: It's a thing of accepting life — accepting that you can't define life, that you have to live it. So it could be almost anything, but it's a way of thinking. You know, it's interesting; there was a movement, German Expressionistic architecture. It went on before World War I and after, and during the war. And it was very free and, you know, as exploratory as anything that's been done.

When the Bauhaus came, it stopped. And I wonder if there wasn't a sense that something like Hitler was coming, so you needed to order things and you couldn't play with life. You had to measure things and put them in a box, you know.

So I think these things come to our culture because of some kind of inner need that the culture has, and so it will go back to a period, you know, like the Romans or the Greeks and, you know, revive it because it's what it needs at that time.

MS. LAURIA: So you wouldn't then associate yourself with any particular movement or style?

MR. HUBBELL: No.

MS. LAURIA: No. Can you describe a relationship that you've had that you think has been important with any particular dealer? No. Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: No, I have been — I haven't hardly met any dealers.

MS. LAURIA: And could you say that there have been any exhibitions that you've been in that have really been

important to your career, like the one that you mentioned at the La Jolla museum, that have really set you on a track or been influential for you?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I think the two shows here at the Oceanside.

MS. LAURIA: At the Oceanside Museum of Art.

MR. HUBBELL: But what happened is that I'm pretty well known in San Diego. I kind of don't exist anywhere else.

MS. LAURIA: So regionally you feel that you've really solidified your notoriety, but you feel like —

MR. HUBBELL: I wouldn't use the term "solidify." [Laughs.]

MS. LAURIA: Okay, but you are well known in this area —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: But you feel like you need to be known more outside of, let's say, the San Diego County or even California.

[Telephone rings.]

MR. HUBBELL: Do you need to answer it?

MS. LAURIA: No, no. I just wanted to stop it from ringing.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, let me go back a long ways.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: When I was in Europe, I really had the sense that I could have done fairly well there as an artist. But I also had the sense that I would probably just be another artist. I found that I could go to San Diego — it would be really difficult, but it could make a difference. And I kind of — and in a sense it was a choice. You know, particularly living up here you open one door but you shut another door.

MS. LAURIA: Because you're isolated up here? Is that what you mean?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and San Diego basically is the end of the road. You would come to Disneyland; maybe you would go to San Diego. But at the same time it gave me the chance to do what I do. I would have clients — I never had a client that knew what was going on in the art world. Nobody ever came to me and said, why aren't you doing pop art, or op art? They came to me because — I'd have clients that didn't have any furniture but they'd want a skylight.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: You know, because they wanted it. And if I had been in the art world, I would have — I wouldn't have had time to do Tijuana. I wouldn't have probably had time to do all the buildings here. I could never have done Pacific Rim Park because my life would have been taken up. So it was a choice. And I did that and I didn't do the other thing.

MS. LAURIA: Well, you're right, it is a choice. And one of the questions is, is what do you think defines success in the art world? I mean, is it living in a metropolitan area like New York and being — or perhaps L.A. and being featured in *Artforum* or *Art in America*, and being in high-profile publications and museum shows?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, Mr. York said —

MS. LAURIA: Yes?

MR. HUBBELL: — "If you want to be famous, do something which is easily readable. Put red dots all around your painting so that anybody can walk in and say, oh, there's so and so. Then you'll be famous." So that's the choice. And I think it's kind of true. I think what I sort of am sorry for, I'd like to be more part of the dialogue about what art's about. And so I kind of haven't been there.

MS. LAURIA: But on the other hand, you've been able to travel to all these foreign countries and do these great community parks, and so many other artists haven't had that opportunity.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And I'd like you to talk about that a little bit if you would, how that came about.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, the Pacific Rim Park came about —

MS. LAURIA: The Pacific Rim Park is in —

MR. HUBBELL: It's a foundation.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: But it's also the whole Pacific.

MS. LAURIA: All right.

MR. HUBBELL: When we were doing stuff for the Ilan-Lael, we found it really difficult to do things. San Diego didn't think of itself as being important. It's sort of a cul-de-sac. You know, like we'd spend 20, 30 years talking about where to put the airport. We can't make up our mind. And I think I got kind of frustrated. And I was sort of curious about what would happen if we thought of ourselves as a Pacific country?

But what actually happened is Gennadi Gerasimov —

MS. LAURIA: Who?

MR. HUBBELL: Gerasimov? I'm not pronouncing it right. When Gorbachev was opening up Russia —

MS. LAURIA: Yes.

MR. HUBBELL: — he sent this man around to kind of explain what he was doing. And a friend of mine invited me to go to a reception. And during the reception the guy said, we're going to open up Vladivostok. Vladivostok was a closed city, just like San Diego was. You know, they're big naval ports.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: So we had, with Ilan-Lael, done a children's art exchange with Yokohama —

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: — which is the sister city of San Diego. And I said, "Let's do a children's art exchange with Vladivostok." And the people in Vladivostok said, "Let's do an artist exchange." So that's when Arlene — four of us went over.

MS. LAURIA: Arlene Fisch.

MR. HUBBELL: Arlene Fisch.

MS. LAURIA: F-I-S-C-H, yes.

MR. HUBBELL: And when I came back — well, we were there two weeks after their first elections, so we got to know the mayor — two weeks before their navy destroyers were going to come to visit San Diego. So we met with all the admirals, and they wound up taking my artwork to San Diego.

When I got back to San Diego, I went to see Admiral Fetterman, who was in charge of the fleet here. He didn't know that the Russians were bringing 16 lady dancers with them on the ship. So we were involved with all of this sort of diplomatic stuff, parties and such. And Lowell and I decided if there had been a war, they would be the first two cities to disappear.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, my goodness.

So I'm just going to spell Vladivostok. It's V-L-A-D-I-V-O-S-T-O-K. Vladivostok, Russia. And that's where you had gone —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — to take the visit with — and you met the mayor there.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: So the two cities became sister cities. There was a lot of exchanges, people coming and going. And one of them — of a couple of times I met the head of the university in Vladivostok, and Gennady Turmov. And he and I decided there should be something physical.

So we took eight students from here, one from Mexico, and eight Russian students and built the first park. During the building of it, the kids wanted a symbol, and they picked a pearl.

MS. LAURIA: A pearl.

MR. HUBBELL: So that's where the idea of "a string of pearls around the Pacific" came.

The next park was in San Diego. And I think at that point we had formed a foundation, and Chinese kids came. Then we did one in China, one in Tijuana, and one in the Philippines and then one in Korea.

MS. LAURIA: And always using students?

MR. HUBBELL: Students, yeah. And they're design-built, so they're involved with the design and they do the building.

MS. LAURIA: And they have to be approved by both entities, the U.S. and the other city?

MR. HUBBELL: No.

MS. LAURIA: No.

MR. HUBBELL: Once the other country — the U.S. doesn't have anything to do with it.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. Well, the kids have to come from someplace.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, in the other countries they come from universities.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: In this country we kind of find them wherever we can, because we don't have a formal relationship with a — we're starting to have one with UCSD's Pacific Studies Program.

MS. LAURIA: University of California at San Diego.

MR. HUBBELL: San Diego.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. So how many parks have you now —

MR. HUBBELL: Six.

MS. LAURIA: Six parks. What, Russia, San Diego, China, Philippines —

MR. HUBBELL: Tijuana.

MS. LAURIA: And Tijuana.

MR. HUBBELL: And Korea.

MS. LAURIA: And Korea. Oh, bravo. So do you have some sort of book that you've published that includes all six parks?

MR. HUBBELL: No, we have a little disc that has the first three.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: We're kind of at a point where our board is reorganizing and I think we'll start having stuff that — they have a pretty good website.

[End of disc.]

MS. LAURIA: And this foundation is called the Pacific parks?

MR. HUBBELL: Pacific Rim Park.

MS. LAURIA: Pacific Rim Park.

MR. HUBBELL: We don't put an "S" on it. It's the whole Pacific.

MS. LAURIA: Pacific Rim Park.

MR. HUBBELL: All of the ones we built are part of one park.

MS. LAURIA: Park. Okay, got it. Well, this is very exciting. So it can continue on.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and it's really — we're trying to get people — it's like trying to get people to think of the Pacific as sort of their touchstone and so that they're a family. So we either live together or we don't. And, you know, we have a terrible tendency to compete and make the other guy the enemy.

MS. LAURIA: And I love the image of a string of pearls —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — because it has a sense of belonging and adornment and preciousness and something that you want to value.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and you want to be part of the string.

MS. LAURIA: Right, because it's something you want; you want to covet.

So do you know if there's another one on the horizon?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, that's why we're going to Taiwan.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, you mentioned that in a couple of weeks you might be going there.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. They want it in December, which I don't know if we can do. And then there's a possible one in Japan.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, well, that would be nice for you to go back to Japan.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So what are the qualities of your working environment? I think we better get through some of these questions since we've kind of —

MR. HUBBELL: No, I think we've basically gotten quite a —

MS. LAURIA: I know, but I've been circling around some of them.

MR. HUBBELL: Questions are —

MS. LAURIA: But do describe your sort of day-to-day activities here on your compound. I know you have people come on certain days, but when you are working here, what are you doing?

MR. HUBBELL: When the studio is working, I'm kind of keeping things going.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I get occasionally some of my own work done.

MS. LAURIA: Do you draw every day?

MR. HUBBELL: Probably.

MS. LAURIA: Because I know you showed me in your file cabinet that you have more than — you have thousands of drawings.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Well, I used to do maybe two or three watercolors every day. That's something we haven't talked — the thing about nature.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, and also the fire.

MR. HUBBELL: Well yes. Nature is really the thing which — I think growing up, nature and art really got me through. I don't know what would happen without them. I think doing all of the watercolors, particularly from nature, I find I place things like a column or — almost the way I've seen them placed in nature. I have no idea

how you teach that. So that's really engrained in me.

MS. LAURIA: Well, you live out here amongst nature and it doesn't seem like you've really disrupted nature. You seem to really place your sculptural buildings on the land without disrupting the land too much.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, I like to think of it the same way — it's a conversation with nature. A building is a human nature. It's your song, like the birds have their song. And it's a conversation. And you don't want to imitate nature, but you want to feel — like, a young man came here and he said — he told Anne, he said, "Mr. Hubbell builds buildings that the trees aren't ashamed to stand next to."

MS. LAURIA: That's very poetic.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So do you — I know you have one building that John works in where he does the metalsmithing.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, that's the main studio.

MS. LAURIA: That's the main studio. And then upstairs is where the glass studio is.

MR. HUBBELL: The glass.

MS. LAURIA: And then there's another room where Tulay does —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, Tulay is usually working below the glass studio.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, she is? Okay. So are there rooms that are directed towards different activities?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, but basically the studio is divided so that different things happen in different parts of it.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: And tools are arranged that way.

MS. LAURIA: And then do you do — do you direct or do you — you go in and do parts of different projects with the different people who are working on different things?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, I either do the part which I can't explain or which is too much fun to let them do.

MS. LAURIA: [Laughs.]

MR. HUBBELL: Like, let's say I'm working with John and if we're doing a gate. I'll make a drawing. He'll rough it out on the floor. I'll come and correct it. He'll do a lot of the actual shaping of the thing. There might be 8 [percent] or 10 percent of it that I work with him. And then when we lay it out we'll move it around, maybe take out two or three pieces, add another piece, and then he'll finish it.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: So I'm kind of working — and with the glass it's the same way.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And then I know that you go into town, into San Diego. You try to reserve at least one day a week to do that.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And that's sort of your business day out away from home, your home studio?

MR. HUBBELL: I'm getting materials, seeing clients, installing things, going to Drew's office, all that kind of stuff.

MS. LAURIA: So it's fairly regimented. So you keep this sort of disciplined schedule so you know what you're doing on every day.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And then Monday is the day that the people who work in your foundation are here, so they do foundation work.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: I mean, the business of your foundation.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And now, also I know that you've got your whole plan set for a new building for your foundation. Do you want to talk about that?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, one of the interesting — when the place — we always expected to put it in the foundation. But when we had the fire, which four of the eight buildings were gutted —

MS. LAURIA: And this fire was called the Cedar Fire of —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And it decimated many, many acres in this area. And it was in 2003?

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, a huge, huge fire — 2003.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: There was eight buildings. Four of them were gutted. Fortunately my son was able to get remodeling permits so we didn't have to tear the walls down. The walls, we had to chip them off and replaster them. All of the wood and glass and tile had to be redone. So that took about three years. Anne and I lived here in the boys' house during that period.

MS. LAURIA: And this building wasn't affected.

MR. HUBBELL: The skylight in the bathroom melted, but that was — and then some of the windows were cracked, still are.

MS. LAURIA: Just from the heat.

MR. HUBBELL: And, you know, two things happened. I think one is Anne and I decided we'd lived here 45 years and we weren't going to be victims. So we basically started rebuilding right away. So we didn't take it as a — it wasn't happy, but we didn't take it as the end of the world.

And I think this experience in Korea helped me, because I, at that point, had decided, if you lose things, you had the fun of building it, which is really fun. I mean, it's not — it's really a gift to just —

The other thing was — there's a little book I wrote about the fire. You know, there was a lot of work that burned up. Some of it I had only seen; possibly one of the girls that works for me had seen. So what's the meaning of it? And I came to the conclusion, maybe life is a prayer.

MS. LAURIA: You mean a lot of your work —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — your artwork.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. You don't have to tell somebody you're praying. So it's all right, you know. And you don't know. You really don't know what's the meaning of things or why — you know, whether — Pacific Rim Park there's probably at least 20 or 12 couples that have gotten married. Maybe that's what the parks are about.

MS. LAURIA: And they use those settings for weddings, is what you're saying.

MR. HUBBELL: No, kids that worked on them.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, that they met through that experience.

MR. HUBBELL: I mean, there was a Mexican architect who went to China. He used to sit on the bus in China with a Russian girl. The live in Chula Vista and they recently had their first baby.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, how wonderful.

MR. HUBBELL: Maybe that's what the foundation is all about. You don't know.

MS. LAURIA: So then you rebuilt here.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And you got back to the eight buildings then.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Well, to go back, when we had the fire we didn't have any insurance. So we thought we'd have to put in a foundation. If we'd given the property to the kids, they couldn't have taken care of it. It's just too much and there's no money to go with it. So that was a big help. And it took three or four years to rebuild.

MS. LAURIA: And did other people in the community come and help you?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, a lot of people did, but there was — there was probably eight to nine people that worked fairly regularly doing it. So it was different from when we did it ourselves.

MS. LAURIA: It was nice to have the other helping hands, for sure.

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, yeah. And the thing that I discovered is that when it became part of the foundation it wasn't just, oh, I'd like to do something. You'd walk around and you'd say, well, it's not finished. It almost became like a job, you know, a commission. So what I've been trying to do is to finish the parts that — you know, this needs a railing; there needs to be other steps.

And one of those things is that the foundation needs a center. When people come here there's nowhere — they either sit under a tree, you know — [inaudible[12:06]] — or they go and bother the people in the studio.

So with the new building there would be restrooms and a kitchen, computers for the foundation, an area where organizations could have meetings, and then an archive place, and a courtyard where there could be events and poetry readings or music or things.

MS. LAURIA: So it will be a bone fide place just for the foundation.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Dedicated to the foundation. And that's going to be up on the hill behind where the studio is.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, that sort of cleared area.

MS. LAURIA: And I notice too that I'm — in fact, you took me the last time I was here. You have this really nice little chapel area.

MR. HUBBELL: It's on the same — yeah.

MS. LAURIA: Right. It was very quiet, very meditative up there. And there's a little garden there too.

So do you have a time frame for the foundation building?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I'm trying — I sent out a whole lot of letters, trying to get enough money to start the first third by September. We've got all the plans done. We've got bids on doing it. So we could start — we could get that done by November, and I could use it to organize my show at Oceanside. But I'll find out what happens. I don't know. Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And you do an annual fundraiser —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — which is a Father's Day barbecue or something?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: Picnic. Picnic.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it's more just an open house.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. And you draw people to come up here. It's a sort of fun activity and it familiarizes them with what's going on.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and there's people that come from other parts of the country.

MS. LAURIA: And do you have an international presence? I mean, now that you've done — you know, through the Pacific Rim Park Foundation you must be getting some, you know, visibility internationally.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, we've done work in Abu Dhabi, done work in Scotland, Canada, Mexico. Oh, and then we had a show at an architectural museum in Moscow.

MS. LAURIA: And that was going to be another one of my questions. And what museums here in America have your pieces as part of their permanent collection? Mingei? Mingei Museum? Oceanside Museum?

MR. HUBBELL: Mingei does; probably Oceanside. The modern had some but I think they gave them away.

MS. LAURIA: The modern —

MR. HUBBELL: In San Diego.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I think San Diego — I don't exist in that world. I mean, I exist here a little bit, but — now, if you'd ask somebody like the head of the museum in L.A., they wouldn't know who I was.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. Well, maybe that will change over time.

Have you ever wanted to go back to teaching art since you taught at the La Jolla —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, that was about four or five months.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, okay. So you never had the call to teach in an art school.

MR. HUBBELL: No, I actually would love to teach.

MS. LAURIA: You would? Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: But I didn't have a degree.

MS. LAURIA: So in the university system it wasn't possible.

MR. HUBBELL: They never asked me. For some reason I get architect kids that come to work but I've never had an art student that's come, which I don't understand either. No, I like teaching and I like working with kids.

MS. LAURIA: Well, what do you think are some of the things you've learned from interaction with students?

MR. HUBBELL: Stay awake. [They laugh.] No, it's very stimulating. And some of the kids that I've worked with on these parks are just awesome kids, just wonderful people.

MS. LAURIA: Do you think of yourself as part of a global tradition, or one that is particularly American?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, to answer two questions, if I go to the Metropolitan, I don't go to the modern section. I got to all of the ancient stuff. That's where I get sort of — that's where I get fed.

MS. LAURIA: That's what nurtures you.

MR. HUBBELL: That's what nurtures me.

MS. LAURIA: I'll bet you go to the Asian sections.

MR. HUBBELL: I go to the Asian section and the ancient Russian stuff, and almost anywhere. And when I work with a country I take the kids to anthropology museum first of all.

MS. LAURIA: Or the ethnographic museums I'm sure appeal to you.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. So I feel a part of that. And, like, when I work with these countries, I realize that I'm part Chinese, I'm part Russian, I'm part Filipino. You really get a sense that you're not separate from that. So in a sense I feel completely international. But in another sense I also feel — I'm really curious what architecture is about if it's in a democracy.

MS. LAURIA: That's an interesting concept.

MR. HUBBELL: I mean, if we really are a democracy, how do you —

MS. LAURIA: Is it because we have choice?

MR. HUBBELL: But how does that get expressed? I think what worries me the most is that we don't realize what

we've got here.

You know, the last speaker at — I just went to this big conference in Korea, and the last speaker was ex-president of Australia. And he kind of went down the list of all the things the United States is doing wrong. And most of the audience, 95 percent of them were Asian. And they think of the world as their world now. They don't think of it as ours. He said, "The United States, you guys have the moral high ground. You lose that and you don't have anything." And we're throwing it away.

MS. LAURIA: Well, this is sad news.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it's sad if we do it. It's just stupid. You know, I mean, China — he said, "China doesn't have the moral high ground."

MS. LAURIA: And what did he say that China does have?

MR. HUBBELL: Organization and the people.

MS. LAURIA: Many, many people.

MR. HUBBELL: And people that work hard and are focused kind of people.

MS. LAURIA: Which is true. So that's all that they're willing to give us is the moral high ground, which is a lot.

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, it's huge. It is absolutely where you want to be.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, but it's seeping away is what he was saying.

MR. HUBBELL: We're throwing it away.

MS. LAURIA: Well.

[End of disc.]

This is tape number three, Jo Lauria recording for the Archives of American Art, interviewing James — Jim Hubbell on Tuesday, July 31st. And we will continue.

So, Jim, in what ways do political and social commentary figure into your work?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, I'm not sure that the commentary does. I had a bunch of friends years ago that were Chicanos, and all their work was political. I would tell them Mozart was political, and they would not kind of — but I think if you change the way people think about things, it's political.

MS. LAURIA: Could you explain that? How is Mozart political? Did they understand your answer?

MR. HUBBELL: Probably not.

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I think what the artist — an artist is like a raw — a nerve in a culture, you know. And so things go wrong — there's a plague or there's a war or atomic bomb — and the artist doesn't — feels uncomfortable. And what he does, or she does, is build a different pattern, either through music or poetry or sometimes through thinking ideas.

And so that they — so it's a very personal thing. I mean, I have to live in a world that's messed up, so how do I find a pattern that allows me to live in that world? So I create something. Sometimes that pattern becomes a social pattern. Sometimes it's just personal. But it could be just a rhythm. I mean, I'm pretty sure that if you turn the music on and you would hear music that you had never heard before, it probably means the time has changed.

MS. LAURIA: And do you think you express this through your art?

MR. HUBBELL: I think it would be good if you did. I don't know how you do it, but I'm pretty sure that — you know, if you could draw the right line, the world would turn.

MS. LAURIA: Do you think other people would see or feel that you were expressing some sort of emotional or social commentary in your work by looking at it, or do you think they would feel a sense of you trying to express beauty in your work?

MR. HUBBELL: I don't think that we do it that way. I mean, like, I think about the kids that grew up before World War I, and then you had the '20s. The music and all of the art came about not because anybody, but because the time — it was part of the pattern of that time and it expressed the time.

MS. LAURIA: So this is a really awkward question. This question seems to want an answer that really doesn't exist. The art that artists create is absolutely a reflection of their time.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, absolutely. You can't take it out of the period. And I think the reaction the artist has is emotional. Like in nature, things change biologically. You know, either you adapt to the weather or you die.

And the human thing, you adapt emotionally. Once you have found the pattern that works, then intellectually you can kind of build a structure that helps the emotional thing. But I think the emotional thing has to come first. You have to allow yourself the opportunity to step through the door.

MS. LAURIA: What changes have you noticed that the art world has gone through in your lifetime, or during your career as a professional artist?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, we'd gone through some of this. I mean, in the beginning I was pretty much aware of kind of the illustration world. I really kind of had an affinity towards surrealism. Abstract expressionism seemed to me a very logical thing. I kept thinking they didn't take it to the point it needed to go. It kind of jumped to something else before it had really done whatever it was supposed to do.

A lot of the things after the '50s — probably minimalism I related to, but most of the other things I couldn't figure out what they were doing.

MS. LAURIA: But do you see the art world today as — do you connect with it or do you feel very disconnected with sort of the kind of bent that it's going on with digital art — new genre, new media, the kind of branding that a lot of artists are connecting to, or do you feel that your work is on a different platform?

MR. HUBBELL: I think I don't worry about it, you know?

MS. LAURIA: Okay.

MR. HUBBELL: I'm hoping that we're able to get through this thing of trying to control the world.

MS. LAURIA: Describe your — you know, what are the similarities and differences between your early work and now what is your recent work? What do you see, some of the evolution of your work, what were you doing maybe in the '50s and what are you doing now in 2010?

MR. HUBBELL: Well, some of the work that I did then is fairly close to what I do now.

MS. LAURIA: In what way?

MR. HUBBELL: I still use the spiral and I still use certain lines. I kind of think that artists are born with sort of something they're about, and their whole life is kind of trying to put that — to say that.

I find some of the early things really surprising: I did that? And I find — I don't know if it's because I haven't been asked to be pushed that much. I think I find some of the earlier things more interesting than some of the stuff I'm doing.

MS. LAURIA: Have you experienced any great change in scale? Has your color palette changed much? Have you made any great leaps with materials? Have you changed any way that you've been using — like, let's say the way that you use metal or glass? Has technology made any inroads in the way that you've made any new kinds of art?

MR. HUBBELL: It sounds awful not to say I —

MS. LAURIA: Do you use any of the new kind of technologies like laser cutting or water jet or 3-D printers?

MR. HUBBELL: I only do it with other people.

MS. LAURIA: Okay. Have you used any of those technologies on commissions lately that requires those on different jobs?

MR. HUBBELL: Some of the laser cutting. And then I do work with craftspeople — you know, glass doors and furniture-makers and pottery and — but I don't think there's — I still like to get jobs where it kind of pushes me.

MS. LAURIA: So you don't think that you're, like, such a traditionalist that you won't make that change into new technologies just because you only believe in using hand tools or hand carving tools or —

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, no, no. I'll use anything I need to use. No.

MS. LAURIA: Anything that will get the job done correctly —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — or expertly or —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, and I have no prejudice against materials or anything. If it works, it works, and I'll use it.

MS. LAURIA: What drives you to continue your work every day?

MR. HUBBELL: Probably a couple of things, but one of them, I'd be bored stiff if I didn't. I don't know what I'd do. And it's really fun to think up something and then make it. I can't believe why everybody does? — it's just so much — it's so exciting. But you probably know that, you know, to get an idea and then see it come out.

MS. LAURIA: Well, that's the artist's soul in the artist. I mean, you get up every morning and you probably think, I want to do this today, or, you know, you have an idea and you want to create it. Not everybody thinks that way.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. I think the way I try to explain it to people is like, if I do a painting of a mountain, in a sense I paint the mountain but the mountain paints me. And I don't know what's going to happen. You know, it's sort of this dialogue with — but it's true with life.

The other thing I find: Almost every rule that I would make about art I would make about life, you know. Life isn't organized. You know, it's a conversation. And you don't know where it's taking you or what the other is about. So that's what's fun about waking up and —

MS. LAURIA: Well, that's true. And do you keep a sketchbook by your bed, or do you travel with one? I mean, do you have something that you constantly are writing down your ideas or sketching things when you're out in nature?

MR. HUBBELL: But not all the time. But actually I'm doing a lot more of that in the last three or four years than I used to. I just have endless sketchbooks with doodles. Sometimes I use them. Sometimes I don't.

MS. LAURIA: I was just reading last night that Einstein, Darwin — I don't know, some other famous people — they had, like, 25,000 sketchbooks when they died. I mean, they just constantly wrote down ideas, thoughts —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — drawings, you know, because even in today's computer age I'm sure there are still people who buy, you know, those little sketchbooks and just —

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, yeah.

MS. LAURIA: — jot down things.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes, I think — you know, I think the thing which — see, I'm over 80. I don't know how much longer I'm really going to function. I'm hoping that I get to do another chapel or something that — or a garden or something that's really fun.

You know, like, some of the — like Ken Kellogg. He's so good. He's never done a public building. I can't believe our culture, that we don't use the people that we have, you know. I mean, I could have done tons more work than I've done, but I didn't get to do some things.

MS. LAURIA: Well, actually that leads me to a question: Who are the artists that you most admire, for whatever reason, for their aesthetics? I know you mentioned Noguchi. I think you admired Matisse for his sense of decorative pattern — decorative in the best sense.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: But are there other artists that you admire, even if you weren't necessarily influenced by them, but their —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, it kind of depends on which thing. I think the person in watercolors is Gustave Moreau. Do you know his watercolors?

MS. LAURIA: Not —

MR. HUBBELL: He's a French symbolist.

MS. LAURIA: No, I don't.

MR. HUBBELL: He has this museum in Paris, and racks and racks of — at least they used to — of all his — his paintings. His oils I don't — they're all right, but his — I think I learned more from his watercolors.

Do you know Redon?

MS. LAURIA: Yes.

MR. HUBBELL: His pastels?

MS. LAURIA: Yes, I do. I was just thinking —

MR. HUBBELL: The way he uses his color.

MS. LAURIA: His reds are — his vibrant reds.

MR. HUBBELL: The color he uses.

I really like Rubens. I just finished a book about his life. It's about his painting, but it's really about his work as a diplomat. And I hugely admire him as being more than an artist in a garret.

MS. LAURIA: Who?

MR. HUBBELL: Rubens.

MS. LAURIA: Oh, you're still speaking about Rubens. I didn't know he was a diplomat.

MR. HUBBELL: Oh, yeah. He was a spy, and he would — they'd send — you know, the Spanish and the English loved to fight in Flanders because it was in between — so he was sent to Spain. He became a good friend of the king. He painted his picture. He was sent to England, became a good friend of the Duke, painted his picture. And all the time he was carrying on this sort of secret diplomacy. He would go to France. He could speak all these languages. Amazing person.

MS. LAURIA: Absolutely.

MR. HUBBELL: And I'm also reading the journals of Delacroix, and Delacroix talks about Rubens all the time. So basically Rubens, Delacroix, Manet. And the modern movement comes from them.

MS. LAURIA: Right.

MR. HUBBELL: It's so interesting, these things.

MS. LAURIA: So it's not only their talent; it's their personalities too.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. Yes, and what they could — I'm really fascinated by these sort of streams that run through a culture, you know, and where — because nothing begins from nowhere. It's all tied to other people and other ideas.

MS. LAURIA: Sure.

MR. HUBBELL: And I kind of think that change is a little bit like acupuncture. You know, if you can find the right place to push — put the finger — and that's what I'm hoping the Pacific Rim Park is. It's like a small thing, but if it's in the right place at the right time, it could make a big difference.

So, you know, that's sort of the way I think about life, to stay awake and watch what's happening.

MS. LAURIA: And be there and be alert and be part of it.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So that brings me to one of the last questions, which is a very difficult one because it has to do with legacy: How would you like you and your art to be viewed in the future? And what do you think your contributions have been to American art?

MR. HUBBELL: I kind of think — I hope what I do opens doors for people, kind of bridges between different things. And I have no idea about what it contributes to America.

MS. LAURIA: Well, most recently your house has been featured in *Handmade Houses*, right?

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And I'm sure people have said before that you are like an American Gaudi.

So, I mean, in terms of contributing to American architecture they're kind of putting you in that same category as liberating from the — you know, the traditional box structure. We don't have to live in these, you know, square little boxes that, you know, other architects have put us in.

You've shown us that we can, you know, be more free-form. We can, you know, sort of decide that we don't have to take, you know, the sort of standardized kind of shelter. We can kind of design our own, that that's possible. I mean, you can concede that.

MR. HUBBELL: Well, that's a big thing.

MS. LAURIA: It is a big thing.

MR. HUBBELL: But, see, all that comes under the term of opening doors.

MS. LAURIA: Yes, and you've got a lot of doors. As I've said to you as I've stayed here overnight, I keep opening the wrong — maybe the right door, but there are so many doors on this property that lead to other places.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: And that's really kind of cool because you love doors. And I now know that when I walk out of a door on this property, I begin to identify where I'm going by the door handles because each door handle is different. I see a bird is one of them. Another one is some other —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So it's a language now of where I'm going by which door I'm entering, which is building a memory. You know, if you think about it, every building has a standardized door, which has a standardized knob.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So nobody ever thinks about it. You just unconsciously walk into a door. It could be any door anyplace. You'd get lost. But here I will know where I am because every door is totally different. Every knob is totally different.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: So I'll know which building I'm in by which door I'm at, which knob I am opening. So, you know, you are testing my memory, and I think that's really cool.

And every building is different, and it's of a different size, it's of a different character. So, you know, if you take this whole property, if this is to be your legacy, then you're telling people that every building is a different art piece. It's a different sculptural piece, but you're living in it so it's a living sculpture. It's organic. Like we are organic and we change daily —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA. — this changes daily by the way the light comes in through the windows, the way that we perceive the shelter because the light changes it through refraction and reflection, and the way that our perceptions are. So it becomes — you know, the whole experience changes. So that is something that you've — the legacy of this compound, these buildings will live on as the foundation.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes. I know that a lot of young people are pretty depressed about what's going on, and what I tell them is we live in a time of compost heap, but compost is really where good things grow. And if you go help the good things, and producing the compost, there's a garden.

So I think it's really easy to get so depressed that you get really serious about it, but I think you have to be willing to play. You have to be willing to say, okay, what's there? What can we make out of this thing? And that's probably one of the biggest gifts the artist has to do.

MS. LAURIA: Well, then maybe your legacy should be that you've brought back a sense of playfulness to architecture —

MR. HUBBELL: Well, that might be, yes.

MS. LAURIA: — and also a sense of light infusion, that light should be part of the daily experience of living, because everywhere you look, in all of these buildings, you are never without light —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — because there's light everywhere. Every place in every room, in every ceiling, is pierced —

MR. HUBBELL: There's also shadows.

MS. LAURIA: Right, which you're not afraid of the mystery, like the Gothic cathedrals.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: But I'd say I get a tremendous sense — everywhere I look there's prisms. On this chair there is a prism that is over your face when I'm interviewing you, from the stained glass window behind us. You know, there's prisms that are following everywhere in the room, which, you know, is a really nice touch because it's, you know, it's the spectrum of light that — it makes you aware that there's something that's invisible that has now become visible.

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: I mean, this is art but it's architecture, so you're taking — you're bridging —

MR. HUBBELL: Yes.

MS. LAURIA: — these things together in an environment that becomes your shelter.

MR. HUBBELL: That's good.

MS. LAURIA: Okay, we'll end there.

MR. HUBBELL: And what I'll try to do is — you have to give me an address and I can mail all that stuff to you.

MS. LAURIA: Well, yeah, I'll give it you or you can give it to me and I'll put it in the box for the Archives so you don't have to mail it, if you want.

Anyway, this is the end of tape number three for James Hubbell.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]