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Oral History Interview with Robert Hamilton Transcript

Robert Hamilton
Rhode Island School of Design

Jonathan Bonner
Rhode Island School of Design, jbonner@risd.edu

RISD Archives
Rhode Island School of Design, risdarchives@risd.edu

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**ROBERT HAMILTON
INTERVIEWED BY BUNNY HARVEY
AT BUNNY HARVEY'S STUDIO
PROVIDENCE, RI
MARCH 18, 1996**

Tape 1 Side A

Bunny: Robert, we want to know how did you wind up at RISD, either first as student or as a teacher or both?

Robert: Well, I was up in the middle of New York state, a little town called Seneca Falls. A very important man on the faculty, Dave Fails, William David Fails, used to come up there and go fishing in Cave of the Lake. Of course, I could draw. So, this is in the 30's. He came up there and he took a look at my, he was friends with my mother and father, and took a look at my drawings and said, "I'm on the admissions committee, I'll get him in and I'll get him a full scholarship." How much do you think a scholarship was? How much do you think the tuition was?

BH: 1930.

RH: \$135.00.

BH: Did you get the scholarship?

RH: Oh sure! Nobody paid anything. Of course, Mrs. Danforth was footing the bill for everything, you know. Now there were twelve, there were twelve people in my painting class. And one rich girl paid tuition, you know, her father had so much money I suppose she didn't have the guts to take [it] free. Nobody paid tuition! You want to hear the rest of the story?

BH: Yes.

RH: Oh, alright. This is the truth, I swear, and what it illustrates is that students don't change. Now in our, we're paying, not paying anything, and in our junior year, they started what been going on ever since. They raised the tuition from \$135 to a \$175. What did we do? We went out in the street and revolted, and we weren't even paying! Honest to God we did.

BH: That's great.

RH: Weird.

BH: Did you come in as a freshman?

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RH: Sure.

BH: So you came into the Foundation program?

RH: Sure.

BH: What was the RISD reputation then, as an Art School, when you came as a student?

RH: It was astonishingly good, as I remember, but I don't know, but I think it was astonishingly good. Very small, obviously, very small. They built what is called the college building, while in my, I had been there for two years. There were what? A textile building and where they have the Freshmen Foundation and that corner funny built place, that's all there was, you know. Then they built the college building, so you can see I was there at the very beginning.

BH: Did that seem to change the character of education at all when the big building was put up?

RH: No.

BH: No?

RH: Same thing, had a little more room. Better equipment, and of course the new painting studios we thought were wonderful, maybe they were. I haven't been down there in along time, I don't know what's down there now. But when I was there, that is what comprised ...

BH: When you were a student, did RISD provide housing for you? Or did... No.

RH: It was absolutely wonderful in the fact that, I forget the expression for it, but when you left the door of the school building you were on your own. Everybody lived around in junky, cheap rooms up and down Benefit Street, you know. I remember I paid \$3.50 a week, and about that to eat. We would have a combine, a dozen of us would meet and one fellow would do the cooking. He did all the cooking and then everybody would wash dishes and so, we all paid about \$3.50 and ate the whole week.

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BH: Wow.

RH: Then of course, on Saturday, you really blew your money. Fifty cents for a quart of beer, and believe me a quart of beer would get you, would get me, well going.

BH: So when you graduated from RISD, did you immediately start to teaching?

RH: No, no, I had to go to war.

BH: Ah.

RH: I went into, I had to after a short wait at home waiting. I didn't want to go into the trenches, having some brains, so I went into the Air Force and I flew B-47's, Republic Thunderbolts on Tactical Air Force, the Ninth Air Force. I flew 100 missions, and was awarded, given the Distinguished Flying Cross. When I came back from, I didn't even get scratched.

When I came back from World War II, I went back to Seneca Falls and got a telephone call from the School of Design. They knew that there was going to be a real influx. They knew, Rhode Island School of Design was wise enough to know that with the GI Bill of Rights, they aren't going to have to go around looking for students, they going to be jammed with them. And so they hired me to handle the GI people, the ex-soldiers who came in to get an education on the GI Bill of Rights. So that's why they called me up. I went down there and did that, which was a stupid little job.

The second year Mr. Frasier said "Wouldn't you like to," John R. Frasier said to me, "wouldn't you like to take one of these classes of drawing?" I took the class of drawing and then I was off. I had a job there teaching drawing and painting, 34 years.

BH: And you never left?

RH: I never left. I threatened in order to get a raise a couple of times. They gave me a raise. You want to know what a raise was? At the School of Design, I won't tell you how, the salaries were \$2500 and maybe \$3000. A raise for the year, \$200. Ha. Didn't bother us. Didn't bother me one single bit,

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because, one nobody ever told you how to teach, do your job. Nobody ever told you how to do it and two, I've forgotten. What was I going to say for number two? Well, it was expected, that you only worked a few hours because you were much more interested in your own real work.

BH: Well, I would like to know more about that. How was your work going at that time? How were you... did you have a studio?

RH: Oh yes, had a wonderful studio up at 30 Benefit Street. Oh, a perfect great big studio, way up on the top floor, with a huge North light and it cost nothing because the state maintained a little bit of that building, 30 Benefit Street. Do you know 30 Benefit?

BH: I do know 30 Benefit Street.

RH: Yea, everybody for a long time, you know.

BH: Many of my class mates passed through there in the '60's and the '70's living there.

RH: Yea, well that, everything wasn't roofed, it couldn't be better. I loved every minute of it. I liked teaching, I think teaching, for instance, even this terrible impossible thing that you and I tried to teach. You can't teach a creative pursuit. Even so, if you're not bugged, it's a great job. But I've always said, "It was a great job for the first 20-years, the last 15 ---- yek!

BH: Oh darn, that's when I had you as a teacher!

You say that nobody told you what to teach or how to teach, do you think there was any underlying philosophy in the painting department or in the school to guide you or other members of the faculty?

RH: Well, the peripheral faculty, meaning, the people who didn't teach things that you did with their hands. People like our historians and so forth, did think that there was a School of Design, too much of a school of design image or philosophy. Well, I never could see it. We tried to be as free as possible and not, certainly not hands on. Certainly not this is how to do it, ever, ever, ever. But there seemed to be a similarity. And if you want to know where it came

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from it came from the same place that it comes from right now, where ever you are. Harvard, Yale or Philadelphia Art School or Rhode Island School of Design, it comes right of reading the magazines that come up from New York, the Art News and that kind of thing. That's where it comes from.

BH: Really? I was unaware of that in my day, that the philosophy might have come from some external force or movement. I would have thought that perhaps it came from senior faculty, for instance, John Frazier, who you mentioned.

RH: I should say, that if there is any, if there was for a number of years, any prevailing general philosophy it was John R. Frazier's, and of course, as far as I'm concerned, I came down there, I came down as I told you, from a green little boy from the middle of New York State. I came down there to be an illustrator. That's what was the big thing then, you know. Like doing illustrations, lots of illustrations of stories in magazines and then of course, there were always the covers of magazines were done by hand by the Leyendeckers and who's the most famous one of them all?

BH: Wyeth?

RH: No, he wouldn't, he was too exhalant. Oh, N. C. Wyeth, his father, Andy's father. Andy would do that. When I got there I found a great teacher. When you go to college all you've go to do is find one or two great teachers and you're going to get your money's worth. And you can do this in any college or university in the world, if you're lucky. But I found John R. Frazier, and if you want to know the basic thing that he taught me that I've never had any reason to change. "Art for Art's sake" that's what he taught me and I still do.

BH: In your years of teaching, how would you say your colleagues would describe you?

RH: How they described me?

BH: Yes

RH: How do I know. (ha ha) I don't know, what rotten things they said about

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me. I think that we will skip that question, because that's an unanswerable question.

BH: What were your other colleagues like, in your department?

RH: Oh, well I said originally, of course, 50-50, fifty almost always everywhere, you have kind of a 50-50 thing. Half very competent, especially for the money at the School of Design. There was very nifty percentage of first rate people at the School of Design, for miserable salaries. You couldn't believe that you could get these people for the money. But then always there is this other half that aren't worth their bread. They were terrible.

BH: Were many of the faculty members like you, graduates of RISD?

RH: Critics would say too many. Yes. Frazier and some of the people used to try very hard to get a guy up from Yale, get a guy from here and get a guy from there and a girl. By the way, the girls were treated very fairly, girls in the student body, we treated them absolutely equally. And I hope on the faculty too.

BH: Were there any women on the faculty?

RH: Let me think, of course there were. There were no women teaching painting until I had been there ten years. Then we started having women faculty, women teaching painting.

BH: I don't recall in my years, between...

RH: Not one, right?

BH: Not one.

RH: Yea.

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BH: In fact, the only women teachers in the school that I recall were in Foundation. There were two, Edna Lawrence and Gracia Melanson. But other than that I never had a woman teacher.

RH: It doesn't surprise me. (ha ha ha)

BH: In fact, when I was a graduate student, I was the only woman in my class.

RH: That was just luck. I mean that was chance.

BH: It was.

RH: I give you my word, cause it's the idea to have something to with who became a graduate student. And I give you my word, when those portfolios came in and that work came in, we didn't care if it was all girls. Work was the best. That's why you were in there.

BH: Oh, thank you.

RH: Well, there was no question in my mind.

BH: Robert, you say that when you came back to RISD as a teacher it was first to do something with the GI's who were coming back to campus. What were they like as students? Were they different from students that were there before, in your recollection?

RH: From a teaching stand point, they were absolutely wonderful. They've all been saying "yes sir" and "no sir" to their officers and of course, they're delighted that they're alive and they're delighted that the government's going to pay for them to be educated, and oh my god, they were wonderful students. And they worked and they were there, I can't say too much about it. But you can understand how that would be? A lot of very good people came out of there too.

BH: Were they older than the other students around?

RH: Oh sure. In general, almost like the entire student body from 1946 through '50 something, ran much older than they did from did there on, which of

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course, was right out of high school.

BH: Well, that's one change in the student body in over the years, how did the student body change in other ways over the years that you were there?

RH: I never found that much change. I've always say to anybody ask me that Rhode Island, one of the great things, I always say very nice things about my job. Because the job that I had there was a delight in every way except money, and that was not considered not important. One of the delights was the absolute wonderful quality of the students. Always, always, the most extremely bright and fascinated by their work. Want to be there and delighted with their work, I never could say enough about the students that where there. Of course, there is a rotten egg every now and then, but we didn't let that bother us. There was always some nut there. But otherwise that was like one percent and the rest were wonderful. A wonderful bunch of people, always go to the School of Design, and I would assume right now it's the same.

BH: You said that the first 20-years of teaching were wonderful, and the last ten - 15 weren't so good. If the student body didn't change why was that the case?

RH: You know, I have a some favorite, I mean I'm old, talk to me you get some old stories, I have some old stories. I'll tell that the real basic reason it's so much more difficult and so less rewarding after 20-years and then I'll tell another thing. In a simple sentence. After you have done something for 20-years pretty soon you're saying the same thing over again and pretty soon you stand out side of yourself and looking at yourself, and you're hearing the same old god damn stuff. So that's really basically it.

Now let me tell you. In the '60's , whenever, when the kids used to get some signals from *Art News*, *New York* and the *New York Times* and so forth. Some kind of signals that were weird.

Now for instance. When it got to where I as the head of or the mentor or the live-in teacher of the graduate students. It would be only half a dozen of them. When I would go, like a girl came in and I'd give them six weeks, I would be friends and speak to them, give them six weeks. Then I would have to go and see how they were doing. It was my duty.

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So when I went into this girl's studio, instead of paintings, (now she came in there on paper to study painting). When I went into the studio there were 20,000 jellybeans laid out in a lines on the floor. I was speechless. So I laughed that off, and lobbed her off on Roland Belhumeur or somebody. Then the guy in the next studio with an ear to *Art News* or whatever, he instead of having a painting or sculptures or anything resembled anything that I knew how to do, he had a cabinet that he got down on South Main Street. He opened the cabinet and there would be a hot dog in the drawer; that was it for this.

Well, you know, I really didn't care to get into that, and I didn't care certainly, to get into conceptual art, because, I figure what I do, improvisation, you can not be more totally the reverse of conceptual. Conceptual is very simple, you look it up in the dictionary, it's you think up an idea. My whole career has been to try to get into a position where the last thing I want is ideas. What I want is for them to make themselves. And so I being totally opposite to conceptual, I certainly wasn't going to bone up on conceptual and do that. So there was quite a split there for a time. I don't know what is going on over there now, but I bet painting is. Uh?

BH: We hope. Was there any feeling from ... pressure from the administration for you to change what you taught because the students had changed what they thought they wanted to do?

RH: Not a whisper. But maybe I left early enough. I went out of there in 1981. In the whole 34-years there was never a whisper, to me, of what to teach or how to teach. I wouldn't have stood for it for a second, and there never was. Of course I remember, I know that you know Gordon Peers, right?

BH: Yes I do.

RH: And that you were, you've got him down there. Well, we'll get to him right now because that's one answer to the question. Gordon, was a hard head and he was an administrator, and quite reasonably he wanted order. And that's just what administrators want, they want it very orderly. Well you and I know that, that's the last thing you're going to have if you're teaching WWII, you can't have order. But I remember, he thought, he tried several ways to get order, and got a little for himself. And then I remember when he got the idea

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to have a syllabus. You know what a syllabus is?

BH: Sure.

RH: Okay. Now you need a syllabus in painting, about like you need to be hung by the neck till dead, you know? So, he got us all together and said, I don't know if Jack was there, maybe before Jack, but he got the whole faculty, probably six is all, of the painting faculty. He said, "I want you to write, each one of you, to write a syllabus for your course and then we'll put it all together." Meanwhile, you know, we're all looking at each other, what I said was, "Gordon, I know what you want," I said, "you must think I'm crazy. If I write down exactly all the things I do and the way I do it then you as the administrator can if you don't like the way I drink my coffee you can throw me out of here and give it to some kid, my syllabus. Do you think I'm crazy? I worked this up, this is mine!" And so, you know, he said, "Well, we want, let's do this." So we all went outside and we all looked at each other and this is, what I said and what they all said was, "what we will do is nothing." Later it was known popular as "stonewalling", we didn't have that word, stonewalling. We never wrote a syllabus. We never mentioned it again, and neither did Peers. (ha ha ha)

BH: In the '60's, 33-years ago, I came to RISD and it seemed to me that was a period when the school was undergoing a major change. A lot of faculty was replaced. I guess that was a euphemism for firing a lot of people.

RH: You mean, Bush Brown fired them.

BH: Yes.

RH: Okay.

BH: And I was wondering what was the feeling of the faculty towards the administration during that period of change and later periods when Lee Hall came and other presidents were running the school and many changes in terms of structure evolved.

RH: Well.

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BH: Did it affect you?

RH: Well, in a word, the feeling of the faculty was, let's shoot Bush Brown. Let's shoot that woman. But you see, she worked on the finances of the school. But Bush Brown had the guts to fire half the faculty and scare the brains out of the rest of the faculty, because there was no academic protection. You know, just at that time with Ron Binks, remember Ronald Binks.

BH: Sure, sure.

RH: You know what I really liked about Ron? Ron, of course Bush Brown thought a lot of his name, you know, Bush Brown. Ron called him "Mr. Brown". Oh I applauded Ron when he called him, always to his face and very seriously called him "Mr. Brown." Probably drove Bush crazy. Anyway he fired, like half an hour ago I'm telling you half the faculty are deadheads anyway. Anywhere, anywhere, including Harvard. But he, so there is no question that Bush Brown fired a bunch of people who weren't cutting the mustard. But still, the faculty, of course, always hates the president that comes in and throws his weight around. Does that answer your question?

BH: Yes. I'm wondering

End of Tape 1 Side A

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Tape 1 Side 2

- BH: I have to do a lot of administrative stuff.
- RH: Oh do you?
- BH: Yes, a lot, and that's the part I just hate.
- RH: Well, of course, now when I say administrators want order, that's true, but there's lots of administrative work that isn't as bad as trying to get a syllabus for a creative pursuit.
- BH: Did you have to serve on committees?
- RH: Yes. Up to a point, and then I just told somebody some president, I said, "no more." And then they never put me on anymore.
- BH: And they accepted that? You just said "I don't want to serve on committees any more"?
- RH: You got to be, you got to think you're good to do that, but I thought I was a good painter and I was not going to serve on the god damn committees. And I didn't.
- BH: So how did you balance being a good painter and being a teacher? Did that seem to fit well?
- RH: Are we on camera? How did I balance it?
- BH: Yes.
- RH: There's another story. My kid said to me one day, "Yeah dad, you didn't like that job but you stayed on there and taught because you had me and Vicky and Nancy and we had to go to college and all that." I said, I told him, "no way, I never thought about that job that way at all." And I didn't. But then I, then I thought that if you only had to teach in the morning, you had all afternoon to paint, and all summer off, you couldn't ask for more. I was convinced that it didn't, it did not conflict. I was wrong. Where it conflicts

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is teaching takes the same kind of special energy and attention that painting does. Some jobs, like you know, go down and change automobile tires, that does not take the same kind of energy, and you could do that all morning and and go and paint far better than you could teach and criticize painting all morning. Then of course, I proved it from 1981, when I quit the Rhode Island School of Design to right up till yesterday, I have made my whole life's work and it's 14 times as good as anything I did when I was teaching. Okay?

BH: Yes, do you think that's true for most of the faculty members as well?

RH: I have no idea. I think most faculty members when they retire they don't lift a finger again to make anything. That's my guess. My observation in a lot of cases, they don't, they do a little, you see there are the kind that aren't worth their salt. They do one once in a while, while they are teaching in order to kind of make believe that they're painters. Their life is teaching. Still they have one for the faculty show, they hope, they don't work, they work at their teaching. Then when they retire, they don't do any more painting, they never touch it again. I can give you a long list of names, but I'm not going to.

BH: Robert, tell us about some infamous students, if any come to mind.

RH: Some what?

BH: Students. Infamous, wonderful or otherwise students. You have stories that just seem to be special, in your recollection, of people that you ran into in all those years at RISD.

RH: Well, if I had read that question I might have an answer for you. I really can't answer that question.

BH: Were there any students whose work profoundly changed you?

RH: Changed me? Oh no, no. My advice, of course, strong advice to all students all the way along the line was "you're going to imitate somebody and you're going to steal everything you can get just like Picasso did. If you're normal, and you're going to borrow a lot of things and use a lot of things. Don't get it from your contemporaries, don't get it from the guy in the next studio. Try to get it from somebody that's already dead." And of course, I wouldn't, I

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have known teachers, and particularly one down at Yale that was famous for, and I assume there were a lot of teachers, who milked their best students year after year after year for devices and ideas. I think that, that is so low, I wouldn't think of it. Oh I wouldn't think of it.

BH: I guess I didn't mean it quite that way.

RH: Oh good. What did you mean?

BH: I meant a student whose particular personality or outlook might have been important to you, as an artist, a young artist teaching.

RH: No, I will say because I've said often enough that Vicky Wolf, that we saw yesterday, had as original a talent as any student that ever went through there. Now I have no idea of what she's going to do with it. What we saw yesterday looked like a continuation of it. But I've always, you know, I've always. If I really want to make a list, I've got a long list of wonderful talents, wonderful talents, and I'll, for your benefit, plenty of them are girls a lot of them are girls maybe more than half. That Vicky had, what she had was originality. Julian Bitterson Craig is one of the most remarkable painters and she remained in contact as a friend.

I could think of a dozen, but right at the moment I'm speechless. I could think of dozen and if there were a reason, I could dig up a 100. And you'd be one of them, that, and Richard Merkin, you know. That first, really first rate, and the sky is the limit. But I didn't think about it before coming over here and I would have too.

BH: Well, did you feel there were plenty of opportunities for students and faculty to talk or get together casually outside of the classroom, outside of RISD, bars or restaurants?

RH: There may have been, but I never went for that. There may have been, some teachers did that and some did not. I'll go right back to the start of this interview. When I went out that door as a student, I was on my own. And as a teacher, I gave them everything in class that I had. When I went out of there, I didn't know that we were separated. I didn't entertain them in my house or anything. Or, you know, I have a habit of going down to the corner

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bar and drinking with them. I think that's good. Not for me, okay?

BH: I have to think a minute here. If you didn't personally engage in social exchanges with your students, did you feel there was a community of faculty when you were there, that was strong?

RH: Unlike every faculty, there were several communities of faculty, and they would run to a dozen, and you know that's the way it was. Socially, we had a dozen people on the faculty that we socialized almost exclusively with. Now there are other people who see benefit for themselves and certainly benefit for the whole faculty, to have a lot of faculty socially. They would run a party and have the whole faculty there. Our way, was to have several cliques. Quite frankly, and that's the way we did it. And they didn't change and they didn't intersect very much. You could only stand, as far as I'm concerned personally, you can stand three or four friends and if you can extend it to a dozen for formal parties. Bossa.

BH: I want to change the subject to the, it seems to me a change in the notion that a student should exhibit work. That seemed to happen while I was at RISD. I wasn't aware of the fact that we were expected to be professionals and exhibit work. Then during the time that I was there, with Woods-Gerry opened up as a place to show work and there seemed to be some pressure to think about exhibition. Were you aware of that change? Or were you instrumental in getting students to think professionally?

RH: The early relationship to exhibition of student work was always a big hodgepodge formal exhibition of student work hung by the faculty for the benefit of the friends of the School of Design, who lived in this city. That's what that was all about. It was to show the people interested in the School of Design, how hot stuff those students were.

So the faculty picked out the students work, the faculty hung it in the museum and then they had a big opening and everybody in Providence that loved the School of Design and contributed money to it and were trustees for it, all came to see what their boys and girls were doing. Now when they got Woods-Gerry it's just a different form of that. Showing the city what a wonderful school they had here and what wonderful students unbelievably talented and able students were being produced. And that's all I know about

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that.

I put my own work up in the Gerry mansion once, as I remember, once or twice. And that's another way of doing exactly the same thing, once a year having a faculty show. Or once every two years, once every year early. So that the students could see what the faculty was doing. The people of Providence could come and see what the School of Design was. Kind of around about answer to yours, I don't know what you were aiming at.

BH: Did you have any particular notion of what kind of career or exhibitions students would go on to have? What kind of lives as professionals that they would go on to have?

RH: The one thing that I could guarantee, at the Rhode Island School of Design, while I was there is. The first thing I said was, art for arts sake, and the second thing I say is, we never kidded a student that they were going to make a living. They were all, in painting, they were all told right from the beginning, "you ain't got a chance kid. If you want to make money, you've got to go and do something else." I mean it might just as well face that because it was statistically true. You didn't detour anybody, in my whole, I've never been able to detour anybody, from doing painting. If they want to do painting, they're going to do it and they don't care what you say Professor Hamilton, I'm going to do it. But it's my duty to say, "look, I never made a dime, kid, and it's very likely that you're not going to make a dime." But having said that, if you want to go on, I did.

BH: Robert, tell us about the work you are doing now. What are you focussing on now in your paintings?

RH: Now that's much easier than remembering all that stuff that you asked me the day before.

I went up, Nancy and I retired, we owned a little cottage hanging right out on a rock at Port Clyde Harbor, that we bought a long time ago for nothing, and we fixed that, winterized that. My son bought a good, great big piece lovely ground across the road, a big field with forest on it. I went up there and I built three museums. I built them myself when I was 20-years younger. Because that's the only way I had money to do anything. You have to do

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everything for yourself. So I built those and called in a carpenter when it got to way up over sixteen feet and I wouldn't go up there. I would call the carpenter for a few dollars and get him to put the rest on.

Then I had my studio in a garage on Horse Point Road. I spent all winter making a lot of paintings, and I take the paintings up in May, I take them up the hill to the museums. Take down the old show, put up a whole brand new show. Send out a bunch of cards and people come by every year. Not like Andy Wyeth, I told Andy the other day that if he ever did this, they would trample the whole thing down, by the thousands. But a few hundred people come, enough. My work is the same it's improvised, it's all invented. I put down a lot of slop and my only secret is, the only difference between me and another true improviser, Francis Bacon. Is Bacon like everybody for the last 500 years, builds his picture up, I uncover my picture. That's the only secret I've got.

So I really have a wonderful happy life. Once in a while somebody buys one. As a matter of fact, I had a group, I have this friend, this very successful painter from New York. Several come up there and they teach, teach a class, going around and do the ox and trees, on the shore. Surg, when he saw my work from New York, he leaped in the air. So he said, "can I bring my 35 people?" I said, "Sure, I'll even talk [to] them." So he brought his 35 people up there, in the process when we were coming out on the steps, money rears it's ugly head. So I said to the group, I said, "look, I not only haven't made any money," but I said, "I've been painting in 50-years of painting every day. I am at least \$200,000 in the red." Serg said, "Robert, Robert, two million."

BH: So do you think that art for art's sake mentality was special to RISD?

RH: Oh, I don't know about that. I know that it was solid. There was nothing else entertained. I don't know, I always had the idea from what we could see from afar at Yale, it wasn't necessarily true down there, and Harvard. After awhile, not so long ago we were known as the School of Design was known as the Harvard of art schools. You do know that don't you?

BH: The Harvard of art schools? No.

RH: Of course, they invented that here. Harvard didn't make that up.

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- BH: Harvard doesn't have a very wonderful
- RH: They have a dumb art school. So I don't know what they teach up there.
- BH: I do I taught there.
- RH: Oh did you?
- BH: And they invited me to come in as a head of it and I turned them down.
- RH: Well, my god. Well I had Dmitri Hadzi. Did you know Dmitri?
- BH: Sure.
- RH: Well, of course, he's an old friend of mine from flying B-47's, so I knew him very well. And I imagine what he ran up there was okay, but frequently thought, they had a dumb operation up there.
- BH: So the last question that, oh okay.
- RH: This is almost enough, wouldn't you think?
- BH: Yes, they want me to ask you one more question.
- Well, Robert, I remember from my education, my classes with you, that music was a big part of your life, and your knowledge of music is profound. Do you feel that you brought that into your life as a painter and as a teacher?
- RH: I don't think that there is any question. After all, the kind of music, the only kind of music that I know anything about is real jazz. Now they call a lot of things jazz, but it's got nothing to do with jazz. Basically jazz starts by being improvisation. Now where in the world did I learn that my pictures had to be improvised?
- 1949, 1948, of course, I had a small brain, I knew a picture, that if the whole life of jazz was the fact that it was improvised on the spur of the moment. The guy didn't know what's he going to play and he didn't know how he did it after he did it. I knew how, that's what it had to be. I had no idea how to

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do it. How in the world do you do that on a horn, I don't know. How do you do that on a canvas, I don't know, but I found out. And that's what took 15-years where I could, you know I can make, you wouldn't believe how many pictures I can make in a winter now. But this I justify by the fact for 15 or 20 years I would work hard, all year long, and get one picture, two pictures. I couldn't get them because I didn't know where to I was going or how to do it. Finally, I got myself into a position where the picture made itself. It's very difficult, and there aren't very many real improvisors. Bacon is a real improvisor. You take another man that I admire immensely, Baldus, not really an improvisor at all, you know, but he is a damn good painter. So, it don't have to be one to a be somebody. But I had to be one. Now, 90% of what I do, I guarantee, I don't know, I had no a priori idea. I didn't know, I wouldn't think of having an idea to make picture, the way Andy does. And when I'm finished, I don't know how the hell I did it, and that's the truth. And of course when the people, that don't know much, show up in my museums in the summer time to come, and they want me to talk to them. That's what I tell them. They don't believe a word of that, they don't know what to make of that. How can you make picture if you don't know what you're going to do, and then you don't know how, he's baloney us. But it's true and you know it, cause you're an improvisor.

That's a good place to stop.

End of Tape 1 Side 2