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Oral history interview with Marcia  
Marcus, 1975 Oct. 30-Nov. 3

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## **Transcript**

### **Preface**

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Marcia Marcus on October 30 and November 3, 1975. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The original transcript was edited. In 2024 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. Additional information was handwritten by the narrator on the original transcript and on notepaper inserted into the transcript. These incorporations have been added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution.

### **Interview**

[00:00:02.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let me say it's the 30th of October, 1975, and it's Paul Cummings talking to Marcia Marcus.

[00:00:08.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, please.

[00:00:09.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't say it so fast, here—in her old studio [703 East Sixth Street -Ed.], right? About to be old studio loft. [Just before moving to 80 North Moore Street. -Ed.] Let's see. You were born in New York City, right, 1928?

[00:00:25.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. One of the few people I know who was actually born in Manhattan.

[00:00:30.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, you were born in Manhattan?

[00:00:31.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes.

[00:00:33.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whereabouts?

[00:00:34.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: St. Luke's Hospital, which I never knew where it was until my kids went to Downtown Community School. And when they had parents' orientation night, they said how they had changed this building 25 years ago from a hospital into a thing. And I thought, Oh, my God, this is where I was born.

[00:00:52.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Where your children—

[00:00:53.93]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it had to be, because—

[00:00:56.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, marvelous.

[00:00:58.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: So except for about six months, when I lived in Brooklyn or someplace like that, or the Bronx for a couple years, I was really born in New York. And I'm the only one I know. Because anyone I know who's a native New Yorker was from either Brooklyn or Long Island or something.

[00:01:14.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Somewhere else, yeah. So did you grow up in Manhattan, then?

[00:01:19.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:01:19.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whereabouts? In what—

[00:01:22.62]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know Inwood?

[00:01:25.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's up in the—

[00:01:26.96]

MARCIA MARCUS: All the way up. It's above Washington Heights. And it's near Inwood Hill Park and Fort Tryon Park and all that. It was about the time I was five. Because from about—I think from about three to five, I lived in the Bronx, but I really am not sure, not having—actually, maybe earlier, maybe a year and a half, until I was about five.

[00:01:53.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Until there. Being born in 1928, you must remember the Depression years.

[00:02:00.84]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, vividly. [They laugh.] Certainly, I remember crashes and people jumping out of windows—nothing. [Being sarcastic. I didn't remember, except people singing in the courtyard, and the WPA. -Ed.]

[00:02:14.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But give me some information about your family. Do you have brothers and sisters?

[00:02:18.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: I have a younger sister who's five years younger than me.

[00:02:22.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is she in the art—

[00:02:25.16]

MARCIA MARCUS: Peripherally.

[00:02:26.03]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Peripherally, in what way?

[00:02:28.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, at a certain point, late in life, that sort of thing, she decided to be a dancer. Now, I don't know how public this is going to be because it's bound to be nasty.

[00:02:39.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] You can restrict it, though.

[00:02:46.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh. Well, she'll never see it, or hear it at all. But there's the real thing and the not-real thing. [She had no instincts and studied jazz dancing at Judson and it was not the real thing. -Ed.] And, of course, growing up was a horror because I had a typical Jewish mother. When she was born—First of all, I'm sure five is about the worst time for a kid to have a sibling, especially someone like me.

[00:03:12.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you say that?

[00:03:14.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, from being the center of the universe. [This was Richard's idea, not sure I really bought it. -Ed.] Of course, that could happen with any older child. But at five, suddenly, there is this baby. And in those days, the whole thing was, you must be quiet. Your sister's sleeping.

[00:03:32.99]

And I suppose my mother tried to [keep things happy -Ed.]. But I do remember a certain kind of resentment. Like, many times, I had to play with beads [laughs] just things quiet like that. And we did not have a very good relationship. My major function in her life was beating her up, I guess.

[00:03:59.19]

Actually, one of my best friends now is a friend of hers who I met years and years later and, of course, didn't remember. Because when you're that age, you don't remember your sister's friends. And some guy that was a friend of a boyfriend of mine at the time brought her to my house. And she said, "Well, I remember you because I was Barbara's friend." And of course, I didn't remember her. But she's one of my best friends now.

[In retrospect, in comparison to people I've talked to in the meantime, my childhood was not that bad. It may have been confining in certain ways, but the voiced ideals, which I believed, and still do, made the hypocrisy stand out. And there was a certain level of living—the country, even if we could only afford a week, a sense of values about good things, achieving that was also there. And recently with my mother being ill and first time really honest about feelings, I am almost in a state of reconciliation. I say "almost" because when she started feeling a little better, the snapping resurfaced. But my general position towards her has softened, mostly intellectually, but emotionally as well. She was a favorite child with great

planet, which was killed (the chances) by the ignorance of her family, which she says she doesn't resent, but still mentions 60 years later. Someone from a movie studio gave her a card when he saw her dancing the street and her brother tore it up. She also had a chance to go to Ethical Culture, and her mother refused it. -Ed.]

[00:04:23.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now Marcus is what name? There are lots of names in your life.

[00:04:32.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I was married very young. In the perspective of adulthood, I realize I did the kind of thing many people have done, which was to convince themselves they were in love so they could leave home because they were incapable of leaving home.

[00:04:49.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Otherwise, yeah.

[00:04:50.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Just, it was impossible. You never even thought of leaving home other than to get married, or, certainly, I didn't. So I convinced myself I was in love with someone who was not terribly much older than me, but like nine years. I was only 19 when I got married. And then, when we got separated, which was just before our second anniversary, like, a day—[laughs]—and I thought, oh, well, this is ridiculous. It's not going to get any better. Because I am a fighter, or else I wouldn't have stayed here this long, in this neighborhood.

[00:05:29.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. [Laughs.]

[00:05:29.76]

MARCIA MARCUS: I do try to make things work. And it was quite obvious it was impossible. So I thought, well, if I wait 'til tomorrow, that'll be our second anniversary. He wants to celebrate. So I told him in Grand Central Station [laughs] where we'd just come back from visiting my parents in the country, that it was over. We got annulled. Because, in those days, you could either get annulled, or prove adultery, or go to Reno. And even though he could afford to send me to Reno, I just didn't want to do it that way.

[00:06:07.29]

So we went through the usual number. Oh, he wanted to have children, and then, after we got married, blah, blah, blah, that kind of garbage. And luckily, we had a judge who zipped through 20 cases in one afternoon. But anyhow, at a certain point—I kept his name for about a year, and then I suddenly thought, this is ridiculous. I'm not that. And I don't want to go back to my previous name, which was very complicated. You always had to spell it over the phone.

[00:06:34.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. What was your family name?

[00:06:36.80]

MARCIA MARCUS: Feitelson. So you always had to spell it. Like, if you wanted something from [inaudible] or something, they'd say, "spell it," which was a drag. So I thought for about two weeks. I also had a roommate, at the time—I do everything, sort of, by accident, in a way. And she was working for a lawyer. So I thought for about two weeks. And I went through a whole bunch of names. And they were all very theatrical. And I thought, well, I don't have any meaning. And I don't want to change my name to something that wasn't somehow significant.

[00:07:08.87]

So after two weeks of thinking about it, I thought, well, I was named after my grandfather, who I never met because he died when my mother was 11, who was a fantastic-looking man. And somehow, I don't know what happened, because he was six feet tall, and everyone else in the family, the tallest person, I think, was 5'4". And that was one of the sisters. The brothers were, like, 5'2" and 5'3" or something.

[00:07:35.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:07:36.29]

MARCIA MARCUS: And the poor old grandfather got lost in the shuffle someplace. Some of the grandchildren were tall but, certainly, none of the actual children. So I decided, finally, that, since I was named after him, if I called myself Marcia Marcus, then I was like myself both ways, in a way, and I had no connections with anything, but it also had some kind of significance.

[00:08:04.86]

And the funniest part was that my roommate went down the next day after I made my final decision and said this to her boss, the lawyer. And he said, "My god, she's not even changing it to something Anglo-Saxon." [Laughs.] Well, he was a funny little Jewish lawyer. [They laugh.] And she was a funny little Irish roommate. But we had a nice laugh over that. And it is theatrical [too euphonious? -Ed.], in a way, which is irritating. On the other hand, I don't— obviously, by now, I'm used to it because I did that well over 20 years ago. And you know, that's my name. It's all right. And I felt that was the best thing. Because I wouldn't have wanted to just change it for making it sound good without having some kind of significance.

[00:09:05.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What was his name, Marcus?

[00:09:07.21]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, my grandfather's name was Marcus. And that family had such a fantastic imagination that I had three cousins from three different aunts, right? They were all named Milton. [They laugh.] Could you believe it, three Miltons? Oh, stupid. Can you believe it? So my mother was unusual, in a way, because she was the only sister that had girls. First of all, she had two—

[00:09:38.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Couldn't be called Milton.

[00:09:39.36]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. The other ones all had one child, right? They were all named Milton. My mother was different. And she had two girls. And she named me Marcia. And I loved it [eventually -Ed.]. At some point, when I was ten or eleven or twelve or something, I looked it up in a book of names. And I found that it came [from the Roman -Ed.] Marcus or Marcia, meant "strong [hammer -Ed.]" or something. And I thought, mm, that's nice. [They laugh.] Thank God.

[00:10:06.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'll take that.

[00:10:07.80]

MARCIA MARCUS: I'll take that. I'll accept that.

[00:10:09.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what schools did you go to?

[00:10:12.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I went to P.S. 52—

[00:10:17.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which was?

[00:10:18.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: —which is during the period I had my first nightmare, which involved the school. Because it was a standard public school—abused, disgusting, dark rooms. And the nightmare involved, I guess, the gymnasium—a huge, disgusting room that was dark and dreary, tall ceilings, and horrible. It also had to do with listening to Dick Tracy on the radio, [and a murder –Ed.]. I think somebody got stuffed up a chimney or something.

[00:10:49.51]

Anyway, I was about seven. And it was the usual kind of horrible public school education, which was not horrible in the sense that it is today, but horrible in the sense that it's a wonder you survive knowing anything. Because my kids don't know the name of the presidents, but what good has that ever done me? I don't remember them, either. I mean, I remember the names, but I can't remember which number any of them were.

[00:11:18.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which came first.

[00:11:20.08]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I know that.

[00:11:21.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but I mean the sequence.

[00:11:23.37]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, the sequence. Like, poor old Mr. Polk, who ever cares? Hopefully, Ford will take his place behind Polk.

[00:11:36.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that was, what, all the way through school, from where to where?

[00:11:39.66]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was up until—I'm not quite sure because, at some point, which could have been like the fifth grade, I was transferred to what amounted to a cross between elementary school and junior high, or just under junior. No, it must have been just under junior high, which is P.S. 98, which is about three blocks away.

[00:12:03.55]

And that was interesting only because there was a teacher there who was very big into theatricals. And I was in a lot of them, but only as a dancer. Because what they used to do is they would give the [lead] to the smartest kid in the class because they figured they could afford to lose the time in school. [They laugh.] I was always among the first kids in school because my mother helped me with my homework.

[00:12:33.85]

And I remember being cast as a part of the princess in some play, like "The Fickle Prince," or something. And I got sick. And the teacher must have been delighted because I was the worst actress in the world. [They laugh.] So she had to give the part to the next smartest kid. And she must have been unbelievably overjoyed, because I just couldn't act to save myself. But I was okay as the dancer.

[00:12:58.82]

And the only traumatic experience was when I was in some kind of operetta or something. And I was supposed to lead the middle group of dancers. And the school, I think, went fairly high. And I couldn't find my way through this back chorus line of very tall boys. So the two side groups got out there, and the middle group got there last because I couldn't get out in time. [A teacher finally shamed us, though. -Ed.] But it worked out because, since I was in the middle, I guess it worked out. And we had marvelous costumes. They hired those things. I remember that it didn't quite fit. It was a little too large, but it was beautiful. It wasn't like no put-together job.

[00:13:42.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you liked all that theatrical—

[00:13:44.50]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, as long as I didn't have to say anything. Because we—oh, I guess it was *The Nutcracker Suite*, because I remember the "Waltz of the Flowers." I can practically remember the steps [they laugh] as I led my group around the center when I finally got there.

[00:14:01.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did you start drawing as a child, or was that—

[00:14:04.99]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. And, well, my aim was to be a fashion designer. Because that was the scope.

[00:14:15.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What part was that? In what age, roughly, would you say?

[00:14:18.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I drew all the time. My mother was permissive [or couldn't stop me in time -Ed.] in the sense that I have found old books I had as a child, fairy stories and things. And they're all drawn in. So she didn't keep me from drawing in the books. And I guess I always drew. And then, when I got a little bit older, I was very—I cut things out of the newspapers and stuff, like fashion illustrations, and I would design clothes, and stacks of things.

[00:14:47.50]

And I'll never forget some horrible cleaning lady we had. And I had been ill because I was ill a lot when I was small. And I had this stack. They used to have those little pads, and maybe they still do, in the five and ten. They're very small, maybe 3 by 5 or something. And I had a stack about—what's that, about five or six inches high?

[00:15:07.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Four or five inches, yeah.

[00:15:08.88]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I left them on the windowsill after I was well and went back to school. And I came home, and she'd thrown them all out. And I hated her! I told you, Capricorns never forget, right? I hated her with a deep, undying passion because she had destroyed all of these wonderful drawings, I thought.

[00:15:29.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do when you were ill? Did you make drawings and that, or read?

[00:15:33.25]



MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I listened to soap operas. And, of course, it was marvelous because nothing much happened. So between illnesses, you didn't really miss much because, by the time you were sick again, you caught up on the story. [They laugh.] And it was okay. And we went back and—

[00:15:47.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did you like school?

[00:15:50.09]

MARCIA MARCUS: Of course not. I hated it.

[00:15:51.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there any people that interested you there, professors or teachers or students? No? [Laughs.] Nothing, no.

[00:16:00.01]

MARCIA MARCUS: I hated school. No, I think it's very significant, in terms of education. In the first grade—I was smart only because my mother helped me. That's not to say that I wasn't naturally brighter, or whatever. But I was in the first—I was either the smartest kid or the next-smartest kid all the time because my mother helped me with my homework.

[00:16:27.78]

But I remember, in the first grade, knowing a word, which at the moment, escapes me. Maybe it was donkey or something. And my reward for being smart was to be allowed to go to the back of the room and do a puzzle while everyone else caught up. And, of course, that was terrible, because it places you out of it, and you don't get anyplace. So there was no allowance for going further. The reward for being smarter was be allowed to vegetate while everybody else got to where you were going.

[00:17:03.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Supposedly, yeah.

[00:17:06.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: And the fact was, as soon as she stopped helping me, I went down to a D. [They laugh.] And after that, I was like a straight-C student because I never did homework or memorize things if I could help it. And I just passed tests when I passed them on what I could remember from classwork. Because I hated it. The only thing I remember about college was liking to do term papers because that was interesting, to look up research. And that was a solitary thing. You didn't have to listen to those droning voices. Now, it's a miracle that I like art, because I had an art history teacher in college who was a sweet man. But I used to get hives every time the lights went out. And it was the only time in my life I ever got hives, and just on my right knee. When the lights would go out [and the slides would go on -Ed.] I'd get hives from it.

[00:18:06.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where was that?

[00:18:07.20]

MARCIA MARCUS: At NYU. Washington Square College.

[00:18:09.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that? What marvelous teacher could do that?

[00:18:11.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: Horace McMahon. [Not Horace—maybe Herbert? -Ed.] I once took a book that he'd written out of the library. And the first [paragraph] was devoted to how an image

hits your retina, gets turned upside down, goes someplace else, gets turned right side up again, and you see it the way you think you see it. That was the whole first [paragraph], which is the only [paragraph] I got to. And we used to have tests, and not to be believed [out of Gardner, and memorize 50 or more photographs. -Ed.]. If anyone came out of that class ever wanting to look at a work of art again, it showed a certain determination to like art. [They laugh.]

[00:18:45.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, just going back to making the drawings on a little notepad, were there books around the house, or music? Was there interest in art? Or was this just something you—

[00:18:58.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, in a certain, peculiar sense. My mother had drawn. And she was brought up on the Lower East Side, which, of course, is why she hated it when I moved here. Because she fought all her life to get out of this neighborhood. And there I was, voluntarily coming back.

[00:19:13.87]

But she had taken classes at the Henry Street Settlement. And there were some drawings that she had done from plaster casts and stuff like that, very 1920s kind of things but not really at that level. Because the first real drawing I ever did was when I went to college, like, a whole drawing. I once enrolled myself, when I was 14 at, I think, Traphagen and took a class in fashion illustration. And my mother, being a typical Jewish mother, of course, has them framed on the wall. And they're quite horrible.

[I did my first two paintings then. One I know was a still life. I don't remember if I used my mother's paints or bought my own. -Ed.]

[00:19:50.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you like that, the Traphagen business? Was that interesting to you? Or did it not go where you wanted it to go or thought—

[00:19:58.55]

MARCIA MARCUS: I had, really, no recollection much about how I felt about it, except at the time, that's what I wanted to do. [I was brought up to achieve. -Ed.] And it was like a battle royale. Because I was brought up at a time when we skipped. They never gave you what you skipped. I was ten before I knew Columbus was supposed to have discovered America because I skipped that class.

[00:20:17.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:20:18.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: And Columbus Day came up. And then somehow—I may have either asked or someone mentioned that Columbus was supposed to have discovered America. And I said, "oh." But so I was ready to enter college when I was, like, during my 14th year. I remember this incredible battle because I wanted to go to Central Needle Trades and be a fashion designer. And we circled the bed, my mother and I [laughs] screaming at each other. And she said, "No daughter of mine is going to Central Needle Trades. You're going to college, and you're going to be a teacher."

[00:20:55.45]

And, of course, the last thing in the world I wanted to do was be a teacher. So we compromised. And she sent me to Washington Square College, where I took the minimal amount of courses to qualify me for an education thing. And I went there. And when I went there, there was one teacher for all the studio classes and for modern art—one teacher.

[00:21:20.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

[00:21:21.44]

MARCIA MARCUS: His name is Erwyn Eaton. And about the best he ever did was give us enthusiasm for working but certainly not much knowledge. And I remember it was very funny because we were early rebels. There were about six of us who thought we were serious. And we were. And the studio was what used to be [Gertrude] Vanderbilt's—the old [Gertrude] Vanderbilt—Whitney, or—

[00:21:54.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The Whitney MacDougal—

[00:21:55.83]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, right. It was next to Judson Church. You had to go up and across the ladder or something. And the main room was a studio building. Oh,

[00:22:03.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. Yeah.

[00:22:04.45]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it had been her studio. So the back room had been the kitchen, but it was cleared out. And I don't remember if it was four or six of us, but we locked ourselves in that room, and we wouldn't let him in. [They laugh.] Because we thought we didn't want to hear his voice droning away with everybody else, or be involved with these other people we didn't consider serious. So we locked ourselves in that room, and we painted or [talked, or did -Ed.] whatever we did. And he didn't make an issue out of it, mostly because he probably had never had it happen to him before, and he didn't know how to deal with it. So the best thing was to leave us alone, since we were the best students, anyway. So he left us alone.

[00:22:48.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have any of those people continued?

[00:22:51.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the only person, which is very amusing because I met her in the Metropolitan about a week or so ago, who was my best friend in college. And I am supposed to have lunch with her tomorrow. And she is working at the Art Institute of NYU. And she wanted to be an art historian, and, I think is in the conservation department. And I'll find—

[00:23:18.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who is she?

[00:23:18.79]

MARCIA MARCUS: Her name is Violet—used to be Violet Primru, and now Violet Bourgeois or something. And I don't know what happened to anyone else. I remember one of the guys who was involved in this lockout, or lock-in, depending on whose point of view you take [laughs], was the son of a restorer. And I certainly have never heard of any—the other guy was a guy who was very good-looking, and we both had a crush on, who was sort of a cross between Paul Newman and somebody else. [Laughs.] And I remember one day when we were sent out to draw in the park. She and I went out, supposedly to look for a subject. And then after about an hour and a half we wander around the park, we realized we were both looking for this guy. [They laugh.] But we hadn't mentioned it.

[00:24:10.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Same subject. [Laughs.]

[00:24:14.60]

MARCIA MARCUS: But to my knowledge, no one else really ever did [get known -Ed.], in my class.

[00:24:18.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what was life like, generally, for you then?

[00:24:23.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: I hated it. I felt totally isolated. I never had more than one or two good friends at a time. And, in a sense, that's true now. So I'm very sympathetic to my oldest daughter, who has very high standards in terms of what friendship is. It's not that I don't know lots of people. But like the people that you'd consider your friends, totally other. And I was never a friendly child. Because mostly, I was two years younger than everybody else because of all that skipping, which is, I think, a terribly damaging thing. I entered college at 15, when everyone else was 17. It was very weird. And also, I consider my college years as walking in one door and then walking out four years later and not having learned that much. [And I was very shy. -Ed.] So I didn't—

[00:25:16.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did you read? Were you interested in reading of any kind, or books, or music or—

[00:25:22.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: Along the way.

[00:25:23.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the city, in any particular way?

[00:25:33.79]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't remember anything specific. We wandered around the Village because the school was down there. And I don't think I really got involved in terms of neighborhoods. And one of the reasons I love where I'm moving is that, once I worked, which was much later, my favorite section to work in was down in the Wall Street area. Of course, now, most of what I loved about it is gone. But there are still parts. Like, the building I'm going to move into is built, I understand, over what used to be the Washington Market. And there are warehouses, still, with paintings.

[00:26:12.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, on the edge.

[00:26:13.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: And there still are little bits and pieces left. But it was always my favorite part. And it's too bad the World Trade Center is there. Otherwise, I'd see all of the bottom of New York.

[00:26:26.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The good old World Trade Center.

[00:26:29.50]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I'm going to have to learn to love it because it's right in front of my windows.

[00:26:32.50]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]. Well, what happened as your sister started growing up?

[00:26:41.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: I haven't the foggiest notion.

[00:26:42.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] To you, in terms of—

[00:26:46.55]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the only thing I remember in terms of her—and you told me, like to say, it's almost like free association. The only thing I remember her as a child is her best friend was the superintendent's daughter, and she was Catholic and went to parochial school. And she used to come over and tell us these incredible horror stories about the nuns and how mean they were and what they did to her. And she was one of the sweetest kids around. And it was horrifying. And my mother, even though she wasn't the greatest mother to us, was the kind of person that other kids could come to when they had problems, because she functioned and still does, in that way, where other people seem to get along with her very well [laughs] and telling her their problems.

[00:27:33.42]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of activity is she involved with, or isn't she?

[00:27:37.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: Not really. She's limited in her life in a way that's kind of horrifying to me and horrifying to my children. Because she's certainly not stupid. She makes herself limited by dealing with what she can cope with. Because, actually, lately, she's begun to have a little bit more understanding, I think partially because she's been forced to, simply by circumstance. She lives in a neighborhood where all her friends, a few years ago, said, "Well, you are going to vote for Wallace, aren't you?" It's that kind of a neighborhood.

[00:28:18.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

[00:28:20.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: And growing up was extraordinary. Because, at seven I came home saying—this was in the building we were in before, the one I just spoke about, where my sister had a friend—and that superintendent's daughter called me a "sheeny," which I'd never heard of before. So I complained to the teacher and then told my mother. And my mother said, "Oh, you shouldn't have said that to the teacher because she's the biggest anti-Semite in the school," which is the first I ever knew about that. So it was a very weird neighborhood. It was almost completely half Jewish and half Irish. It was one of the more interesting—

[00:28:59.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: An astounding combination.

[00:29:00.44]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I think it's extraordinary. Because my youngest cousin, Milton [laughs], who was brought up right in the same neighborhood, ended up by marrying two Irish girls. So obviously—

[00:29:11.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not simultaneously.

[00:29:12.56]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. Unfortunately, the first one died. And she was very sweet. And his parents, after what my mother described as "sitting shiva" when they found out she was going to marry him, learned to love her because she was very sweet. And I met the second one and got to know her a little bit better before they moved to New Jersey. Like, where else would they move to, because he's a very conventional kind of person. But I think it's almost standard when you grow up in an atmosphere like that. His best friends were two Italian kids who lived around there. But they were a very small minority. It really was, basically, Jewish

and Irish, which was really very—

[00:29:58.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Strange combination.

[00:30:00.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. It's like [when I spent the summer -Ed.] on Fire Island in 1968. [Laughs.] That was funny, too. [The same division, Irish and Jewish. -Ed.]

[00:30:10.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you went from school. How did you pick NYU? Because it was—

[00:30:16.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: I did not pick anything.

[00:30:17.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was picked for you?

[00:30:19.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. I would have liked to have gone away, for obvious reasons. But I was too young, and my parents said they couldn't afford it. But I'm sure, aside from not being able to afford it, it was just because they thought I was too young to go away. And I guess I was. Because I was really stupid.

[00:30:34.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what do you remember of the war years? Because they were just charging along. [Not quite—I started in 1943. -Ed.]

[I remember being in the car the Sunday the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the next day all the teachers had radios in class so we could hear Roosevelt's speech. Everything else was images in the movie reels. My older cousin (Milton of course) was drafted and my Aunt Anna committed suicide some months after because of it. My future husband also was drafted and I wrote frequently as a friend. Also, I belonged to a sorority, and we sometimes went to dances or a place on lower Park Ave. (39th?). And I got a gorgeous Navy boyfriend out of it. He always brought flowers for both me and my mother. I was 17. It ended, believe it or no, because one of his buddies made nasty remarks about my being Jewish. I couldn't believe it, and was both hurt and angry when he stopped writing "for my safety," I vaguely remember. -Ed.]

[00:30:39.49]

MARCIA MARCUS: I had to stand on line for cigarettes because I was a chain smoker at the age of 15. [They laugh.] And as a matter of fact, which is hysterical, one of my first boyfriends was a soldier who was stationed at NYU under the STAP program or something like that, where they went to school. And he was studying French, and he was Irish and very cute. And my mother almost fainted when I said I was going to bring home William Vincent O'Brien. And he was short and cute and very sweet when we were first going out. Then he was transferred away.

[00:31:22.78]

And he came back—he wrote to me a year later to invite me to a basketball game and to ask me to get a date for a friend of his. And he said he would meet me in the commons at NYU. And I sat at a table. And I saw this thing walk through the door. And my first impulse was to flee, but since I was naturally polite, I didn't. [Besides, he had my phone number. -Ed.] Because in the intervening year, he must have drunk like 15,000 bottles of beer.

[00:31:52.67]

Because from this quite adorable-looking person, he had turned into someone who had

gotten no taller but had gotten about five feet wide. It was unbelievable. It was like a totally different person. And, of course, his friend turned out to be about nine feet tall. [They laugh.] And the friend I got on the date with him was slightly taller than me. And it was a total disaster, except that he introduced me to jazz, which was nice.

[00:32:19.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:32:20.34]

MARCIA MARCUS: And also, my first drink. Because I looked much older at 15, so they never asked my age. And they just—my first drink. I suppose most people's first drink was a Tom Collins. We used to go to Nick's.

[00:32:34.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:32:35.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I saw a lot of the jazz greats on this horrible double date we had. We went to Eddie Condon's. And that was [great. Fats Waller was playing. -Ed.]

[00:32:45.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How'd you pick up on jazz? What interested you?

[00:32:47.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: I didn't.

[00:32:49.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or didn't it?

[00:32:50.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: He picked me up on it because he knew about it. And so he took me—when we went out, he would take me to Nick's most of the time during the year that—I mostly saw him when he was still good looking and nice. And the only other time I saw him was that disastrous year later.

[00:33:05.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you like jazz? Would it become an interest or not?

[00:33:09.80]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I'm very peculiar about music. I like things. It's something that doesn't occur to me to do, except very rarely, to go to a concert or something. I like it. It's not that I—it's just something I don't think about. And I think I have good instincts about it. When I hear something, I kind of know what's good and how it ought to be. Like, you hear something, you know how it should be. And, of course, during college, one of the great things, like the friend [Violet -Ed.] I mentioned before who was my best friend in college, and I were total balletomanes. And because of school, we would get discounted tickets. And I must have—and that was the golden years of the American Ballet Theater. And we must have seen every ballet they did five times, from every seat in the house, from the orchestra to the family circle to the box seats—

[00:34:09.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everywhere.

[00:34:10.03]

MARCIA MARCUS: —everything, including backstage. Because we talked our way back. Not at the Met. I don't think we ever did that. But at the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo at the City

Center, we talked our way backstage once. And we did drawings from the catwalk or something. It was—

[00:34:28.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

[00:34:29.89]

MARCIA MARCUS: So that was my major [interest] during that time. We loved it. Dance is something that I was—

[00:34:39.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You still like that? I mean, respond to it?

[00:34:41.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't go anymore. Mostly—it makes me, when I say it, it sounds like I'm old and like those people who say, well, "it'll never be as good as it was," but the few times that I've been, either because someone's given me tickets or taken the children or something, it just isn't. There aren't the great dancers and companies that there were. The few times I've been to the City Center, I think it's a disaster.

Maybe the worst thing that ever happened to Balanchine is that he got that grant. Because, for one thing, I think the best ballet he ever did was Orpheus. And when someone gave me tickets, since we were there, I went down to the box office to see if I could get tickets to take my children to. And Orpheus wasn't on the program, ever, not for any of the programs. And this was early in the season.

[00:35:30.90]

So it's like he's done all this incredible garbage. I thought Bugaku—whatever that thing is, was the tackiest thing I have ever seen in my entire life. So we did see the greatest dancers. We saw the most beautiful ballets, the greatest companies, because there was nothing better than ballet theater when it was going during those great years. Can I turn the heat on?

[00:35:57.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you come to go there? Was that a—

[00:36:00.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because my mother made that decision.

[00:36:02.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was it? And so you went?

[00:36:04.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, you have to understand that I graduated in the wintertime, so that when I entered college, I was just 15. I was born in January.

[00:36:14.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In January, right.

[00:36:15.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I was just 15. I was in no position, outside of that one hysterical fight, to really do anything. What could I do?

[00:36:26.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But do you remember—



[00:36:27.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: She's different. Jane is 15. [Laughs.]

[00:36:32.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: She's doing something about it.

[00:36:33.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: She's a hell of a lot smarter than I was. But then—well, you know. You know your friends' kids. It's nothing like when we grew up. We were infantile. Nobody told us anything.

[00:36:44.50]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I don't know—sometimes. It's so different [inaudible].

[00:36:47.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: There are very few people—well, I was probably more unconscious than most. But most of the people I know were pretty dumb.

[00:36:54.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was that, do you think? I mean, why do you say that?

[00:36:56.59]

MARCIA MARCUS: No one ever told you anything. No one was ever straight with you. It was very funny. I don't remember who told me now, but the only sex book that I ever read was *Abnormal Psychology* [because it was in the house. -Ed.] So I knew everything about people who had shoe fetishes and nothing about sex, like normal. [They laugh.] No one answered a question [or they gave weird information -Ed.]. And as a mother, I would begin to see—you know, when they ask questions. And there was some point at which I remember Jane asking me a question and my not being ready to deal with it myself. So I turned it aside.

[00:37:37.83]

And then, about a week or so later, she asked a question. And I suddenly realized it was the same question but more removed. And then I could see how that would work, that if I had refused to answer it that time, then each time would be more and more diffused. And finally, it wouldn't get asked. Right? So I backtracked that time, and I faced it and answered the [original -Ed.] questions. And they knew they'd never been lied to, which is the major thing I remember in my childhood, the hypocrisy of my mother, which used to drive me up the wall and still does. It doesn't really anymore because I found my peace with her by simply ignoring everything and deciding that I [could] never have the kind of relationship that I would like, because it was impossible.

[00:38:30.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were there any professors at NYU? In all those years and all those classes, there must have been some outstanding—

[00:38:37.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, yes. I minored in geology for one reason. The teacher had a sense of humor. And I appeared to be the only one in the class who, when he would make one of his dry, humorous remarks, seemed to understand what he was saying, and smile. And he was the only teacher that I felt was intelligent and funny.

[00:39:01.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was he? Do you remember his name?

[00:39:04.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. And I ended up taking some geology classes, not with him, simply

because that was part of the minor. But it was interesting. And I minored in it, really, for that reason. Because I had to minor in something. And it was the only teacher that I felt any kind of rapport with. I ended up in a class in mineralogy, which had three people in it. One was me, one was someone who was terribly serious and had total contempt for me, and the other person, who was an older woman who was English, who kept taking the same course over and over again because she said she'd gotten hit on the head during the war and couldn't remember anything. [Laughs.]

[00:39:45.71]

So this other person who was serious, he had total contempt for us. Because I was taking it because it was pretty to look through the microscope and see the minerals in cross sections. And this woman was taking it because she found it interesting but couldn't remember from one minute to the next, and had to keep taking it over and over again.

[00:40:04.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, heavens. Well, what did you take art classes besides the one you had mentioned?

[00:40:10.56]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I took all the studio courses there were. And there were only those few. There was watercolor, oil painting, drawing. And it was all taught by the same person. And I did one painting that I think I kept that was good, which I did from the roof of the studio building, actually.

[00:40:29.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's where the law library is now, isn't it—

[00:40:32.68]

MARCIA MARCUS: Probably.

[00:40:33.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —that old building? The south side of the building?

[00:40:34.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I think the studio building still exists, but it's been turned into dormitories. Because it's the building right next to Judson Church. I don't know if that building is still there.

[00:40:45.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, know. No, yeah, it's still there.

[00:40:48.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: But it's been—the building we went through to get to it was a dormitory. And we had to go out on a kind of funny, almost like a catwalk, and up the fire escape and then through the door. It was a wonderful, big studio. It must have been marvelous for one person to have. But it was full of tables. And he was a very sweet man—

[00:41:12.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it just didn't work much.

[00:41:13.89]

MARCIA MARCUS: It was just enthusiasm, not knowledge.

[00:41:17.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what happened once you came out of there? Because you were—then what?

[00:41:23.01]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I got married.

[00:41:23.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's [inaudible].

[00:41:24.66]

MARCIA MARCUS: I never even went to graduation, which didn't mean anything to me, in any case. Because I had no feeling about it.

[00:41:33.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you met your husband in college?

[00:41:34.95]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, I met him because he was working with my father.

[00:41:38.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:41:39.01]

MARCIA MARCUS: And as I said, he was older. My mother kind of engineered it, for my own good.

[00:41:43.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Giving you suggestions.

[00:41:44.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: A weird, ambiguous kind of relationship.

[00:41:46.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:41:47.75]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it was a disaster. He had a good sense of humor. He's very nice. And he probably has never gotten married since, because I think I tend to do that to people. [They laugh.] Once you've survived me, you just want to relax for the rest of your life. [Laughs.]

[00:42:05.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did he do? What was he—

[00:42:07.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I mean, it was ridiculous. He came over from Germany alone when he was in his teens. And he was sent here, I guess, in '36, when it was obvious that Hitler was going to do a real number. And he got a job, first, at the stock market. His parents had had lots of money in Germany. And as a matter of fact, when his mother finally came over, she was horrified when I was wearing a [Henry] Wallace button. Because—it was very educational. Because there were lots of German Jews who moved into the building I was living in as a teenager.

[00:42:48.41]

But I guess it wasn't until I met my mother-in-law, finally—because they finally got out and went to England. And they spent the war years in England. And his father died there while he was in the army, which was kind of sad. And his mother came here after the war. And she

was horrified. And it suddenly occurred to me that the rich German Jews had no objection to Hitler if he didn't happen to be so inconvenient as to not like Jews. Because everything else, like the hatred of Communism and all that, would have been perfectly okay with them. It was just that he didn't happen to like Jews, and that made it kind of nasty.

[00:43:29.48]

But he had money. He worked in the stock exchange for a while. Then my father did a number on him, really. Because, for reasons that I will never understand, because he was certainly not stupid—he was kind of lazy. He had an income. And I guess if he wanted to live frugally, he probably could have gone through his life without actually having to work. He took a sign painting course or something. And my father was a window dresser. And so he ended up making signs, like little price tag, junky things.

[00:44:06.01]

And my father, when he found out that he had money, talked him into opening a store with him, which they did. And that happened about the time I was 13. And he kept it after my father got out, because he was definitely not the kind of person who could deal with customers, because he just had too violent a temper and just didn't have that kind of personality. But he kept it. And I really don't know what he's doing now. I haven't seen him in 20 years or something. And the whole thing is like a big blur.

[00:44:46.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that lasted—

[00:44:47.83]

MARCIA MARCUS: Two years.

[00:44:48.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Two years. Just shot.

[00:44:50.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: —during which—well, it was really shot. Because the weird thing was that I don't know whether it was the times—I certainly, in terms of women's lib, I'm aware of the pressures, but I still must have had certain instincts. Like, given a choice of a fur coat or a—well, I had a choice of a wedding present of a fur coat or a diamond ring. And I felt it was unsuitable and I didn't need to have a fur coat. So I took the diamond ring. But I really wasn't that excited about it. It didn't mean very much. And the horrible thing to me, when I think about it, is that for the two years I was married, when I really had nothing to do, I spent more time in department stores, either buying things to put eggs in, or something—

[00:45:44.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something you really didn't need.

[00:45:45.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: —and not doing much work. Like, I did a few paintings. I think I studied with someone privately, taking a sculpture course or something. I went to Cooper Union for a while and didn't like it.

[00:45:59.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, that was what, 1950, though, or something?

[00:46:02.67]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I first went into Cooper, I think—I'm really not sure. I think it was '49. Well, no, it must have been earlier. Maybe I went between—I really don't remember.

[00:46:19.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because you got out of NYU in '47, or something?

[00:46:24.16]

MARCIA MARCUS: I really don't remember when I got into Cooper Union. I lasted about a year, and dropped out because I couldn't stand it. I thought it was stupid. And I had to take this thing called two-dimensional design, which I still hate with a deep, undying passion. Because it is a very hateable non-subject. And I disapprove of it completely. But after a while, like in '50, I think, I went back. And I talked my way back into Cooper by claiming some kind of emotional thing.

[00:47:00.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:47:02.23]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I lasted then for two years, at which point I got kicked out.

[00:47:07.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How'd you do that?

[00:47:09.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the first half of the semester, I got three As and a C, which was in lettering. Because some great brain at Cooper decided that if you were going to be an artist, you had to earn a living at something. So somebody decided lettering should be what you should earn a living at. So that was required. And for reasons which were only my own stupidity, I was going to night school. There was no reason why I had to, certainly, the first time. I could have gotten into the day thing. I don't know why I did it. It was just plain stupidity. And when I went back, I went into the night school. And the teacher for painting at the night school was Ferren, who was totally destructive.

[00:47:52.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:47:52.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: And for years after, when I'd see him at the club, I'd tell him what a destructive teacher he was, after I had a few—

[00:47:56.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you say that?

[00:47:57.27]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because he was. I mean, I would go in there at seven o'clock, as everyone else did when the class started, and everyone would [quietly -Ed.] start to work. And most people had jobs during the day. And at that point, which was the second time around, I guess I must have also. And he'd show up fifteen or twenty minutes later and stand in the doorway and start cracking wisecrack kind of jokes and destroy the whole atmosphere. Nobody was fooling around. Everyone was really getting to work. And finally, again, sort of like a replay of the earlier thing at NYU, about six or eight of us, or ten of us, just found that the room next door was empty that session. So we moved in there. And it was obvious that we moved in there, for anyone who had any instincts, not to goof off but to concentrate and not be distracted by his generalized conversation. Because it wasn't criticism. It was just—

[00:49:00.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Chatter.

[00:49:02.15]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. And it was like amusing himself. And he followed us in there and did the same fucking thing. And then, one point, after about three or four years of my attacking him at the club, he finally said, "Well, that was a rotten class." And I deny that. And people who had studied with him in Brooklyn had a totally different feeling about it. And it must have been his own problem. He felt that if it was night school at Cooper, nobody could have been serious. And therefore, he destroyed what was there.

[00:49:32.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Couldn't care if it—yeah.

[00:49:33.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: The second half of the semester, I was on unemployment insurance, which meant that I stayed home, and I was painting. So very often, I would come in, sometimes drunk, sign in for class—he was very understanding about that—and I would sign in, and often go home. And I didn't go home to goof off or anything. I went home because I had been painting during the day, and I felt I got more out of painting at home than I did in class.

And I had a two-dimensional or three-dimensional design, whatever you get in the second year, teacher, who the first part of the year thought I was wonderful, except that, at the end of the term, he accused me of turning all his [stained glass -Ed.] projects into paintings. You know, like that was terrible. Because you weren't supposed to do that. Because two- or three-dimensional design is not painting, as we all know. And finally, that was ridiculous. So I'd go across the hall. And Bob Gwathemy was teaching there then. And he, of course, ran the freest ship in the world. The noise in there you wouldn't believe.

[00:50:39.81]

But it was a drawing class. And I felt like if your major was painting, why should you have to take this garbage instead of having drawing every year, which is essential? So I'd go across the hall. I'd check into the three-dimensional [class], or whatever it was, and then I'd go across the hall and draw. So of course, this guy who thought I was wonderful got terribly hurt. [Laughs.] You know. And anyhow, I couldn't make up my mind whether I really wanted to stay. So I didn't really make any effort to do what I was supposed to do in terms of their requirements. So eventually, I got kicked out for poor attitude, attendance, and grades.

[00:51:18.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was Gwathemy as an instructor, though?

[00:51:20.88]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't remember him instructing anything. The only advantage was that he would allow people like me to go in there and draw. Because he must have—obviously, he knew that I was supposed to be somewhere else.

[00:51:36.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. You weren't on his list.

[00:51:38.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, I was not in his class. But he knew, as a painter, that drawing was a hell of a lot more important than the stupid idiot course. So they—and actually, I taught there from '70 to '71. And I didn't mention that I had been kicked out when they hired me. [Laughs.]

[00:51:57.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how did you like going back to your ex-school to teach?

[I was amused at the idea of teaching at Cooper after being kicked out, but basically the situation was so difficult that I was more involved in the work and the difficulty of communicating than giggling about being a black sheep coming home to roost, so to speak. -Ed.]

[00:52:03.43]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it was a disaster. Because they were phasing out the evening school, for one. That's where I taught. And it was also at a time—I was very upset because I couldn't believe—I was supposed to teach seniors and graduates, mostly. And I was appalled at their lack of ability. And when I would try to correct them, it was a totally negative thing. And this was, as I said, in '70. And I remember taking the kids to the pediatrician one day and his saying—they were very interested in me.

[00:52:42.58]

After I had paid for a year when Jane was a baby, one day when she was sick, there was a [married] couple who were doctors who worked together. And she came down here and said, "Oh, you're a painter." And she said, "Well, you don't want to pay any more bills. We'll trade." So they were always interested in me. And we traded. And they went to my shows and stuff. And he came into the office one day. It was when I was there. And at that point, the kids were old enough not to really go in there except for booster shots or when they were ill or something.

[00:53:18.92]

And he said, How have you been doing? And I said, "Well, I've been teaching at Cooper, and it's really weird. These kids don't listen to a thing. They don't want to hear anything." And he said, "Well, it's just the times. They mistrust adults totally." And he was teaching pediatrics, see? And you'd think, like, what's to argue about pediatrics? It's not like drawing, which is a creative act, supposedly.

[00:53:46.34]

And apparently, he was having the same kind of thing with teaching. And he said, "Well, they don't want to listen to anybody." And I thought, well, it was the time. Because, of course, it was in the height of a total awareness of the Vietnamese disaster, so that all young people, apparently, distrusted any kind of teacher of any kind.

[00:54:07.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Authority, yeah.

[00:54:08.03]

MARCIA MARCUS: And when he told—hmm?

[00:54:09.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Authority.

[00:54:10.67]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. And when he told me that, I felt—it didn't make it easier, but it made me feel a little better, because I just couldn't get through to them. And also, I hadn't really taught that much, except on a visiting basis. I think that may have been the first time I taught on a regular basis. And I was shocked because their work was so poor. And they were mostly seniors and graduates. And how did they get that far, being that rotten? And they still didn't know.

[00:54:41.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They had to get through the system.

[00:54:43.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. And nobody did anything. So it was kind of interesting. But it was very depressing, because they were phasing out the evening school, and so they couldn't really care less. And the only people I really felt I could talk to were two—well, there was a girl who worked there at the desk at night and her boyfriend, who stayed there just to talk to her.

[00:55:07.44]

And they were about the only people I talked to during the time I was teaching there because the students were unbelievable. I got reasonably friendly with a couple of them, but it was very difficult to get through. It was very hard, especially since I hadn't really taught a lot. And I went around talking to a lot of people who had been teaching longer and discovering that my feelings about it were not unusual. I felt terribly inadequate. I thought, I must be doing something wrong. And it turns out that's basically the way it is.

[00:55:43.08]

But now that I've taught more, I realize that there are the standard two or three people—and it doesn't matter where you teach, whether it's an art school, or a college or anything—there are only two or three people who are really serious, and you have a good relationship with them. And the best you can hope for with anybody else is bringing them up a step or two [to a minimum standard –Ed.]. But it's really a kind of weird situation.

[00:56:06.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But when you went there in the early '50s, were there any students that you became friendly with, or not?

[00:56:14.15]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. I don't think any of them really became painters. There was a guy I was very friendly with who went into advertising. And I haven't seen him for years. But I remember, for years, after we got out of Cooper, when I would meet him—after the active phase of our friendship was more or less over because we drifted apart—whenever I'd see him, he'd quickly explain that he was still painting. His guilt at having gone into advertising was extraordinary. But I didn't hold it against him, if that's what he wanted to do. But he felt he had to explain himself.

[00:56:54.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They always have to defend themselves when they make that kind of shift, for some reason.

[00:56:58.20]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Well, because he felt that he had thrown away this thing. And he was among the more talented people. And the person he married was someone who I was reasonably friendly with during the time they were married. Then, when they separated, I still maintained a friendship with him for a couple years after that 'til we drifted in other directions. And I haven't seen him in a long time. But as far as I know, there was nobody there who was really as serious as I was. And I say that in a weird way because I feel as if practically everything I've done up until relatively recently has been, more or less, unconscious.

[00:57:45.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean that?

[00:57:47.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, other people always seem to feel that I had a certain determination. But I was not conscious of doing any particular thing or being different.

[00:57:58.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean, in terms of painting or living, or—

[00:58:01.53]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, like, a certain consistency. It wasn't like I said to myself, "I know I'm going to be a painter." Because when I talk to students now, when I get friendly with them—or, actually, a couple weeks ago, when I did a slide thing at Parsons, I said that I didn't really feel that I could say "I am a painter," until I was, maybe, 25, maybe a little bit older than



that, that I never felt that I was like that. And I remember one girl at the slide lecture a couple weeks ago said, "Do you ever get discouraged?" And I burst out laughing. [Laughs.] I said, "Yes, every other day." I mean, you never get over that part of it.

[00:58:44.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:58:45.29]

MARCIA MARCUS: But the fact is that, up until a certain point, undoubtedly—I mean, you've interviewed God knows how many people—probably, some people knew from the beginning. Like, you know Lennart Anderson. And I'm sure he knew from the very beginning he was going to be a painter. And there's a consistency in his work. Because, of course, he had been one of my best friends, and I still see him occasionally.

[00:59:07.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you meet him?

[00:59:10.07]

MARCIA MARCUS: Somewhere around—

[00:59:11.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the milieu somewhere.

[00:59:12.56]

MARCIA MARCUS: —the club or somewhere. But I remember seeing his work from about the time he was 17. And it was like a straight line, as opposed to most other people I know who kind of tried out all kinds of different things to zero in on what could be called their style. But with him, there's been an incredible consistency. And I'm sure there are other people who are like that, who just started at A and went to Z—or, well, they haven't died yet. [They laugh]. So they're not at Z, but it's been a straight line.

[00:59:45.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They're on the road there, yeah.

[00:59:48.16]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I just never felt that. I just felt as if I, more or less fell into most of the things that I've done.

[00:59:58.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But did you find that when you went back to Cooper in, what, 1950, that you had a sense of wanting to be a painter? Had you wanted to be a painter before that?

[01:00:09.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I always wanted to be a painter. Once I went to college, it's the one thing my mother did, which, of course, is not what she intended, right?

[01:00:18.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It happens.

[01:00:20.43]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, yeah. She sent me there to be a teacher. And I discovered making a whole picture, as opposed to what I had been doing up to that point, so that, then, of course, I wanted to be a painter. But I didn't feel I could call myself a painter until much later.

[01:00:40.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you gone to the museums or galleries or anything up to that, say, up through NYU?

[01:00:46.75]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, in high school, they had this thing where they had things on Saturday. And I signed myself up for that. And they were things like Milton Coniff drawing "Terry and the Pirates." And that, actually, is the only thing I remember. So I guess the others were even worse. [Laughs.] I don't know.

[01:01:06.45]

But I guess we went to museums from time to time. And I don't remember any strong impact that way, like being influenced by art, until I went to college. And I remember, when I was very young—because I was much younger than everybody else—when I was about 11, and I was ready to go into high school, I wanted to try out for Music and Art [high school -Ed.].

[01:01:30.39]

And the art teacher discouraged my mother from even letting me try because I was so young. And she felt that I wouldn't even—and now I'm not sorry. Because when I was in college and there were students from Music and Art, you could spot their work at 50 paces because it was all the same thing. It was a kind of weird, Cézanne-esque approach to things.

[01:01:52.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They'd been indoctrinated.

[01:01:53.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: So, in a way, even though it may have taken me longer, I'm not really sorry, because it was such a dum-dum approach that I had to come out on my own, simply because there was no clear thing that was set up in front of me that I could follow.

[01:02:06.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[END OF TRACK AAA\_marcus75\_8066\_m]

[00:00:05.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side 2. Were there any other people at Cooper, I mean, instructors or other students that—

[00:00:11.76]

MARCIA MARCUS: That I had any feeling for?

[00:00:12.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, that you felt made any impact.

[00:00:14.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: The first year I was there, there was an architecture teacher—I've always loved architecture. I don't remember his name. I know he's an award winner somehow. And he was a small, neat, precise—precise in the best sense. Like, he gave us technical information. Like, he was a real person.

[00:00:34.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. I see.

[00:00:35.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: As opposed to the schmuck that I studied with the second time who thought I was wonderful because I did these weird things, see.

[00:00:42.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] I see.

[00:00:43.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, I designed a house with a round bed and a round bathtub, and he thought that was so sexy. And he obviously didn't know zilch about architecture. But the first guy was terrific, and he had, like, a Von-something name. I don't remember. I don't know if he ever got to be, like, a super architect. But he was terrific because he did really more than he ought, I guess, for that kind of a course, because it was a first-year course, when everyone had to take architecture, but he did it for real, which is why I think he probably was a good architect, because he taught us about, like, what goes into a roof, for example, like the flashing, the whole structure—

[00:01:22.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:01:23.17]

MARCIA MARCUS: —as opposed to the garbage kinds of things.

[00:01:26.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. The carpentry out of—yeah.

[00:01:27.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: So even though I never did anything with it, or anything, I respected him because he was terrific. There was also a sculpture teacher who was hard of hearing, whose name I don't remember, but who really cared, and he was good. And the only reason I dropped—I removed myself the first time—how many people get to hear this? [Laughs.] I left for a very specific reason.

[00:01:54.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:01:55.23]

MARCIA MARCUS: Peter Busa was teaching two-dimensional design. I couldn't stand him. I still really can, hardly, even though I wanted a job out there [Minnesota -Ed.] and he was in charge of it.

[00:02:06.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:02:06.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: He was probably—well, the combination was probably even worse than Theron, in a way. Like, he wasn't destructive. Like, he doesn't have enough personality. Like, Theron had a certain aggressive, abrasive personality. But then he had his own bitter wit to contend with, which I understand now, which I certainly was not sympathetic to when I was a student of his. But Busa was, like, a complete wipeout, and that's really why I dropped out of Cooper the first time, because he was forcing us to be abstract when I felt I didn't even know how to draw. And he was making us do these things—

[00:02:50.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:02:51.50]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I really couldn't stand him. And he was the major reason I dropped out.

[00:02:55.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you really wanted to learn basics—drawing and composition.

[00:02:58.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: I wanted to know how to do this. And the first time that it happened, which I haven't mentioned yet because you haven't asked me, is in 1954, I am a totally accidental person in a sense, except that I guess, from this perspective, that my instincts have been reasonably reasonable, because I had a boyfriend who told me I was a rotten painter.

[00:03:24.65]

And I argued with him, naturally, and, I mean, I was very insecure about what I was doing. And so he looked at me with amazement after he had finished attacking how terrible, what a rotten painter I was, because I was defending myself. [They laugh.] But he sent me to Dickinson. I studied with Dickinson for one month [every day], but at the League, which is the best setup anyplace. Unfortunately, there is no one now that I can send a student to—

[00:03:57.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There?

[00:03:57.60]

MARCIA MARCUS: —to study with there.

[00:03:59.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you say that?

[00:04:00.90]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because I looked through the brochure for several people who have been students of mine who wanted to work in that way, who are serious, who want to study, but really want to sort of half work on their own but want to learn something. And there was no one that I know who's teaching actively now that I could, in all conscience, send them to. And I studied with him and said—

[00:04:23.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why don't you go and talk to Stewart Klonis and teach there yourself?

[00:04:25.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: I have already.

[00:04:26.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:04:27.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well—

[00:04:28.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

[00:04:30.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: I have.

[00:04:31.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:04:31.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: I called him only last week. I mean, I've really been doing things that I thought I would never do. I have done so much operating and bullshit you wouldn't believe, because it's taken me all this time to realize that's the only way you get anything, right?

[00:04:45.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's part of the game, a lot of—

[00:04:47.82]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but, see, I was always a romantic, and I thought you didn't have to do that. You just stood in your studio, your gallery, did all your selling, and your virtue would be its own reward—ha, ha, ha, ha, you know? [They laugh.] Now I know it's not like that.

[00:05:04.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But who was it that suggested Dickinson?

[00:05:06.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: I wouldn't tell you. [Laughs.] Because that was a kind of disastrous relationship, in a way. Like, he was an extremely beautiful and impossible person. But he did send me to Dickinson, and because he did, Dickinson took a particular interest in me, also because—

[00:05:24.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were they friendly, or something? Or—

[00:05:26.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, he had studied with him at Black Mountain [or Brooklyn College? – Ed.].

[This person came back into my life in 1979 and claimed that if he thought I was a rotten painter he wouldn't have sent me to Dickinson, so I had to take that out of my slide lecture when it comes up. –Ed.]

[00:05:29.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:05:29.91]

MARCIA MARCUS: But also, I was good. You know, I had worked on my own for a long time before that, because this was 1954 now.

[00:05:37.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And something was—yeah. Yeah.

[00:05:40.30]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. So it was obvious that I was good. Dickinson is, to me, the most extraordinary person. Like, I love that man. And I alienated Merwyn Eaton for life, because one of the first times I tried for a Guggenheim, which I have not as yet gotten—

[00:05:57.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They write you a letter and tell you when to apply.

[00:05:58.93]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I got—I already did it for about the eighth or ninth time this year. And last year, I wrote back and said, "You know, it'd be nice if you changed your board every now and then so that some of us who deserve it would get it, [laughs] instead of the same

people.

[00:06:14.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. But John Rewald says they only give it to you when you won the Nobel Prize [laughs] or something.

[00:06:18.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I mean, there's not much likelihood of my getting it unless I do something incredible, like discovering a way to cure cancer through painting or something, you know? [Laughs.] Not too likely.

[00:06:29.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But anyhow, you went, what? You only studied with him for a month at the League.

[00:06:32.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: But I studied with him every single day. I mean, he only came in twice a week. But the class was totally professional.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

She seems—okay. That man is, like, extraordinary. I told it to him, to his face. I've told everyone else.

[00:06:53.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

[00:06:53.95]

MARCIA MARCUS: And as I said, I alienated Merwyn Eaton completely because I used him as a reference either the first or second try I tried. And in the course of when they asked you the story of your life and all that shit, I said that I studied with Dickinson, blah, blah, he was the best teacher I ever had, exclamation point, at which point, they called me about three months later and said they had not received a letter from Merwyn Eaton recommending me. [They laugh.]

[00:07:21.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They wanted to hear—[laughs].

[00:07:23.69]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I called him, and I don't know, I don't even remember what he said. But I do know that wasn't very tactful, but tact has never been one of my strongest points, as Jane would be only too happy to tell you. But it was true. Like, you know, okay, so I didn't get it anyway, and Merwyn Eaton, who may not even be alive anymore—like, I mean, he was a sweet man who was really, like, not fantastic. But it was true, because he [Dickinson -Ed.] took me more seriously than I took myself, and he brought everybody up to his point. And I'll tell you a story about him because it's indicative of this extraordinary thing that he's got, right?

[00:08:06.42]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:08:07.76]

MARCIA MARCUS: In 1964, I got—which is one of the great ironies of my life—

[Side conversation:] Jane [inaudible].

I have a great sense of irony, which is probably the only reason I've survived so far and will continue to survive, because without a sense of irony, you might forget about the whole

thing, right? Okay. So they had one of their numbers in the spring where they'd invite—I don't know how many people they'd invite, but somewhere between twelve and fifteen.

[00:08:40.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Where is that?

[00:08:43.19]

MARCIA MARCUS: American Academy of Arts and Letters.

[00:08:44.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:08:46.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: Then they, out of those people, they, at that point—I don't know, because I haven't been invited for a long time. I tend to think that some of the people who are in the Guggenheim now become in charge of that thing. So I'll never get one of those again. But they have, like, eight or nine awards at that—in that year, like, \$2,500, right. I got the Rosenthal Award, which is for someone who is distinguished but not recognized. I want you to know—1964!

[00:09:21.42]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. Right.

[00:09:22.38]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right? I am still distinguished, but I'm not recognized, right? The irony was that I got \$2,000. These eight other people got \$2,500. They all got the same award. But I was distinguished but not recognized, so I got \$500 less. Right? Okay. But at the reception, either before or after these awards, I think before these awards were made, I mean, they have a luncheon the whole thing. And everyone's very polite and charming and, you know, I don't even remember what we had for lunch.

[00:09:51.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All those marble halls up there.

[00:09:52.73]

MARCIA MARCUS: I know I had a marvelous dress because I had traded with the designer. And it was beautiful, and I looked marvelous. And I saw Dickinson, and I reminded him of something. At that point, I think he just had a show at Graham and he was getting, like, enormous play.

[00:10:10.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, it was about then.

[00:10:10.51]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I said to him—well, I mean, it's, like, two separate kinds of things, but I said to him, "Well, now you don't have to teach." And he looked at me and said, "Well, of course I would teach. What else would I do?" Because to him, teaching was like a crusade [mission -Ed.]. Like, to most everyone that you probably interviewed, including me, teaching is a way to earn money. Like, it's not that anyone's not conscientious who's serious about being a [teacher -Ed.], because you are [if you're a good painter -Ed.].

[00:10:36.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it has a practical financial—right.

[00:10:38.60]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, like, you'd rather be able to earn a living as a painter and not have

to teach, because it's a drag. You know, except for these two or three students who are rewarding, it's a drag. But he said that, and then I said one of the most extraordinary things that happened in class. I remember that at some point during this month that I studied with him—

[00:10:59.77]

[Music; background noise.] [Laughs.] Yes. A woman came into the class who obviously wanted to be in Frank O'Reilly's class, or somebody like that [probably, and it was filled and [...] with Dickinson -Ed.].

[00:11:10.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Right.

[00:11:10.67]

MARCIA MARCUS: You remember, back then, it was the clown week thing.

[00:11:14.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. [Laughs.]

[00:11:16.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: And she came in, and she started talking. Of course, nobody answered her, because the class consisted of maybe two or three serious students. And I'll tell you a funny story after this. Yes, see, I already mentioned how you can't stand my digressions. But it's interesting, other people who are archivists, because they put it all together afterwards.

[00:11:42.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:11:42.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: Okay. This woman came in. Nobody answered anything that she chatted about, right. And she came in like—well, let's just say, for neatness's sake, that Dickinson came in on Tuesday and Thursday. So this was, like, a Monday or Wednesday, right. Nobody answered her. [We're all thinking [...] Dickinson comes in. -Ed.] The next day, Dickinson came in and he would start at the beginning of the room. I sat here, you know, like that. As you went around the room, he would get more and more involved and more and more excited. His voice would get louder and louder and everything.

[00:12:16.30]

He came to this woman, who tried to be, like, cute and adorable, everything, no one having spoken to her the day before, right. He looked at her work, and she did her thing that she was trying to do the day before but nobody talked to her. And he criticized her work exactly the way he did everyone else's, and she never said another word for the rest of the time she was in that class. She worked as hard as everybody else, and she—I don't know what she did because I never had time to go look. It didn't matter.

[00:12:51.42]

The fact was, he made her work as hard as everyone else in that room, and most of the people in there were retired businessmen or housewives who had been studying with him for like three or four years, maybe more, right? By the time he'd come around to me, his voice was pretty loud because I was like two-thirds of the way around the room. And I remember him saying things to me like—anyway, I told him this story and he looked at me with great amazement, and he said, "You remembered that?" I mean, he has no idea of how fantastic he is and the kind of influence or feeling that people get from having studied with him, because he is an extraordinary man. I mean, he's a real person.

[00:13:34.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What are the qualities that make him that way to you, in your way, your



point of view?

[00:13:38.37]

MARCIA MARCUS: Like, a total seriousness about studying as an artist, right?

[00:13:44.68]

Jane, would you plug it—

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

Oh, that's what I wanted.

[00:13:46.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Yeah.

[00:13:48.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: She's really [inaudible]. Okay. And he would say to me things, like, very polite. I don't have that technique with my students. Most students think I'm terribly tough, and they only learn to like me, like, the week before I'm ready to leave [they laugh] when they appreciate that I'm—

[00:14:08.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They've figured it all out.

[00:14:09.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: They've gotten something, right? Okay, I can't do that, because I wasn't brought up that way. I mean, I wasn't brought up in that old-world kind of grandeur. I mean, he is a gentleman in almost the 19th century sense of the world.

[00:14:26.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So Edwardian. Yeah. Very, yeah.

[00:14:27.15]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, exactly. Exactly. Fantastic. I mean, I could go on and on, not only my stories, but other people's stories about him, right. Okay. And he would say things like, "That's a marvelous drawing. And if I saw that hanging in the show, I would say, 'Oh, what a good drawing that is.' However, since the model is there and you are here, and you have a chance to change it—like, the angle of the leg is not quite right, and this is not quite right, and that's not quite right." And we had to have plumb lines.

[00:15:02.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:15:03.73]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, a spool of thread and a string.

[00:15:06.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic. Uh-huh [affirmative].

[00:15:08.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: I'm not sure I would even know how to make a plumb line now, but we had to have plumb lines because he wanted it absolutely accurate. The thing about it—

[00:15:16.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was accuracy? I mean, what did that mean?

[00:15:18.45]

MARCIA MARCUS: Accuracy meant that you looked at the way the model was, and you got like that angle at—for instance, if I look at Jane now. And I was drawing her, like, to get exactly the way her leg is fitting onto that chair, right, or the way her head is angled.

[00:15:38.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's your plumb line and the angle.

[00:15:40.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes.

[00:15:41.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:15:41.85]

MARCIA MARCUS: But that was not the end, because he would talk about the interstices—is that right?

[00:15:48.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh-huh [affirmative].

[00:15:49.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Okay, because I have no other—you know, for 21 years, and I've never used it myself because I can't pronounce it. Okay. But he would make you look at the things between things. And actually, I've used that in a way with my students, which is why they get upset, because it's different than anything their usual teachers say, and why it's important to have visiting artists, which unfortunately are being cut out because of the financial pressure.

[00:16:17.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a luxury, yeah.

[00:16:18.96]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Well, it's not a luxury. It's a necessity.

[00:16:21.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but I mean, in terms of the administration.

[00:16:24.34]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, they also hate you. I mean, the people who work at those colleges don't want you there because you represent what they didn't do. You know, so there's a basic hostility. It doesn't matter who you are or how you work. You can be non-objective and they still hate you, you know. You can be male, female—

[00:16:41.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Short—

[00:16:41.67]

MARCIA MARCUS: —white, black, [they laugh] short, fat, long, beautiful, ugly. It doesn't matter. You've done it, right. You are a real artist, and there's a quality about a real artist going to visit a school that is different from the people who are there, who are basically teachers, and not doers, with very few exceptions.

[00:16:59.89]

Okay. So the thing that I use in my teaching now is a thing that I discovered during that time, because in that case, the model was there for a week. And finally, I got to the point of realizing, the last hour or the last day of the pose, you suddenly began to see what was really going on, like, between the arm and the body or something. And you really got into it, and you finally began to see, because there's no way that you can really see what's going on the first time. You know, you'd have to have X-ray vision.

[00:17:35.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've got to do it over, put it down and put it back.

[00:17:36.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, you know, and he set up a situation that made it possible for you to work in a concentrated way.

[00:17:45.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would this be the same pose or changing?

[00:17:47.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: The same pose. I mean, that's the whole point, right? And so I've used that in my classes because I think that's incredibly important, and also, it's not what other people do. I mean, it's not what their usual teachers do. And it's very hard to break that habit, and so it's a very great resistance. And when I went to be a visiting artist at Baton Rouge, I was instantly infamous. [Laughs.] By the next day, everybody hated me, right, because I told them I expected them to do the same drawing, preferably on the same page so that they could see the changes.

[00:18:21.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For a whole week?

[00:18:22.34]

MARCIA MARCUS: See, like, you're looking like—not for a whole week, for a month.

[00:18:25.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. Yeah.

[00:18:27.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because [Dickinson's] classes were every single day for three and a half hours a day. When you're teaching college, it's twice a week—

[00:18:34.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:18:35.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: —so that I would sort of aim it for a thing. But I have also scheduled the same model indefinitely, and sometimes it's even gone through the whole course. And maybe some students have never done more than the one painting, and I tell them, "I don't care if you don't do more than one painting. I'm not interested in numbers. I want you to really push whatever you're doing as far as you can." And that's really something that, obviously, I got from Dickinson.

[00:19:03.23]

But in the course of this thing, the one thing you couldn't—I mean, I don't know whether it was being female, or being insecure or whatever, but I tended in the beginning to kind of answer or be cute or charming or some half-assed something in the middle. And he would never allow that. I mean, he would just simply ignore it and ride past it and assume that of course you would do—

[00:19:34.88]

I remember him saying something to me and my saying, "Well, if I really tried," and he said, "Well, of course you would try, what else would you do?" And, I mean, he had the ability to make me feel as if I wanted to go straight through the floor, cover myself with a blanket, and never be seen again, right?

[00:19:54.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Uh-huh [affirmative].

[00:19:56.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because you felt like you were failing him as much as yourself, because at that point, I didn't have that much sense of myself, so he gave me the feeling of being the most serious thing. And then—now I'm going to tell you the funny story, because in the course of this thing, at one point maybe during the second week, this tall, skinny guy came into the class, and I suddenly became aware as I was drawing from the model—I mean, I only drew there because I was painting at home. And the hassle of bringing paints up there just seemed too much, so I just drew. Most people painted in this class. And this guy was painting me, and I was furious, absolutely furious. I thought, here is this class going, and the model's there. And this is a serious class, and why is he painting me? You know who that was?

[00:20:51.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who?

[00:20:52.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: Lennart Anderson. [Laughs.] And I don't think I met him, like, for another year or so, and he's the one that told me that it was him. [They laugh.] And I was just outraged, because by that time, I was, like, a total Dickinson aficionado, right? I mean, he's narrow in his way because it was also the same year that Rauschenberg showed that [framed -Ed.] slab of earth at the Stable Gallery, which was just around corner. And I remember a few of us going out for coffee with him, and he was outraged that this was art. He said, "Well, what are people supposed to do? Are the guards supposed to water it every day?" You know? [They laugh.] So, you know, it was like that. But he had his very strong principles, and he would very often refer to his teacher, who was William Merritt Chase.

[00:21:48.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:21:50.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: And, I mean, you could go on for hours getting Dickinson stories. I remember walking down Fifth Avenue a couple years after I had studied with him. I'd seen him across the street, and I was about to cross in his direction. And he was coming towards me, so I waited. And he looked incredible, as he always did, right, like dapper, Edwardian, as you said, fantastic. As he got nearer and nearer, I realized that the coat he's wearing is totally threadbare. It's green, you know, it's so threadbare. It was supposed to be black, but it was totally threadbare. And, I mean, you know, de Kooning once told me about visiting him in Cape Cod, and he's impeccably dressed in this beautiful linen suit with a string tie [and hat -Ed.] and the whole thing, and barefoot [in the sand—Ed.] [they laugh], you know, walking around, and introducing him to his father, who must have been, at that point, like, 94 or 95 or something.

[00:22:47.49]

And Dickinson brought de Kooning in to visit his father, and the father sort of lifted himself as well as he could out of his chair and said, "Yes, my son burnt the library down," or whatever building. it was, apparently. [They laugh.] Like, I don't think he really did. But a fire had taken place which he blamed him for, like, 20 years before. Maybe he was a Capricorn. [They laugh.]

[00:23:15.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's terrible.

[00:23:16.99]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, but there are incredible stories. He is the most incredible man. Like, five years after I had no longer studied with him, I asked him for a recommendation for something, probably the Guggenheim or Fulbright or something. And he said, "Well, Marcia, I always liked your work when you studied with me, but as you know, I have not seen your work for about five years now.

[00:23:40.37]

And I don't like to give my name to something unless I'm totally convinced that it's all right. Would you please bring some work up to my house?" And he was living then on Morningside Heights. So I took up about four small paintings, and nervous as hell, right. And I went up there, and I unpacked them and put them around. And he didn't appear to look at them, and he said, "Would you like some coffee?" And I said, "Okay." I didn't, [laughs.] you know. [He said, "Why don't you unwrap the paintings?" -Ed.] Then he went in the kitchen and he made some instant coffee or something.

[00:24:13.82]

He didn't say a word, then he sat down. And he looked, and he said, How long did it take you to do that painting? And I said, "Well, basically about 20 minutes. That was during my Abstract Expressionist period." [Laughs.] Yeah, he said—and he looked around, and we drank coffee. And he asked me some questions, but nothing to do with painting. And about 20 minutes pass, and I'm dying, [laughs] right, like, absolutely dying. And there's this silence, and he asked a few more questions maybe. I don't remember, even, whether he asked anything else besides that one question about how long it took to do that one particular thing. [I remember he touched one of the paintings. -Ed.] He said, "Yes, I'll write you that recommendation." And it was like—[They laugh.]

[00:25:01.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wow.

[00:25:01.44]

MARCIA MARCUS: And then, of course, I've asked him several times, and it's been all right. I mean, he is really something else. And he explained to me that it was not personal, that he felt that if he was on a jury or something, he wanted his opinion respected. And if he was known as someone who would do something out of friendship, then his value as a recommender would not be as good, which is perfectly valid, except you're in a state of total hysteria because, is he going to do it for you? Is he going to think you measure up? And, I mean, he's unique because I can't think of anyone who operates in that fashion.

[00:25:43.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he's always, to me, in many ways, carried a lot of the Chase tradition into people who don't even know that much about Chase.

[00:25:53.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't know anything about Chase, [laughs] to tell you the truth, except that apparently he wore a top hat, because that's one of the things he mentioned in class, that it was so wonderful being a student of Chase because you were so proud when you'd walk down Fifth Avenue and that was your teacher with the top hat and the frock coat.

[00:26:09.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, and he was very elegant.

[00:26:11.22]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, how fantastic it was to see, this was your teacher, this elegant man.

[00:26:17.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:26:19.30]

MARCIA MARCUS: I don't think anyone would say that about me [they laugh] or anybody else that I can think of, really

[00:26:25.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There are marvelous stories about Chase. But that was only one month study with him, right?

[00:26:31.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, but it was crucial.

[00:26:32.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why only a month? I mean, did you—

[00:26:35.21]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because I felt it put me over the edge.

[00:26:38.50]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. In terms of being able to make pictures work, or—

[00:26:43.57]

MARCIA MARCUS: In terms of—well, it was the first time I sort of knew specifically what I wanted to do in terms of [drawing -Ed.], right? Because before that, I'd studied in a kind of vague way because I felt I didn't know anything. And obviously, from what I've told you about Cooper, I didn't get anything that I wanted. I wasn't quite sure about what I wanted. By the time I got to Dickinson, I knew that I didn't know how to draw.

[00:27:12.73]

I went there specifically to learn how to draw. I think I learned how to draw, or certainly an attitude about it. I got a feeling from him that was, like, unbelievable, obviously. And I thought, okay, I don't have to. It could've been financial, because at that point, it was maybe \$37.50 for a month. But I don't think that was really the reason. I think I got exactly what I wanted. [Recently I got a transcript and see that I sent back for two days in May. -Ed.]

[00:27:45.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just came at the right time and it worked.

[00:27:48.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it just—yeah.

[00:27:48.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:27:51.03]

MARCIA MARCUS: And that's why it makes it so upsetting to me when good students have said they would like to study with a person. There is no place in New York where you can have that kind of setup except at the League. And at the moment, there is no one at the League who functions in that kind of capacity.

[00:28:09.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of person are you looking for? I mean, would their qualities be,

that they would need to be a certain—

[00:28:15.87]

MARCIA MARCUS: Of being good artists. You know, because basically—well, not necessarily, but mostly, the people who've asked me have needed a kind of discipline in what we can laughingly call naturalistic art. I mean, I think that's basic. I think that's the beginning. It doesn't matter. But even for people who I thought could use good instruction from someone who was totally non-objective, I looked through the catalog for about two or three years for various students, and I couldn't with good conscience recommend anyone who was teaching then. But the setup is unique because anyplace else, they would have to register for a whole course of study, and they didn't want that.

[00:29:04.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, they'd go for days and hours or whatever you're—yeah.

[00:29:08.15]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. So I suggested—especially, I remember a girl at Vassar who was terrific, and I said, "I think you're better off"—because I had already looked through the catalog for the guy I was looking for, right, so I knew who was teaching there. I knew there was nobody that I could recommend.

[00:29:27.75]

And I said, "I think you're better off just coming to New York and working for a year." She was willing to work, but also, I think her parents could support her a little bit. And I thought she'd be better off just being in New York, where she could go to museums and go to galleries, because art is a source also.

[00:29:44.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:29:45.81]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, and one of the drags about most colleges is the art history and the art studio departments are kept religiously separate, and they usually hate each other.

[00:29:56.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, of course. Art history isn't about art.

[00:29:59.14]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, of course.

[00:30:00.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's about slides and dates. [Laughs.]

[00:30:01.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: I have always hated art history, with a very few exceptions. When I was at Vassar, actually, it was the first time that I met people who really loved what they were teaching, who loved the work they were dealing with.

[00:30:15.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was teaching there then?

[00:30:16.20]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well [1973-74 -Ed.], of course, Linda Nochlin teaches there. But someone who I got very friendly with when I was at Vassar, who's a friend of Lennart's, and he—I mean, Lennart said to me, "Call him." I had met him at my interview, and he found me totally charming. And the reason he did is because on the other side of me was someone

who obviously was totally antagonistic. So I devoted all my time talking to this guy. [They laugh.] So—and he was not teaching that year. But I called him up anyway, because Lennart said, "Well, why don't you? You have to stay overnight. You know, and he's a very nice guy, and he's a friend of mine. Like, just call him up." And that was a very good thing.

[00:30:54.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

[00:30:55.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: His name is Eugene Carroll, and he teaches [... -M.M.] Italian [Renaissance -Ed.] art, which appeals to me very much. But we became extremely good friends, and it was very nice to have someone up there that I could talk to. And there were people also who seemed to care about what they were doing. And there was one guy there who was extraordinary because he's not really an art historian. He was a collector and a businessman. And they invited him up, and he, as far as I know, still does it like for half a year. He teaches a course called the Connoisseurship of Drawings—Curtis Baer. [He is now deceased. -Ed.]

[00:31:42.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:31:43.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: He put out a book on landscape drawing.

[00:31:45.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Right, the landscape drawing.

[00:31:46.22]

MARCIA MARCUS: And he is an absolutely marvelous man. And he gave a talk that I went to on Poussin. It was marvelous because the one thing everyone leaves out of art is a sense of humor, and he started out by saying, "Why would anyone want to talk about Poussin? Could anyone be more boring?" [Laughs.] You know?

[00:32:04.90]

And then he went on to say these things about Poussin that were fantastic, because whatever he said—I mean, obviously, if anyone's dead and their lives have not been well documented, and how documented except for facts can they be, you have to make it up. Right? But there's a difference between making it up on the basis of actually looking at the work, and looking with feeling, or looking at it for some preconceived notion you have and then applying it to the work.

[00:32:34.96]

And he obviously said all these things that were possible based on his having looked at these things, right, and it was a marvelous thing. I mean, that was another crucial point in my life, actually, because I was in a very nasty situation up there. I was hoping to get a job for the next year, and they'd kept me hanging. And as he was talking, I was saying, like, this is the first time in my life I've allowed other people to determine my life. They're keeping me hanging here. I'm a painter. Why should I be at their mercy?

[00:33:14.51]

And it was partly because he's saying these things that are totally real. So during the course of his lecture [I made up my mind. -Ed.] I was going through these changes, and the very next day I dropped a note to the head of the department and said, "I am no longer interested in this job." Knowing that—of course, knowing at the same time that the chances of my getting it were practically nonexistent, also. But also, they had no right to do that to me. You know, I'm better than that.

[00:33:40.29]



PAUL CUMMINGS: But that's the standard business approach in college.

[00:33:42.67]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that's—okay, but I didn't have to be subjected to it. And I found myself hanging there waiting for them to make a decision and not doing something. And I am not a hanger-in-waiting for someone else to decide my fate, and it was very important from that point of view.

[00:34:02.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, now, you did mention the abstract paintings, and you didn't do that very long, did you? Or did you? I can't remember.

[00:34:11.91]

MARCIA MARCUS: Abstract paintings? Well—

[00:34:13.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Early—

[00:34:16.81]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, actually, around 1951, I did a great many non-objective paintings. I mean, I also did some that weren't, that were sort of abstracted, a kind of—based on my previous experience, kind of abstracted, semi-Cubist, crappy stuff. I mean, I think some of them are very good. Unfortunately, I don't have any photographs here, but right in the Archives, [they laugh] because that saved me.

[00:34:52.79]

You have no idea what it's been like for me, because I'm an accumulator, as Jane can tell you, because she hates it. And for me to be able to take even a small carton up there and let them deal with it, it is such a relief to me, even though there are 5,000 cartons still left that I can't give away, that I still have to deal with. [They laugh.] But it's a great satisfaction to get rid of some every year.

[00:35:15.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: A little bit here, a little bit there.

[00:35:16.71]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. So you do have a photograph of one of the best paintings I did in 1951, which is still on, which is basically naturalistic. But I also, at the same time, did a lot of non-objective things. Some of them were done for this course in two or three-dimensional design, where the guy kept accusing me of making paintings, which was his problem, because I'd rather make paintings than do two-dimensional design. But I really feel that the student or young artist period is a time when you should try everything.

[00:35:51.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:35:52.36]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, I have no—I mean, one of the greatest influences to me was Mondrian. And one of the interesting things in terms of art history is that this guy who taught everything, including modern art, right? He gave you great enthusiasm. So for about ten years, I accepted Mondrian as a wonderful artist, right, modern, terrific fantastic. Right. And then Janis had a show of Mondrian's work, maybe 1953 or '54, something like that. By this time, I'd been out of college long enough to have forgotten all the garbage about the design, the organization of the space, whatever dumb words they use for that, right?

[00:36:35.83]

I walked into that room, and I was totally wiped out, because no one ever talks about the vibrations that happen when these [edges -Ed.] meet, just in terms of the paint, and that was extraordinary. And it had a great deal to do with my work later on, this kind of thing that happens when two things come together. You know, that's Mondrian.

[00:37:01.03]

And it was extraordinary because a long enough time had passed so that I forgot all the garbage and I could really look at the paintings. And that's one of the reasons I hate art history, because it's like a barrier between you and it. You know, like, I mean, who could explain a thing like Courbet's "Studio," for example, which is my favorite example of an impossible painting. It's the most sentimental, "smurchy" thing in the world. You know, here's this guy—

[00:37:28.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody's carrying on, yeah.

[00:37:30.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: The ghosts of his models, the studio, the whole romanticism of being an artist. But the passion that he brought to it makes it one of the greatest paintings in the whole world. That's what's important. But nobody talks about that.

[00:37:46.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that scares people. It's too intimate.

[00:37:48.45]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, of course,

[00:37:49.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's too intimate. [Laughs.]

[00:37:50.63]

MARCIA MARCUS: But that's why people have been accusing me of doing personal paintings. And it finally it took me five years to realize what personal meant. Personal meant you have to look at it. So it makes me feel good in terms of being an artist. It makes me feel rotten because financially it's a drag, because no one wants to buy one, unless they're the kind of person who really wants to look at what they buy. It's not an investment property. It's not something that hangs on the wall that you don't have to look at, I mean, like the best ones, right. And so it's gratifying for myself, as an artist, when people meet me years later and say, "I still love the painting I bought ten years ago, and I like it better all the time," because that's the way it should be.

[00:38:34.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

[00:38:35.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: But it doesn't help me financially [they laugh] because you can count those people on two hands.

[00:38:40.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know. I know.

[00:38:40.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: And the ones who buy it to hang on the wall and not look at, you can count, like, on every limb you've got on the whole block.

[00:38:50.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Yeah, alas.

[00:38:52.07]

MARCIA MARCUS: So, alas.

[00:38:52.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what happened in the mid-'50s, because you started getting involved with 10th Street and the March Gallery and—

[00:39:00.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the first time I ever showed was at the Roko Gallery. And that was the guy I told you who was a very good friend of mine at Cooper, who later went into advertising and was guilty about it. And he got me into the very first group show I was ever in because he knew Mike. And I don't know how it happened exactly, but he came in one day and said, "I know this guy's got a gallery on Greenwich Avenue," like, you know how long ago that was—"and you should put something in."

[00:39:35.09]

Unfortunately, I went through a thing, until I moved to this place, I had fireplaces, so I burnt a lot of paintings. [Laughs.] And unfortunately, I burnt that one, because the more I think of it—because I do have a photograph which probably is in the Archives—and it wasn't that bad a painting. And that was the first time I—

[00:39:56.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, that was a large gallery then, wasn't it? I mean, fairly big.

[00:39:59.63]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah.

[00:40:00.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:40:00.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: I don't even remember the show, to tell you the truth. And at that point, that particular painting reminded me somewhat of Balcomb Greene, or maybe someone told me that.

[00:40:17.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

[00:40:18.51]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it was very white. At the time, or right before that, I'd been taking a ballet class in a studio that had lots of mirrors, and it was a rather large space. And the painting was based on that studio, and there were maybe three or four mirrors. And it was not really abstracted. I think you have photograph, or Syracuse has it, because I send a box of things to them first. But since it was a shoe box, I would suspect that you have the photograph, because the photograph couldn't have fit the shoe box.

[00:40:50.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:40:53.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: But it was not a bad painting, but I did end up burning it, which I sort of regret. And I did a lot of things that were semi-abstract, for want of a better word. And I went through an Abstract Expressionist period, like a lot of other people, simply because—but I think the difference was, where my instincts were always correct, even if I didn't know what I

was doing exactly, was that I never for one moment thought of myself as an Abstract Expressionist. I felt that it was something to learn from, because my work was very stiff.

[00:41:43.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:41:44.34]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I looked at de Kooning's, and the first show I saw, which was the women's show in '53, I didn't like, because it was a very frightening image, and the only thing I could really look at was kind of the edges, the parts that were really non-objective, and were like the spaces around the figure. And I couldn't really deal with the figure at that point. I mean, his thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:42:11.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: But I wanted that kind of freedom. And another thing that happened when I was with Dickinson is that one day, because he took a special interest in me, he came over one day and he said, "There's an opening later I think you would like to go to." And that was Tworlov's opening at Egan's. And he told me where it was, and he said, "I'll be going there. Why don't you come after class?" And that was, like, another Dickens story—Dickens, but Dickinson story, but maybe Dickinsonian in a way.

[00:42:44.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would he do that—

[00:42:45.22]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I went—what?

[00:42:46.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —make suggestions of things you might like, or to see?

[00:42:50.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: To me, he did. That's the only—well, just because there was an opening, and Tworlov was a friend of his. But he did take a special interest in me, I think partly because of the guy that sent me there, and partly because I think that he knew, even if I didn't know, that I was serious and that I was talented. And I went over there after class, and of course, it was very early, because I didn't know zilch about openings and things, and you never get there at five o'clock because nobody's there. [They laugh.]

[00:43:21.16]

And there were about six people and a table with drinks on it, right. So I walked in, and of course, the only person I knew there was Dickinson. And I went over to him, and I said, "Mr. Dickinson, can I get you a drink?" And he's wearing his black suit and he opens his pocket, and there's a drink in the pocket. [They laugh.]

[00:43:45.74]

I mean, I just adore that man. He is so incredible. I mean, you could go through—you know, like, the guy who sent me there and studied with him at Black Mountain, but also I think at Brooklyn, he said one day, he met him—well, he used to see him, like, walking through the halls, combing his beard. And once he met him on the subway station, and he was kicking this thing—or maybe it wasn't Brooklyn. I don't remember now where it took place. But he had obviously put a penny in for some chewing gum, and he was kicking that machine to hell because he didn't [laughs] he neither got his penny back nor his gum. I mean, for a sweet, quiet man, he is, you know, keen.

[00:44:30.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's feisty, yeah.

[00:44:31.82]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right, like, unbelievable. He is really like something else. So that was, like, the first time I went to an opening. And I looked at that, and I—so at the same time, I signed up to study with Tworkov, and that was a disaster. It was interesting.

[00:44:50.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he at the League?

[00:44:50.99]

MARCIA MARCUS: And this is going to be private, isn't it—

[00:44:52.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:44:53.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: —until, like, somebody dies, or something? That was one of the most unbelievable experiences of my life, because—

[00:45:05.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was at the League still?

[00:45:07.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, this was privately. Tworkov was teaching in his studio once or twice a week. And during the same time that I was studying with Dickinson, maybe the second or third week, I signed up for Tworkov. And that was extraordinary because I liked the freedom of the thing, and I felt I needed that, because my work was, like, very tight. And I studied with him. And they were mostly housewives from Scarsdale, and they thought he was wonderful. And to me, it was like Mr. Pussyfoot all the time. Right, he was sort of tiptoe around things.

[00:45:47.97]

And after like two or three weeks, I finally got the picture that you were supposed to work—there was a model, right, but you were supposed to deal with the space around the model. But it wasn't like the usual negative space being as important as the figure, blah, blah, blah, like, all that crappy verbiage, which I'm not assigning to him. You know, that's not what he said. I'm saying this is—like, it wasn't that.

[00:46:20.47]

But at some point, I suddenly realized that what he was talking about was like removing the model, practically. It was almost like the atom bomb, right, like you were supposed to be painting the space the model was in but not the model. This did not appeal to me at all, and his manner certainly didn't, because it was negative in the extreme. It was almost like he couldn't deal with anything, and his work is like that, in the way.

[00:46:51.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm. You mean the ideas, or the students?

[00:46:53.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, both, because they—I mean, how could you separate it? It was like—it was non-factual, just the way like—Dickinson, in a way, was super factual, but with a plumb line and the angle of the leg and the thing, except that you went on to really see, which is something I got, that I say to my students, look, I'm not trying to teach you anything except to see, to really look, and to get to something, right?

[00:47:29.32]

But it was like not dealing with things, in a sense, because space removed from a content—which is maybe what I'm saying, but I'm not sure—was not what interested me, and it still doesn't. I have no prejudices against non-objective art. I think it's like good or bad art, which is nothing original. When I first said it, I thought it was original, and I discovered that everyone else thinks so, too.

[00:48:01.72]

Or anyone who's worth anything thinks so, too. Like, does it matter? You know, I can get so turned on by a Mondrian, especially sort of that intermediate period, you know, with the ovals, before he got to the most famous ones, and just wiped me out. And then I went to Holland. You know, I went to that museum that's supposed to be famous for Van Goghs. And I just got wiped out by Mondrians. I mean, they're so incredible—because it doesn't matter. It's like your involvement in it that matters.

[00:48:35.99]

And this, the thing that killed me with Tworkov was his non-involvement, his fear of stepping on anyone or dealing with anything. And I suppose, you know, in retrospect, it's hysterical to be studying with two people who are so diametrically opposed. But I was at a stage where probably that's exactly where I was at. Like, it's—

[00:49:03.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long did you study with Tworkov, then?

[00:49:06.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, probably maybe another month, you know, but not as often as with Dickinson, because I finally realized that I don't want to paint nothing. I mean, painting nothing is not interesting to me.

[00:49:18.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It doesn't go anywhere.

[00:49:19.49]

MARCIA MARCUS: No.

[00:49:20.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, where were—you were painting where you were living? Was there a studio? Or what kind of—

[00:49:23.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, yeah, wherever I've been, I've set up a studio, even if it was a closet. Not that I've ever lived in a closet, but [they laugh] you know. But I've been in some pretty small spaces, and I've always like carved out a space for myself. At that point, I was living on Third Avenue, which was a place I was in before I came here. And I used what had been the living room as the studio. And it was just east light, which is not great.

[00:49:52.06]

But I did some very large things, and I did things that were very highly influenced by Abstract Expressionism. And I did that for maybe two or three years, and then one day, I did say to myself—like, I said something before, but that's like after the fact. Like, when I was influenced by it, I didn't really think about like my involvement with it.

[00:50:20.27]

But one day, I looked at something I was doing and I said, well, I can never be de Kooning, who I thought was the greatest. I mean, of the three giants of the time, that's the one I feel the closest to, in terms of respect or learning something from. You know, Kline, actually, at the time, I thought Kline was a personal painter, in the sense that he was not someone you could really learn from, because—

[00:50:52.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm, why do you say that?

[00:50:56.90]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because there's so much feeling in his work. I mean, it's, like, really his personal thing. De Kooning deals with both things. He deals with content and what, for want of a better word, we could say, space or technique, or whatever words you want to assign to it. Like, he's like the complete artist to me.

[00:51:24.90]

I mean, I love Kline. I thought he was a fantastic person, and a terrific everything, human being. Not that I ever knew him that well, but the little I knew about him, he was a terrific, terrific person. I loved a lot of his work. I didn't feel I could learn anything from it. I feel you can learn a fantastic amount from de Kooning. I think Pollock is marvelous. I didn't feel like I personally could learn anything from that.

[00:51:54.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think you could learn from de Kooning, then?

[00:52:02.82]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, actually, in terms of actual technique, because I did know him quite well for a period of time, he would stop—since his studio was on Third Avenue, sometimes he would take a walk and stop by and he told me things just technically that were interesting. And when I went to Holland, I saw what he meant.

[00:52:22.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What—

[00:52:22.23]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because he had been a house painter.

[00:52:23.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:52:23.85]

MARCIA MARCUS: Okay. So I remember him saying once how to get a smooth surface. Like, he was talking about how he used to house paint, and how they used to get a completely smooth, glossy surface by dipping the brush in water. And, you know, if you know my work from like 1961 or something, when I finally achieved what I consider my style, I did use it a lot to get that smooth surface, either before or after the fact, you know. And I don't remember now whether he said you dip the water in before or after. I've done it both ways—but the smoothness of surface. And when I went to Holland, they have bathrooms that are not tiled, but the gloss on the paint is so deep just because of this kind of technique.

[00:53:14.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Technique, yeah. Yeah.

[00:53:16.51]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, but it was never an end in itself. And he was like, to me, the most vital painter. Like, I'm not fond of what he's done recently, but, you know, that's like one of those things. I mean, he survived longer, and therefore he's suffering kind of a decline in a sense.

[00:53:38.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: His new show is interesting, though.

[00:53:40.07]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I haven't seen it. Oh, it's for—

[00:53:42.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For Cobb, yeah, it just opened with hordes of people.

[00:53:47.08]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I'll try to go late in the day or something.

[00:53:48.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's always crowded. I mean, I went in the middle of the afternoon or late the other day, and there must have been 40 people in there.

[00:54:00.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the thing is, to me, he is like the most complete artist, straight down the middle.

[00:54:06.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do mean? I mean, how do you mean that?

[00:54:08.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: I mean there's a mainstream and then there are people who are like individuals. Botticelli is like, to me, an individual. This is not someone to learn from. Bellini is someone to learn from. If they're current—my art history, as we all know, is a little fuzzy. You know, maybe they're not contemporary. Like, Piero della Francesca is someone to learn from. You know, it's straight down the middle, right? It has to do with art. It has to do with personality. It's everything. That's how I felt about de Kooning, like he was a complete artist.

[00:54:44.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah, so it's a combination of art and life, work, philosophy, and—

[00:54:48.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, no, I absent his life from it. That's his problem, you know, and not out of a lack of sympathy or anything for the crap that he had to take, or anything like that, or dished out, from whichever point of view. But he's the one I—well, for one thing, he's the one I knew the best. But also, that really had nothing to do with the art part of it, because I can enjoy a Kline. I can enjoy a Pollock. I don't feel I can learn anything from it. Well, I mean, I'm saying it currently, but at this point, of course, is like a past thing.

[00:55:28.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did you—how did you sort of find out where things were in terms of The Club and Cedar Bar, and, you know—

[00:55:38.79]

MARCIA MARCUS: Through the same guy, who suddenly took me to a few openings and people kept saying, "Oh, where have you been?" I mean, he was one of those people. And that was interesting because he still exists. And when this thing stops, I'll tell you something, but I don't want it on the record. [Laughs.]

[00:55:57.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah. Yeah.

[00:55:58.92]

MARCIA MARCUS: But during the time we had a relationship, for example, he moved, and he



had this canvas. And we had a terrible fight because I was helping him move, and I didn't handle something properly. And he screamed and yelled because I didn't do something precisely correctly. And at some point, I said to him, long after he'd moved—well, long, like, three months or something—in the same canvas, unprimed, but with, like, a rabbit skin glue cross on it to keep it [straight –Ed.], he said—or something. I don't know that much about it technically. I'm not—the period during which I did my own canvases was very brief, because it's such a drag and it's not worth the involvement. I said to him, "But you haven't painted." He said, "You don't have to paint to be a painter," or something like that. And I started thinking about that, and—"Oh?" You know?

[00:57:04.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. Hmm.

[00:57:05.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: Like, how long do you wait for this magic moment, you know, to arrive? And he's certainly off the scene in terms of anything that's going on, and god knows what he's doing now. He showed me photographs of what he did at Black Mountain, and they looked interesting, totally [well-schooled Abstract Expressionist like the black and white paintings –Ed.]. I think de Kooning had been down there. Well, everyone was down there.

[00:57:31.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, a long time, that was.

[00:57:32.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: And unfortunately, I was very dumb. I didn't—you know, I think it's harder, if you're in New York to find the center than if you're someplace else.

[00:57:41.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, because you're so close, you can't see.

[00:57:44.19]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, you can't see what's going on. I met him by total accident. I was taking a walk with a friend, and I met someone I knew who was with him. And that's how it started. I didn't know him before. And then I got to the club and to this whole scene, and then there was a whole other—

[00:58:04.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Cedar [Bar].

[00:58:05.81]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, the whole bit, and it was very important. And a lot of people have said a lot of things about it, and I'm, in a way, happy for my unconsciousness. A lot of people have—women are bitter about it because it was a male show with this theme in these terms. I sort of always knew there were guys who would prefer their women tied to beds and kitchens, and so you wrote them off. But obviously, some of my best friends have always been men, and some of the—you know, how did anyone ever get anyplace? Who was in a position of influence to invite you to a Stable Annual or to like any place else, except another artist who who's usually male.

[00:58:51.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:58:51.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: And a lot of women were intimidated by it. I somehow, for whatever reasons, always felt I had every right to be there, operated the way I felt like, and was never intimidated by it. And if something happened, either I was unconscious about it or wrote it off as, like, this thing—well, that's that guy. Like, forget about him.

[00:59:14.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:59:14.55]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know?

[00:59:15.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was the individual—

[00:59:17.59]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, and there were enough people that I had good relationships with and still do. I mean, Bob Beauchamp, I've known for like more than 20 years. And still he—

[00:59:29.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did he come into this?

[00:59:31.83]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because I actually—I met him through this guy, too.

[00:59:33.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh-huh [affirmative].

[00:59:34.80]

MARCIA MARCUS: And felt—you know, but that's the least—the discrimination amongst artists is the least. And as you go up, it gets more and more—the next step is the galleries, and they discriminate more. The schools are the worst, and the museums are somewhere in between the galleries and the schools. And I'm happy for my unconsciousness, partly because I think if I had realized how bad it was, I might have been intimidated. On the other hand, I might have gotten angrier and—you know, because I do operate a lot on anger when feel taken advantage of.

[01:00:19.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I think—yeah, but I think it was. But in those days, too, there were not so many women around who wanted to be painters. Or were there?

[01:00:29.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't think that's true, from what I know now.

[01:00:33.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well—

[01:00:34.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I think there were. I mean, I spoke to someone about a year or so ago who said she could never go into the Cedar because she felt intimidated. And I was never intimidated. I mean, I used to live on Third Avenue. And during the time when I didn't have a job, I often worked at night, and sometimes I would walk by myself down to the Cedar, like, one o'clock in the morning, not necessarily—I wasn't meeting anybody, but I needed to see someone. I mean, you know what a solitary occupation it is, and sometimes I would—in those days, you could do things like walk out at one o'clock in the morning, and there was a bar you could go to, and no one was going to try to pick you up unless you wanted to be picked up. You know, I would never have thought of going to my local bar at one o'clock in the morning, that's for sure. [They laugh.] I mean, we all know that.

[01:01:24.06]

So sometimes I would see someone I know and talk for half an hour, an hour, and then go

home, and feel like I had at least some kind of human contact, or I wouldn't see anyone but just sit there, and at least be in an atmosphere that I felt—you know, where I could be like impersonal, because you get so involved, especially when you're concentrating on your work, that I've been—like, in this, when I first moved here, there were times when I never left the house for three days, and you'd begin to think, I'm going mad, [they laugh] you know?

[01:01:55.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[01:01:56.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because you have no contact with another human soul.

[01:01:59.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[01:02:00.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: And you start to think, "What am I doing? Is it any good? I can't see it anymore. I've got to get out of here."

[01:02:06.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[01:02:07.59]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, and I never felt that I didn't have the right to go out. So somehow, somewhere, as a woman, I never felt that I didn't have the same right to do what all those guys were doing. I don't know how they felt about me. You'd have to ask them.

[01:02:25.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[END OF TRACK AAA\_marcus75\_8067\_m]

[00:00:05.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side three. It's the 3rd of November 1975. Paul Cummings talking to Marcia Marcus in her about-to-be-vacated loft of almost 20 years.

[00:00:15.67]

MARCIA MARCUS: Almost. In March.

[00:00:19.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just wonder if there are any other things about de Kooning of that period.

[00:00:22.90]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, because, I mean, I was really so happy, because even though the last interview was the best to that point, which was Women's Interart Center, they did a videotape. I have never seen it, but it felt good. But with you, it was even better. For one thing, because you've known me for probably more than 20 years, or at least of my work or something.

[00:00:45.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, Yeah.

[00:00:46.93]

MARCIA MARCUS: And also, you're very knowledgeable, which means that you ask better questions than people who are—other types. [They laugh.]

[00:00:54.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Other types.

[00:00:55.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: Other places.

[00:00:56.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now that was the time when you really started becoming involved with artists and art world in a more in-depth way and discovered the Cedar [Bar].

[00:01:10.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: Circulating the club, the whole shmear.

[00:01:15.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did it move along? I mean, there was this mysterious man whose name you didn't put on the tape last time who kept bringing you hither and thither.

[00:01:23.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, actually, I feel meaner today, so I can say it because—[they laugh.] And no, because he was like what I call an underground artist in the sense that there are people which you may or may not know about, but you probably do who—and this was not a comment on that. This is a comment on my [inaudible], that is—okay—who justify their non-participation in all the garbage entailed in the art world by saying that they're too good for it. They're not—they don't want to go through that, and any number of other excuses, which is to avoid the issue, because you have to take all that crap along with being an artist. It's just simply part of what you have to do. Nobody that I know really likes it, right? But it's just —[Anyway, he was really a commercial artist eventually. -Ed.]

[00:02:23.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's part of the—

[00:02:24.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: —part of the—Yeah, I mean, if you really want to be serious about it and be an artist, you have to do all that. I mean, you have to have your—you have to show. You have to sort of lay yourself on the line, as it were. And you can't pretend that you're really not doing that.

[... -MM.]

[His operative word was "humble," and recently when I saw him, he said de Kooning once told him he was too much in awe to be a painter, which made me understand de Kooning's saying to me, "it's good to see you get so angry," when he met me when was fuming about what someone had done. -Ed.]

[00:02:49.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he became a kind of entree for you to a lot of groups of people.

[00:02:53.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, because, like, I remember him taking me to Museum of Modern Art opening once and meeting a lot of people. And one of them came over and said something like, you know, "Where have you been?" Blah, blah. And that was Rauschenberg. And that's the first time I'd ever met him. At that point, I'm not even sure that I knew his work, because this was '53.

[00:03:16.61]

But he also—took I don't remember if he took me to the Club, per se, but probably. [But I don't think so. -Ed.] And it was really important because as I said, like getting me to go to Dickinson by telling me I was an lousy artist, which I denied. [They laugh.] And will deny to my dying day, despite whatever insecurities I feel from time to time. [And eventually it let me to the center of the art world. -Ed.]

[00:03:45.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rights. But now what happened with the Club in the Cedars? You got to know all these people and observe their life and what they were talking about. And how did it affect you? I mean, did you like it?

[00:03:57.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't know how it affected my work, really, except in terms of studying with Dickinson and then with Tworokov, which was like a substitute in a sense for studying with de Kooning, whose work at that point I really couldn't quite cope with entirely. But when Dickinson told me about that opening, which we discussed last time, there was a freedom in his brushstroke that I needed because my work was very tight. So that it was like a transition in a sense that even though I realized I couldn't study with him because I wasn't going to paint nothing, it enabled me to free my work enough so that eventually I worked my way up like to de Kooning's image, you know. [Otherwise it affected my work because it made me aware what was going on—top to sides to bottom. -Ed.]

[00:04:44.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you were you were doing figurative painting, or non-objective painting?

[00:04:48.25]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I would say that the non-objective period. [But usually gotten from a real subject. -Ed.]

[00:04:53.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't remember any of those offhand.

[00:04:55.17]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because it was 1951, you know, like I did—right. [But rarely without an image after that. -Ed.] To my knowledge, I never showed any of them. And there are very few that still exist. One of my favorites, which unfortunately, I thought I was trading completely to the lawyer with whom I changed my name. Unfortunately, I had to pay as well, so it turned out to be almost like a gift. And God knows, I don't even remember his name. I don't know where the painting is. It was all white, and that was like one of my favorite paintings of that time.

[00:05:30.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that pre-Tworokov?

[00:05:32.88]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, yeah.

[00:05:33.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was.

[00:05:33.69]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because these were all in '51.

[00:05:35.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So by the time you got to Tworokov, you were doing—

[00:05:38.37]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I was doing what I would consider half-assed abstracted images, probably vaguely based on like the kind of Cubism that went on in the '30s and '40s. You know, like I told you, the first painting I ever showed reminded—actually, I said it reminded me of—Now when I think about it, I mean, that's why this interview is sort of useful, because it's jogging my memory—was something that some other friend said reminded him of Balcomb Greene, because it was a very white painting with three mirrors on it. And there was color in the painting, but it was a very kind of lit up. You want to close the window?

[I worked on a self-portrait from 1951-1953 that was a bridge from the semi-abstract, non-objective period of 1951-1952, to the freedom of my being influenced by Abstract Expressionism, a real jumping-off point to the work of 1954-1957. -Ed.]

[00:06:26.81]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:06:30.38]

[Inaudible]

[00:06:35.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Anyway, so what about the Balcomb Greene with the lights?

[00:06:40.76]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was just what somebody else said during this 1951 to 1953 period kind of thing. Okay. At that point, I'd say the crucial period for me, like psychologically, the transition between being an almost-artist, and becoming an artist was maybe '53 to '55, when I finally say "I am a painter," and not qualify it.

[00:07:15.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What led you to that? I mean, how would you describe that?

[00:07:19.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: Which part?

[00:07:20.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well—

[00:07:20.85]

MARCIA MARCUS: Being able to call myself that?

[00:07:22.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, and what happened in the two years.

[00:07:24.17]

MARCIA MARCUS: I think the reason I couldn't is that I have a basic sense of integrity, and take being an artist kind of seriously in a way, not for any romantic idea, like being a gift or anything. But until I felt that I was really rolling in a sense, I just didn't feel that I knew enough, which is one of the reasons that Dickinson was so good for me. Because as I said before, like, I got a sense of enthusiasm from the person I studied with at NYU, but I sure as hell didn't get any real information.

[00:08:02.08]

And so that was like building up to whatever came later where anyone would have seen anything, you know. And the work became in the manner of Abstract Expressionism. And I think, as I also said last time, I think the difference between me and a lot of other people is that I somehow instinctively never thought of myself as an Abstract Expressionist or that

Abstract Expressionism was where to go. I mean, you know, about all the flip-flops when it sort of lost favor.

[00:08:43.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

[00:08:43.79]

MARCIA MARCUS: And a lot of people who were fairly good second rate or third rate or fourth, fifth, you know, Abstract Expressionists suddenly flipped over and became something else.

[00:08:54.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. They had [inaudible].

[00:08:55.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. I didn't really have that problem. I just always thought of it as something I needed for my work because it was too tight. It was the point. I mean, this is skipping and we'll probably backtrack.

[Siren sounds.] [Recorder stops; restarts.]

Lost the thread.

[00:09:15.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, what kind of paintings are you making once you after you did the Abstract Expressionist?

[00:09:21.01]

MARCIA MARCUS: After or during?

[00:09:22.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, during or after.

[00:09:24.61]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I did things that were very loosely worked that I did like in terms of what you might call the conception of a painting. Like, I could get that down maybe in an evening, because I was working a lot at night, partly because I was working, partly because I was going out a lot, and didn't wake up until later [laughs] or something. But maybe—they never really were without an image of some sort.

[00:09:55.57]

In fact, just that short period of time was when I worked totally non-objective. And then it was almost like ideas about color or something like. I mean, not all ideas about color, but using sort of very, almost geometric shapes and things like that. And they're somewhere in that McGee closet at the warehouse, right, because I kept a few, because some of them are not bad in themselves, you know. They would astound people, I suppose, if they ever saw it in conjunction with what I do now, because they couldn't figure it out.

[00:10:33.89]

But, you know, when people have objected to things like that—I mean, sometimes people even object to my doing a landscape and say it's different than my figure painting, which I think is ridiculous. I mean, I did them both, therefore there must be a connection, just by the fact that I did them.

[00:10:50.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But were you were you using models or still lifes, or what?

[00:10:53.08]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, the only time I ever in my whole life hired a model was during the time I was studying with Dickinson. And I told you the feeling I had at like, the last minute of the last hour of the last day of the week, suddenly beginning to see something. And one of the models was absolutely terrific. He was a Chinese guy who was one of the best models I had during this time.

[00:11:18.33]

So I hired him. And was the only time I've ever hired a model. And I hired him for eight hours all in one day and did a drawing, which I'm still very happy with. I think it's in my gallery, but I'm not sure. I don't know where anything is at the moment. [They laugh.] I think it is. I went to the drawing room.

[00:11:35.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now who are the people that you met in those days, because you probably.

[00:11:39.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I met just about everybody. You know, I—well, I think—well, I guess one of the things is crucial, which I've left out, is in '52, I had a mad desire to go away to the country. And I had a boss who was terrific because, you know, you're not supposed to collect unemployment insurance unless you're fired.

[00:12:11.95]

And I had gone hitchhiking for one weekend with somebody and decided—and found a place and asked the people, I mean, the people that picked us up and took us back for coffee and cake. And they had this little summer house. And I guess maybe as shy as I always thought I was, I had a certain amount of nerve. [They laugh.] They were Amish, reformed Amish. And he was really a—one of the worst people I've ever met in my life. But she was absolutely marvelous.

[00:12:41.15]

And I asked if I could, you know, if I fixed up the summer house, could I stay there for the summer? Which is obviously an incredibly nervy thing to do. [They laugh.] And I wasn't all that young to be doing something like that. And I went there for a little over a month. And during '51 and '53, I spent a lot of time in the Village. I put all my furniture in storage at some point because I had problems with the landlord and I got out in a hurry because my one of my roommates defected, and there was a whole complicated emotional scene, not so much involving me for a change, but the world around me.

[00:13:20.57]

And I knew a guy very, very casually who had sublet a place and then decided that he didn't want it, and told me about it just at the point where the whole thing was breaking down on 25th Street, which is where I lived then. So I put everything in storage, and took over his sublet and spent two and a half months in the village, which is my only village experience. And I did the whole bit, and I never really went back because it was horrible. [Laughs.]

[00:13:47.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whereabouts was that?

[00:13:48.95]

MARCIA MARCUS: It was on Waverly Place. Actually, I think the Morris Gallery still exists—

[00:13:54.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:13:54.29]



MARCIA MARCUS: —or it did until a few years ago. Well, I live right across the street. And I was there the year that they opened in a first floor apartment where some of my friends would climb through the window. You know, it was very [bohemian. -Ed.]

[00:14:04.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Must have been marvelous.

[00:14:05.21]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, it was like the whole bit. But it was good. And I mean, a lot of people that I met kept talking about Provincetown. And I've never been there. And I really didn't think much of them. And I'll tell you a very funny story in a second. But I managed to paint during that summer. And aside from, you know, closing all the bars and everything else. [They laugh.] And when I went away the following year, I mean, I found the place on Third Avenue at the end of the summer in '51. And I moved there. And so after that, I only went back from time to time, to like Louie's which you may or may not remember, which is—

[00:14:51.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

[00:14:51.71]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Right. Okay. And I developed a sense of like, what those, all those people were like, which is not much.

[00:14:59.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean, the whole Tenth Street scene, or Louie's?

[00:15:01.55]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. [The Village. -Ed.] Well, I'll tell you the story that's so hysterical. Like, I met a guy in a bar who was the one I finally went hitchhiking with, and he was like a very minor boyfriend. But it was funny. Like, I knew him for a few weeks casually. And then he made what amounted to a formal date, like, "I'll pick you up at" thing. Okay, so I had set up an easel in the living room. There'd be no other room, really, except some kind of cross between a kitchen and a bedroom, somewhere else with no light in it.

[00:15:33.01]

And I was working that afternoon. And then, of course, I stopped and got dressed and the bell rang, and I opened the door and he looks at the easel. He looks at me and said, "Whose is that?" And I said, "Mine." And he looked at me and said "Oh, you really do paint, don't you?" [Laughs.] And that was like the whole thing. I mean, there were all these people who were going to write something.

[00:15:55.95]

As a matter of fact, this guy is supposed to be a writer, and he was probably less horrendous than the rest. And I remember once when I finally moved to Third Avenue, like a couple of years after I'd even seen him very much, his calling me up to tell me he was going back to Tennessee, where he may still be, for all I know. And he was probably, you know, like less fraudulent than most of the other people I met.

[00:16:18.30]

So when they talked about Provincetown, I thought, "Well, I'm I know I'm going to hate it." Anyway, I went away on this, you know, thing. And I hitchhiked out [to Pennsylvania -Ed.] either alone or with friends for about a month and fixed a place up, and then stayed there for about six weeks. And then my mother's birthday is in August. I think every Jewish mother was born in August, except me, of course.

[00:16:47.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: True, but you're—

[00:16:48.03]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. Not me. But I'm a different kind, even though my children accuse me of being the standard [kind of Jewish mother –Ed.] but not quite so bad. Anyhow, I thought, well, everyone's been talking about it so much. What I'll do is I'll hitchhike up to Provincetown and I'll stay there two days. Then I'll hitchhike down to visit my mother on her birthday. Then I'll come back here to Pennsylvania. This was about 15 miles below Reading.

[00:17:17.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

[00:17:17.88]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. So I hitchhiked up. I hit Provincetown. And that was it. I mean, that was it.

[00:17:28.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

[00:17:29.73]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, in a sense. And I just absolutely went ape. And I met some people I had known in the Village and I stayed with them. And then I went back to Pennsylvania, packed up a whole bunch of stuff, shipped it to Provincetown and left some things there, which I picked up the phone and went to and stayed for three months.

[00:17:52.54]

And I stayed like into November 10th, at which point I was completely broke, but also so cold in the place that I'd rented that I had to leave or I would have died. [Laughs.] I mean, there were two nights I really went to sleep and wasn't sure I'd wake up. And I went to sleep fully clothed with every blanket in the house piled on top of me. But I think in some weird way, even though I don't think it happened at the time, just visually, it's been very important to me. And I still love it, you know?

[00:18:22.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way do you mean visually important?

[00:18:26.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, there was kind of clarity of just colors and things. I mean, the realization of it took place much later, like seven years later. But just in terms of a place, I absolutely fell madly in love with it. Like I entered on this sunshiny day with the tide out and the flats just sitting there, and everything sparkling. And I thought oh my God, this is it. Home at last. Because my knowledge of the ocean had been confined to something like Rockaway Beach, you know, when I was a child. And a few trips to Jones Beach, or something like that as an adult. But I'd never seen, like, the ocean and this whole thing. And I just went absolutely out of my mind. And that summer I met, well, Wolf Kahn and Ibram Lassaw and went to like, Boris Margo's big fire thing that he used to do every Labor Day, which, of course, nobody can do anymore.

[00:19:34.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that?

[00:19:35.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, at the time, everything was very fuzzy because I knew nothing about it. And I was just taken there by people. I mean, for a week I hardly ever left the place where I was staying because I didn't know anything about it. And I was, you know, I really didn't—I just knew from New Beach and the west end of town where I was staying and really didn't know anything very much about the whole scene in terms of what it meant as an artist or whatever you want to say, call it, that whole thing.

[00:20:06.75]

But I was taken to this thing. And I remember, in those days, which was heavenly, they hadn't put Route 6 in yet. So walking from town to the dunes took about an hour. And it was unbelievable. I had already been out there once with some friends and, you know, rolled up in blankets and spent the night there. And it was unbelievable. I also got poison ivy, which was unbelievable. [Laughs.] But, you know, so that when I visited my mother finally, you know, my eyes were tight shut because I thought I had sun poisoning. It turned out to be the worst case of poison ivy I've ever had because we'd walked out at night and of course, we couldn't see—

[00:20:45.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where you were going.

[00:20:46.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: I mean, it was moonlight. It was like being on the moon or something. It was incredible.

[00:20:49.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what's this Boris Margo things?

[00:20:50.62]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, apparently every year until the National Park took over, you couldn't even make a bonfire of any kind. And I didn't know him. Like, I really hardly know him now, I just met him a couple of times. But every year he would have—it must have been Labor Day. But he would invite practically everyone who was interested, but it was an open thing. Like, you know, when we went out, I think we went on foot, but we were passed by beach buggies. There were people streaming in from town. It was like a highway or something. [They laugh.]

[00:21:24.47]

And I think that night, like someone, you know, a car overturned on a dune and all kinds of stuff. But he would invite everyone out, and they would build this enormous construction on the beach. And at some point, they would set fire to it, and there'd be this huge fire. And people would recite poetry and play music and sing songs and the whole thing.

[00:21:46.21]

And of course, I met a lot of people. And since I stayed there until November, I met a few of the people who stayed there. And actually some of them are still friends. And I had, at the end of the summer—well, I'd been living with someone who shall be totally nameless. [Laughs.] Anyway, that became impossible. So I looked for a place. And by that time, I'd been out on a fishing boat and I'd met Manny Zora, the famous sea captain, you know, about whom is like a whole other myth in Provincetown. Not anymore, because the whole thing was really totally removed, you know, like nowhere.

[00:22:29.25]

But he said he knew about this place, And it's just like my move now or even my move then. I've always gone further. It's like the place strikes me, like where I live is very important. And I had like no money to spend. But I had this ex-husband from whom I could borrow money, and my parents who occasionally would help me out but couldn't really afford very much, and absolutely zilch money.

[00:22:55.18]

So I was thinking in terms, which was possible in those days, of a place that was like \$25 a month, which I could just afford because I'd borrowed some money to stay for a while. And he said, "Well, there's this place, but I think it might be more than you want." But he took me to what was the old Haymaker place, and that was like a haunted house kind of situation, where there was this old lady and a kind of idiot—either daughter or niece—there were various stories that either was her natural child, or it was a sister's child. But in any case, the girl was really in bad shape.

[00:23:31.98]

And they all dressed very funny, like it was really strictly out of something else. And the top floor was for rent. And I went up those stairs and that was it. It was \$50 a month, but I didn't care. [Laughs.] I mean, this place was unbelievable. It was enormous. It was filled with the wildest furniture, like marble top dressers, and a round music box and wicker furniture and an Isinglass stove, kerosene stove.

[00:24:03.28]

I mean, there was an ice man [who came once a week -Ed.] because it was an ice box. And it had two bedrooms, which didn't matter because I was just by myself at that point. But this huge space. It wasn't the greatest place to work, but it had windows all around. It was just unbelievable. It's now been—I mean, it's still an apartment, but it's like the grounds, which were wild, because they were unkempt but fantastic, and on top of Bradford Street, like right at the top of that hill, overlooked the bay, and the whole thing.

[00:24:36.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you had views.

[00:24:36.79]

MARCIA MARCUS: And the huge windows on the west. And I've always been a sunset freak. Or maybe that's how I became a sunset freak, I really don't remember. But, you know, I obviously I couldn't work after a certain point when the sun started going down, because everything turned red and orange. But it was absolutely marvelous 'til it became too cold. And there were lots of stories involved with that, not crucial to my work, but, you know, I worked.

[00:25:03.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of work were you doing up there? I mean, did you draw or paint?

[00:25:06.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I did just about everything, which was very good, in which I try to tell my students, because it was just at the point where you should be trying out all kinds of things. And I met a guy who was a jewelry maker, but also a painter who was very good, who has come to naught because he was also crazy. And he was doing very kind of naturalistic, straightforward things. And I did a few of that, but the work was totally varied.

[00:25:38.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you work outside, though, or—

[00:25:40.25]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. Well, I did, I think once. I did a thing because I remember knitting myself fingerless mittens so that I could work in the courtyard of St. Mary's of the Harbor. And I also knit myself little socks with toes [laughs] or at least one toe because I wore sandals. I have the most beautiful feet after those six months because I hadn't had a pair of shoes for those six months.

[00:26:06.47]

And I don't remember except for that one time really working outside. I think I did sketches or something, like I'd go out to the beach because I someone lent me a bicycle. And I went out to the beach and drew and stuff like that. But I really did sort of everything. And I think the best part of it was kind of having that sense of freedom, you know, because I guess in a way, like I've always been out of it. So I've never been under the pressure like to do a particular thing until relatively recently. And then I don't listen anyway. So it doesn't—

[00:26:42.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you critical of your work, or did you just kind of turn it out and not

study it or make decisions about it?

[00:26:48.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't know if critical is the right word. It's just that I didn't feel I knew anything, and therefore, I tried all kinds of things, like I did what could be considered straight drawings. And then I did kind of abstracted things. And I did, you know, like because of this guy who was a jewelry maker whom I sat for, by the way. I mean, he even designed like a little thing that I knitted while I posed so I wouldn't get too bored. And I was making some kind of halter top. And he gave me the idea of—I mean, he's a fantastic person.

[00:27:19.98]

And it's very unfortunate, because he was one of the most talented people I've ever met in my life as a jewelry maker, and even as a painter, you know. He was just like a magic kind of person. It's unfortunate in some, well, it's hard to know about things like that. But in some ways it was probably bad that he had such a supportive wife because it kind of allowed him to be maybe crazier than he might have been if he'd had to pull himself together. But the townspeople—and at that point, like to be not from the town during the month—like even the day after Labor Day, was almost freakish. You know, people used to stare at—

[00:27:57.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

[00:27:58.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because nobody ever stayed. I mean, now it's almost as crowded in the wintertime, isn't it? Well, not quite. But there are lots of—

[00:28:05.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: People staying most of the year.

[00:28:07.68]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. And at that point, I remember, you know, I would ride my bicycle and people would come and stare, you know? "Oh, there's one left." [They laugh.] You know.

[00:28:16.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: "What happened?"

[00:28:17.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, like some mistake is taking place. But they were unbelievable because he really was freaky to the point where his wife said that—the Beachcomber Club still exists. And he was invited to belong to them. And all he needed was like one drink to go completely bananas. And he'd go screaming through the street. And the townspeople who normally were the least tolerant probably of any, well, I don't know about other resort places, but certainly is intolerant of strangeness.

[00:28:48.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Resort people always are, it seems.

[00:28:50.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but it was incredible, because they never did anything to him. Like they never threw him in jail or anything. They would just sort of gently suggest he go home or just leave him alone, you know? But he kind of turned me on to working—not by saying anything, but just because I saw some of the things he did. And I tried to do very direct kind of studies of like, you know, pots and vases or something like that, some of which are not all that bad. And as a matter of fact, I have two paintings here of the place I lived in. Do you want to see?

[00:29:25.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:29:27.38]

MARCIA MARCUS: But I just did whatever I felt like, you know? So it wasn't a question of critical. It was—

[00:29:35.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were just doing—

[00:29:35.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: It was just like trying whatever sort of came to mind, which I think is extremely good. Because basically what—you know, it's like when I teach and people say, like, "How do you paint?" Well, you start painting, then you learn how to paint. Yes, I mean, know, like I never had a teacher like that, and I probably wouldn't have listened if I had. But I just am totally horrified by people who say, you know, like the whole palette, every single color squeezed out, right. Like, why? "Are you going to use them all?" You know? And the students kind of stare at you. "What do you mean by that?" And I said, "Well, if you're not going to use it, what's the point of doing it?"

[00:30:21.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You're wasting it. Yeah.

[00:30:21.75]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. Yeah, a waste. But it was a kind of, I guess, good as a kind of setting the scene for what came later because like, there was no pressure of any kind. I remember when I first went there for my supposed two days and then stayed, I think, a week to start with. I went down to the art store and got four brushes [and three tubes of paint - Ed.], which is all I could afford, and a canvas board, which I hate, but it was cheaper than anything else—and did like a very lousy painting. But it didn't matter, you know. And it was just good that way, you know?

[00:31:04.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what happened in the fall? You came back to New York then?

[00:31:08.19]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. And I had to get a job and, of course, was the worst time to get a job. I was a secretary, I told you, for ten years. That is the worst kind of get—

[00:31:15.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? What kind of times did you have then?

[00:31:17.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: Everything. Because very early on, I decided that I would just do temporary jobs. As a of fact, I fought for and won the right with the state labor board of collecting unemployment insurance after temporary jobs. Luckily, I didn't think to try and do that until I'd already done it for three years, you know, without trying to collect. So I could easily say, "Well, you can see from my employment record," and I went through a whole scene with a stenotypist and someone from the state board and someone local.

[00:31:48.86]

Anyhow, because after trying many different ways over a period of years, nothing was really satisfactory. But this was the least damaging to trying to work. So I would work for about a month and try to save some money. And it was destructive in the sense that it would take me like a week to work into actually working. Then the last week, I'd start getting frantic about not having any money, so I'd have to start looking for a job. So essentially, I only got

about two real weeks out of a month.

[00:32:20.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Of painting. Yeah.

[00:32:21.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: It was still better than [cross talk].

[00:32:21.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you paint on the weekends while you were working?

[00:32:25.29]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I always did. [Dog barking.] I had a boyfriend in '51 who spent almost all his free time in bars. So I did more drawings and bars than probably anyone, except maybe Toulouse-Lautrec, you know. [They laugh.] And, you know, stacks and stacks of things. I have one of those wonderful Waterman Indian pens. And that's about all I did for a while, except a few paintings, which most of which were destroyed by me in the fireplace.

[00:32:58.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. What kind of jobs did you have? I mean, working for anybody, or anything?

[00:33:00.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: Whatever came up. I mean, the first job that I had, which lasted almost a year, was for RKO. And that was absurd beyond belief. I mean, it was absolutely insane. It was the only thing I was really qualified for in a way, because I was the last—I mean, I didn't want to do it, but I was. I mean, now with the perspective of women's lib and my BA in Fine Arts and everything, when I started going around maybe to look for a thing in an art agency or something like that. They said, "Well, if you knew how to type." [Laughs.]

[00:33:35.70]

And of course I didn't. So I enrolled myself in a speed writing course, which I think my ex-husband paid for. It was \$90. Anyway, I was the last in my group to get through the typing course. I do know—after ten years, I finally learned how to type. But it was a little late by then, and I can still type up easily. I mean, you couldn't avoid it. If you do it enough, you can't avoid getting pretty good at it, right?

[00:34:01.72]

But in the beginning I was dreadful. And I had this insane job where mostly in the hour before the boss came in, I would do ballet exercises, because I was taking ballet class. I dusted his desk. And he must have been, what—I don't really remember the term because I haven't read it for so long, but I think anal sadistic where if anything is like a sixteenth of an inch out of line, you freak out. So if I dusted his desk and didn't put the calendar back exactly level with the book into the desk, he would get very upset. And about once every three weeks he would dictate a letter to me at the rate of about five words a minute. So even I could do that. He was weird.

[00:34:43.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did he do?

[00:34:44.08]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, nothing. And eventually they—I finally quit after about a year and started doing temporary or part time things. But I went back to visit a couple people I'd become friendly with. And they reorganized him out of the thing, and he ended up doing something like producing bacon bits. [They laugh.]

[00:35:03.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

[00:35:05.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: For something. Anyway, he didn't really do anything. And my major typing chore was typing labels for the back of publicity photographs. But I did meet who I think must be the same guy whose name I can't remember now, a terrific publicist who I think handled Elizabeth Taylor now, and you can mention the name I'd know it. But I remember, who was the guy who played Tarzan once? Lex Barker?

[00:35:29.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Lex Barker.

[00:35:30.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: He walked in the office one day, my first movie star. [They laugh.] All I remember seeing, he's very large and very clean and tan. He says he—you know, I wasn't too impressed because he was not my favorite movie star, so it didn't matter. But that's about all I did was type labels for the backs of these dumb photographs. And I would—I knitted a lot. And I read a lot [and knitted and did my nails -Ed.] because there was a secretary who was like the basic secretary, and I was like, God knows what, like a semi secretary because there was nothing to do with that whole office.

[00:36:05.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

[00:36:06.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: And there were two guys next door who were very nice who I used to bum cigarettes from who did something a little bit more exotic in terms—Oh, John [Springer], is that a person who was a publicist? Because I think he came once for about a week, and then I really had to work [on the publicity releases. -Ed.]. [They laugh.] And that was very stressful because I wasn't used to it. And the office he used was also the one in which I used to do my ballet exercises.

[00:36:32.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

[00:36:33.88]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it was all right. It was interesting.

[00:36:36.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the part time jobs? Were they of any influence or interest or were they just income producing?

[00:36:41.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: Sometimes I typed drawings. [They laugh.]

[00:36:44.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

[00:36:45.08]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, I think I probably had them in that thing.

[00:36:49.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean, you almost became a concept artist?

[00:36:51.88]



MARCIA MARCUS: I probably was before I knew one—before anyone ever knew. Certainly on a computer, but, you know, I—at that point I didn't do that. But because the job was so boring, I didn't want to use the typewriter any more than I had to because I could hardly type. But it was a very handy job, actually, because, well, it's possible I was fired maybe just before the reorganization. I don't really remember. But I do know that I collected unemployment insurance.

[00:37:19.41]

And it was wonderful to have had that job, because if they sent me out—and this was during '51, which is why I was able to do quite a lot of work. If they sent me out on a job that required a great deal of responsibility, I could say, "Oh, but all I did in my last job was type labels," right? And if they sent me out on a boring job, I could say I really wanted something with more responsibility. And then they would sort of turn me down, like I got very good at doing that, because you can't, you know, turn it down or anything. [It was my informal government subsidy for art. -Ed.]

[00:37:53.56]

But they finally got me because it was one of those conscientious people who feels like you're taking it out of your own pocket. And so she put me on a daily reporting basis. This is when I was on Third Avenue. And I had a marvelous guy that I had to see who understood my situation, but he said, "There's really nothing I can do because when they do that, you really do have to come in every day."

[00:38:12.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:38:13.43]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I decided I might just as well take a job because I had to go there every day anyway. And it would take about two hours to sit there until you saw someone. So it was a waste of time.

[00:38:23.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:38:24.08]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I took a job. But after that, it was pretty cool.

[00:38:27.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were any of the part time jobs useful in any other way than just the income producing?

[00:38:34.16]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, only in the most peripheral kind of way.

[Telephone rings.] [Recorder stops; restarts.]

I can't think of—well, it depended. If I had time, then I could read. And I remember doing a whole series of kind of word drawings based on Gide, who I was very much into. And I think that was—I really not sure. But somewhere during the time I lived on Third Avenue, probably around '53 or so. And I did a number of kind of sketches that incorporated his words in a couple of woodcuts, because somewhere in there I took a course with Frascini at the New School. I didn't last very long because I could never do a color woodcut. If I did do even a two color ones—

[00:39:20.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

[00:39:20.91]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because I can't really think ahead. That's why doing that print for the Olympics was really torture. And I had to do a painting first, because I have no way of conceptualizing something until I do it.

[00:39:32.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you have to put it down for it to exist, really.

[00:39:34.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, so that if I did a color woodcut—and I think I did two—then each part was independent. And they operated as prints on their own, probably better than when the two parts were put together. And that's as far as I got. So, you know, no. [Laughs.] I mean, some people can—

[00:39:53.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do it all in their head.

[00:39:54.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: Are able to think that way, and some people can't.

[00:39:56.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. Well, how did you come to move here, then? Because—

[00:40:01.07]

MARCIA MARCUS: By foot. Well, I at some point—I inherited the lease of the place I moved into. It was a two-story railroad flat with a bar, and on the ground level.

[00:40:17.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was on Third Avenue.

[00:40:18.89]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. And I had moved in and had to buy like in those days, fixtures that would be laughable, you know, like three bookcases for \$75 or something. And I moved in there between 16th and 17th Street where there is a great big ugly white building now, and a tree in front of what used to be my window. And of course, the Third Avenue El was still there when I moved in. And that was like a whole other number. And that did not influence my work except by waking me up early.

[00:40:48.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Your alarm clock.

[00:40:50.87]

MARCIA MARCUS: It was a nightmare. We would never have done an interview because as the train would approach in one direction, you'd have to stop talking because you couldn't hear. And then it would pass. And just as you began talking again, the train would come the other direction, you'd have to stop. [Laughs.] But in any case, I inherited this lease when the person upstairs moved out.

[00:41:13.56]

And I put an ad in the *Voice*. And these two guys showed up one morning, and I had a terrible hangover. And I guess I've always been a sucker, probably as most Americans are, for an English accent. You assume that the person behind it is going to be responsible, intelligent, and all those other things, right? So I leased it to these two guys, and it was a nightmare in a way.

[00:41:37.93]

I am still, well, at least when I see him, I'm sort of friendly with the guy who actually forced

me to leave in a way. But the English guy was just a horror. And he—I mean, he fixed this place up and he had constant parties. And actually, I guess in a way that influenced my work because I remember the party up on the roof. And I sort of based a painting on that during my Abstract Expressionist period.

[00:42:10.53]

But in any case, the other guy who was really okay, but just sort of—he was Black, but he was [inaudible]. [Laughs.] And I remember vividly that whole evening—like, I'd been to an opening. And I remember Paul Jenkins had asked to see my paintings because I knew him vaguely. So he stopped by the loft and I had all my paintings. I dragged out all my paintings and showed him the things. And then we went out to dinner. And then he left.

[00:42:43.00]

And I thought, "Shall I go home now?" And I thought, "No, I'll go to the Cedar," which, depending on how you look at it, was a good or bad idea. So I went down to the Cedar, and I didn't get home until about 11:00. And apparently, possibly while I was still in the house, which was like somewhere between 5:00 and 6:00. This guy had been upstairs, and we had fireplaces in that place where I burned a lot of my early paintings.

[00:43:10.81]

And he had—I mean, [the guys upstairs -Ed.] were totally careless in general. And he had put a log in the fire and then gone out. And I remember leaving the Cedar, walking up Third Avenue and seeing a lot of fire engines. And as I got close, I thought, "Oh, that's my building." And what's interesting is that Angelo Ippolito, who was then going with Marisol, and Marisol was standing outside and saw me, and he said, "It's your building."

[00:43:40.39]

And I went upstairs. And the firemen were their usual selves, like they were terrific, because all my paintings had been out because I'd been showing them. And they had moved whatever they could out. Luckily, someone in the bar who had left had looked up and seen the roof in flames and called the fire department. Otherwise, it could have been a lot worse. Because it must—the firemen, when they came back the next day, said it must have smoldered for hours before anything really happened. That's why I think that he might have been home during the time I was, and it started like that early. And they moved everything gently out of the way. I lost maybe one painting and a chair. But they did steal my camera, which is standard procedure.

[00:44:25.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They always do.

[00:44:25.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: They always do. [Laughs.] Right. And when I got there, they were laughing hysterically because Bob Beauchamp had given me a very pornographic drawing, and they were just in stitches. And I heard someone say, "Shh, here she comes," you know. Anyway, I walked in. And they were really very nice, even though one of them had stolen my camera. And I was very lucky, because a painting I've been working on for two years had been in that room also, and they had moved it into the next room. And even though it's not a terrific painting, it was like a very key thing.

[00:44:58.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which one was that?

[00:44:59.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't think I—I think the Archives has a photograph of it. It's a huge painting. Well, not huge, but for me, it was—four by six—on Masonite. And I'd worked on it for about two years.

[00:45:10.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was it called, do you remember?

[00:45:11.93]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it was a self-portrait. And it sort of had—it was very autobiographical, and very like of my kind of Cubist kind of style, if that's the way to think of it. I mean, I know there's something else I guess I should have told you because that would have been sort of connected with that painting. During the time I was married and studying at Cooper, I met Anthony Tony, who was not a major painter, but whose work you know. And at that point, as I said, I had, you know, a fair amount of money. So I commissioned a portrait because I liked his work. And I got to know him and his wife very well. And they were like my best friends and probably like a cross between friends and parents.

[00:45:57.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Surrogate.

[00:45:58.75]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, right. And so that painting, in a way, was very much influenced by that kind of fractured space that he uses. And, you know, you know, torn up figures or whatever, you know. But actually, that night I stayed at Marisol's place. And then I came back. And then the person who had lived upstairs before that said I could stay with her. And I stayed there for about three weeks while the landlord was deciding whether or not to fix the place up.

[00:46:33.46]

And as you know by now, since I'm still here and only on the verge of moving, I hate moving and I always have, so that I didn't do anything about anything. And then finally one day, I thought—I was going back there every day to work. I could only work during the day because the lights, of course, had been burnt out. And there was a huge hole in the floor. And my mother, who is vaguely psychic—I remember calling her, because—well, I probably didn't keep the phone, or it could have been burnt out.

[00:47:04.20]

And she said, "Well, aren't you afraid?" I said, "I'm going to stay here now because I—it's really ridiculous, like, I can't get any work done. And she said, why aren't you afraid of rats?" And it never even entered my mind. Well, the next morning—I had two kittens at the time. I also had the mother cat who I don't know where she was at the time.

[00:47:23.55]

But I said, I woke up at dawn. And one of the kittens was right beside my head and crouched to spring. And I assumed it was springing at the other kitten, which was about four months old or something. So I put my hand out to push away what would have been the other kitten. But it wasn't. It was a rat, and it bit me.

[00:47:44.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

[00:47:44.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it was the worst experience in my life, and the only time in my life I've ever screamed. And I screamed. And it was six o'clock in the morning. And I didn't know what to do. I mean, it was six o'clock in the morning. So I jumped into the tub while I thought about this. And I was due to go to the unemployment office the next day, actually.

[00:48:07.41]

And I made breakfast, and I'm sitting there, and it ended up biting both hands because when it bit one hand, I put the other hand out to push it away [so it bit both hands -Ed.]. And I wasn't really completely away. So one hand bled a lot, which was good because the poisons were washed away. The other one was barely nicked. And as I was having breakfast, it was just hurting unbelievably. And I went to the unemployment office. And as soon as I got there,

I went into a phone booth and I called a friend of mine and I said, "Do you know a doctor, because I've been bitten by a rat." And he said, "Well, I think you should go to Bellevue, because they would probably know more about it."

[00:48:43.11]

So I think I—by that time I think I had already or maybe I called the lawyer, the same lawyer who changed my name, I don't remember now. But I went to Bellevue, and they were like unbelievably stupid. They sort of gave me a pill, scrubbed the wound, which of course, was already clean because I'd taken a bath for like two hours 'til it was late enough, you know, to get going. And it was throbbing unbelievably.

[00:49:12.52]

And I called the lawyer and told him what had happened. And we sort of he said, "Come down here and sue the landlord." And that—anyway, I went down there and I remember his saying, "Well, come on, I'll take you to lunch." And this was like around noon or something. And he helped me out with my coat. And the coat didn't really even touch my hand, and it was unbelievably excruciating.

[00:49:38.89]

And they had said, like, "If it still hurts or you feel anything, come back in at five." Right. Anyway, he took me out to lunch, and I was in incredible pain. I went back there and it was like an unbelievable scene because I got there like around five. Everyone was eating, or they—I think the people in the ward had already eaten, so I never had dinner that night. None of the doctors were available.

[00:50:02.92]

Anyhow, once they finally got to me, then it became like ridiculous the other way. They'd wake me up at two o'clock in the morning to give me tetanus shots. They had both hands bandaged like a boxer. I mean, one hand was perfectly all right. The other one was just unbelievable. And I was very lucky because they explained to me what could have happened, and which was in the process of happening.

[00:50:28.24]

Like, luckily I got there in time because your muscle can atrophy because the poison does something horrible. Anyway, I spent about three or four days there. And it was really something else. And I was in this enormous ward with everything, like people with amputated feet and young girls with leukemia. And it was just a nightmare. And they're very—they're very conscientious. And I kept trying to tell the doctor that my right hand was fine, or my left hand, I can't remember which was which now. But they insisted on making these enormous bandages, because I think they were practicing and they had to—

[00:51:07.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They do have a lot of those students.

[00:51:08.83]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. So I got up. And I did what you're not supposed to—but I couldn't really bear having people feed me and stuff. So I got up early one morning and unwrapped all the bandages and took a bath myself, which I wasn't supposed to do. And then they got a little bit annoyed, since obviously I couldn't put the bandages back how they had. But you know, I was okay, and I did sue the landlord, which was very good because that paid for the plumbing on this place. [Laughs.]

[00:51:36.13]

And actually, maybe that's where the white painting went. I think that's where the white painting went, when he did that, and I still had to pay. I mean, he still took—I think we won a suit for like \$750 and he took half. Plumbing was a lot cheaper in those days, you know. But in any case, I found this by foot, because I did all the usual things, and then I just started walking. And during the time that I had worked, I lived at Third Avenue, I had taken long walks from time to time.

[00:52:05.47]

And at that point, the neighborhood seemed very colorful because the Puerto Ricans were just beginning to move in. And you get glimpses of bright blue walls and things, and it was all very romantic. And you'd pass through Tompkins Square Park late at night, and there were all these Ukrainians and old Jewish people playing chess and cards, and it was all very exciting. And it was, you know, it wasn't the first place. But I went to lots of places and there was nothing that looked possible.

[00:52:33.76]

And then I saw a sign. And I went up and looked at this, and it was like love at first sight. [They laugh.] And as a matter of fact, I brought two people over who were doing plumbing at the time, one of whom was Al Leslie, and the other one I think was George Spaventa, but I'm not sure. They both said, "Don't take it," because it was too big and it would have been too expensive. But I thought, it's the only place I've seen that seemed worth putting any money in. So I did take it, obviously. And I'm still here. [Laughs.]

[00:53:03.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For a few more days. Incredible. Incredible. So, you know, this now gave you really big studio space to work in? Right?

[00:53:12.85]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I had a studio space on Third Avenue because I took over what was the living room, just as I know when I moved down. You know, it's not ideal—but, I mean, this was ideal in a sense, because, first of all, when I first moved in, I was alone, which is why the living part of this thing is so miserable now, because I divided it roughly into three parts.

[00:53:34.97]

And there was the working studio which is this. Then the kind of rough thing next door which had the racks, eventually. I mean you understand this was all one big empty space to start with. And when I was alone, of course, the living space was enormous. And then I got married and started having kids and it got divided up and subdivided and it was highly unsatisfactory.

[00:54:01.07]

But gradually, like, I don't remember now what happened with it. It was a robbery or a fire or something, but at some point I'd been wanting to change things for a long time. But because of having done certain things to begin with, it's much harder to make drastic changes. And something happened. I can't even remember what it is now, but it was like the excuse for getting rid of the paintings, which allowed me to enlarge the bedroom back there. [A fire next door? -Ed.] And that's when I put everything in Hahn Brothers. So in a sense, like I've been moving for the last seven years. I'm very slow about things. And I have a feeling, I'm not getting out a moment too soon.

[00:54:51.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, you know, this was, what, '55?

[00:54:54.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: '56, when I moved.

[00:54:55.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: '56. And what—

[00:55:00.82]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I was at the other place for about five years.

[00:55:05.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. So '56 was—where? What part of the year did you come in here?

[00:55:08.83]

MARCIA MARCUS: March.

[00:55:09.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In March.

[00:55:09.78]

MARCIA MARCUS: When I finally moved—I don't remember now if I—I think I worked on it for about three weeks until the basic, you know, plumbing was in. And it used to always be very amusing to me when I would come here to do some work on it, and then I'd go to an opening or something, and I would pick my way through the garbage and the dust in my velvet coat to go out to this opening, having washed myself as best I could without a hot water heater or anything as yet installed.

[00:55:40.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, but you were also, you know, spent time on Tenth Street because you did a little later get involved with the March Gallery.

[00:55:47.16]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I was first invited to be in a show on Tenth Street, I think in '53 or '54. I think it was probably after I met Beauchamp. But somewhere in there, I had also met like Alex Katz and a number of people who lived in that building who were not well known like that. But I met them for actually [at a party on 28th Street, where a lot of artists lived. - Ed.]

[00:56:14.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Where did Beauchamp come from? How did you—

[00:56:17.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: I met him through this other guy. [Unmentionable guy -Ed.]

[00:56:18.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

[00:56:19.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because—I met him on a subway station, actually, because he knew him, and I thought, my God, you know, he's terribly young if he still does all these—

[00:56:30.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They all work that way.

[00:56:30.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, and we sort of got together New Year's Eve at The Club. [They laugh.]

[00:56:39.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: One of those great bacchanals.

[00:56:40.84]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, it's one of those bacchanals.

[00:56:42.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, now where did Leslie and Katz and that—

[00:56:47.20]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was very funny because I had a boyfriend in 1953. And somehow for—at least while I was single, it always seemed to be that in the summer, I would get these terribly boring boyfriends, but they always had cars, which was very nice for going to the beach. And I remember going into the Roko Gallery one day with this guy. [Mike] had a frame shop in the back. And this is all going to be—oh, I wouldn't mind this part because he's such a horrible person, it doesn't matter.

[00:57:24.24]

Anyway, I stuck my head in the back for a second to look at the frame shop because I knew Mike fairly well by that time, because I had shown there the first time. And during the period I lived in the Village, I saw him from time to time. And this guy who I'd never seen before, looks up and said, "I'm having a going away party, you know, like blah, blah, will you come?" And later I found out he thought it was wonderful the way I had swept into this gallery with this guy in my wake. [They laugh.] Anyway, that turned out to be Charlie Dubeck. Anyhow, so I went over there to the party.

[00:58:01.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where has Charlie disappeared to?

[00:58:02.85]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, he disappeared into the Landmark. Richard calls that "the graveyard of artists." [They laugh.] He's a very gentle soul. Anyway, he won't go to openings there anymore because he tends to sit on the floor and wait for me to leave. Would you believe? This is another terrible thing. Can I put it in a total digression?

[00:58:24.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure.

[00:58:24.63]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, you know Matilda?

[00:58:26.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Matilda?

[00:58:28.23]

MARCIA MARCUS: Lowe. [In accent] You don't know Matilda, darling? How could you miss Matilda, darling, all these years, darling?

[00:58:33.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know.

[00:58:34.66]

MARCIA MARCUS: You don't know Matilda Lowe? Anyway, apparently she hated me because she heard I was going with something much younger, because her son, her adopted son was going with someone only five years older. But she still hated me for the whole idea. So in the last year or something, I was at an opening with Richard. And Richard was sitting on the floor because he can't stand that place.

[00:58:57.04]

And Matilda saw me. And of course, she didn't know that someone had told me she was hating me for this thing. She said, [in accent] "Oh, darling, I hear you have a new young boyfriend, where is he?" So I said, "Over there." She forces me to take me over to him, makes him stand up and take his hat off and turn around [to inspect him -Ed.]. [They laugh.]



[00:59:18.96]

Oh, she's incredible. I mean, she's like another one with a whole bunch of stories. She is really something else. Anyhow, so this turned out to be Charlie. So I met Jean Cohen, who you probably know. And they were all living in the same building, because of course, at that point she was married to Alex. And Charlie and Blackie Langlais, and I don't remember who else I met that night, but I probably—well, probably Bill, I think I knew Bill King already. No, I met him later.

[00:59:48.84]

Well, I probably met them all like the same time because they were, you know, it was a going away party for Charlie. He knew all those people. Anyhow. So I sort of gradually gotten to know more and more people. And I don't remember who first invited me to show on Tenth Street. It could have been Bob, or it could have been Alex, or Jean, or anybody, you know, who was involved there.

[01:00:12.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So some of were involved with the Tanager and things like that?

[01:00:14.43]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the thing is, at that point I was around, so that I was invited. Well, there weren't that many galleries, really. I mean, there was the Tanager, basically at first.

[01:00:24.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. And then the March.

[01:00:25.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: Which was one of the things that was incredible about Tom Wolfe's article. I don't remember what part, but he got that completely bollaxed up. And that was so easy. I mean, that really didn't require much research to know which came first, or which was there like forever. But somehow I got involved with March. I don't even remember how. And that's where I had my first show in '57.

[01:00:48.23]

But something interesting happened when I moved here, in a way. Like all during '55, I had jobs. And I did a whole series of paintings based on the buildings—I was working uptown mostly. And I guess I must have done it like straight off the top of my head, because it was a very expressionistic time for me. Like, I was painting things purely out of like visual recollection. So I did a whole series of paintings, partly based on lovers, partly on, you know, there were some buildings and a whole bunch of stuff like that.

[01:01:30.61]

And then I moved over here. And the first painting I ever did was a big painting of a [ship - Ed.], because at that point I had a job. I guess—yes, it did influence me. [They laugh.] See, I had like a [temporary -Ed.] job working for a lawyer, but I had a fantastic window overlooking the Hudson on Liberty Street or something. And I remember this—what may have been the Liberté or one of those. [And I knew people leaving that day. -Ed.] And I did a big painting of that. And it was here that I really started. Well, I did—I did then, too. But it was more like I became myself, because I remember very actively—Are you watching the time?

[END OF TRACK AAA\_marcus75\_8068\_m]

[00:00:04.42]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side 4. Okay. You were saying—

[00:00:09.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: I've forgotten.

[00:00:10.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —about this.

[00:00:12.37]

[It was in this studio that I said, "If I can't be de Kooning, I'd better figure out who I am," probably 1957. -Ed.]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. No, something really important happened here. I lost it, the painting, which is okay. But about the third or fourth painting I did when I was here, [undoubtedly much later -Ed.] I remembered de Kooning came by, and he looked at it and said, "Oh, that's very good. [Don't touch it. -Ed.]" And I did something that was totally different than what I've been doing for two or three years before, or whatever it was, and I felt as if it was a kind of tapestry in a sense. Like, it started at one end, and I worked my way down to the other [corner -Ed.], right? And it was [a figure -Ed.], you know, not from anything—

[00:00:53.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, did you start like that, or did you draw first and then paint?

[00:00:57.37]

MARCIA MARCUS: I don't remember. I think I probably just started painting, and I just—but it was different. It wasn't like the sweeping brushstroke thing like before. It just started at one end and ended up at the other end. And he thought it was very good, but as I said, I don't listen to anybody, right, [laughs] even de Kooning. And so then I overlaid that particular painting with all the stuff I'd been doing before, and then I looked at it, like, a week or so later, whatever. I looked at it again. And then I very consciously said to myself, "Well, I'll never be de Kooning, so I'd better start thinking about, what do I do?" So it was crucial. [I scared myself—it was so different. -Ed.] I mean, I've kept that somewhere, rolled up in that closet. But the original thing is somewhere way underneath it.

[00:01:53.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Layered. Yeah.

[00:01:53.95]

MARCIA MARCUS: I suppose even if you used X-ray photography, you might not even be able to see what was there to start with. But I remembered—actually, this is another digression—back to when I was staying with my friend on 12th Street, after the fire, [Bill] came by one day, and he said something. Well, he said lots of things. I mean, he'd go on for hours about—you know, he was going through all that horrible stuff, and that—

[00:02:21.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What horrible stuff?

[00:02:21.71]

MARCIA MARCUS: —with Joan, when she was pregnant and his whole feeling about that, and he was very freaked out about it, partially because Pollock kept needling and saying, "Are you sure it's yours, Bill? It could be mine." You know, the whole thing like that.

[Even when I was on Third Avenue, I remember his saying how Nancy Ward kept pushing for him to divorce Elaine and marry Joan and he said it wouldn't be so bad (the pregnancy) if they'd just shut up. -Ed.]

[00:02:36.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Yeah.

[00:02:39.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: But I remember his talking about Pollock and how important he was to all

of them, meaning those particular painters.

[00:02:48.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. And what kind of things?

[00:02:49.49]

MARCIA MARCUS: And he said he really made a breakthrough. He broke the ice, is the way he put it, and I'm sure he's put it in many interviews that way, unless he was hating him that particular moment. [They laugh.] But he said it was a breakthrough. And I don't know whether he said it or I thought it while he was talking about it, and I thought, well, actually, anything you do is okay if it works. And there was a great deal of freedom in that, and it came back to me months later when I was here, with that particular painting, that anything is—

[00:03:23.96]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let me ask you a question. You said that it works. Now, that, to me, has always been a term of the '50s and early '60s, and you don't hear it—

[00:03:31.69]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, maybe I'm stuck there. [Laughs.]

[00:03:33.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but you don't hear it so much anymore in that context.

[00:03:37.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because paintings are not intended to be looked at anymore.

[00:03:41.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just written about. [Laughs.]

[00:03:42.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, you know. I mean, I suppose it has to do with a particular age, because even phrases go out of fashion.

[00:03:50.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what does that mean to you at that point, if someone says, "Yeah, that really works?"

["It works" is a way of avoiding using composition and color, and separating those words from the actuality of painting, which is all those things and more. "It works, it's there."]

[00:03:52.63]

MARCIA MARCUS: What it meant to me was that when I had loused up this painting, and then I thought of how he was impressed with it when he saw it in its first and only real stage, in terms of me, then I thought—I mean, there's a point at which a painting can be changed and it can't be made any better. It's either there or it's not there, and that, to me, is like when it works. Like, it's there. And that's like a quality that I've always wanted.

[00:04:29.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean, there are no more changes, there's nothing you want to do, or —

[00:04:31.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, you can make changes, but it's not going to make it any better.

[00:04:35.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah-ha.

[00:04:35.78]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, you can make it different, but you can't really make it any better. Like, it has achieved whatever kind of balance or whatever you want to call it, because I tend to avoid trying to be too specific, because I really don't know how you can say that. It's like a thing you feel. You know, this is—we talked about that with Courbet's "Studio." In terms of a description of a kind of painting, you'd think, it can't be done. It's too sentimental, and it's too ridiculous.

[00:05:03.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:05:04.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: But his passion carries it off. You know, and in a sense, Mondrian is the same way, because if it wasn't for his intense involvement in the way two things come together, he couldn't carry that off either. I mean, just think of the people who copy him—like, Burgoyne Diller is, to me, one of the most boring people that ever existed, you know.

[00:05:28.79]

So it's not simply a question of dividing the space and finding colors that do something. It's more than that, you know. So it's really the intensity with which you express what you personally care about that's important. That works. That's when—you know. I mean, how else could Pollock carry that off? I mean, that's a totally different thing, and it works. You stand there and you're mesmerized by it, the way you should be by a great painting. That works. That's what—I don't know—there's a freedom about it, because it means that whatever you want to do is okay.

[00:06:07.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

Anyway, now, let's talk about your first show at the March, which was in '57. That was a co-op gallery, wasn't it?

[00:06:18.19]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, the largest co-op [laughs] gallery that ever existed—[They laugh.]

[00:06:22.07]

[Sirens sounding.]—which can—[Horns honking.] Oh, I want to move. Okay.

[00:06:29.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you—somebody asked you to join the group, right, the March.

[00:06:33.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, somehow. [Probably Felix Pasilis, who started it. I was a charter member. -Ed.]

[00:06:35.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And what did you think? You know, here it was the group were something. How did they decide who would have the show when?

[00:06:44.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh. Well, I don't know. [They laugh.] It just—I mean, being that it confirmed everything I've always felt about belonging to a group, which I had never done to that point—I very briefly, I think, wanted to be a Girl Scout once. My mother wouldn't let me.

[00:07:00.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the March Gallery came along.

[00:07:03.17]

MARCIA MARCUS: And—yes. And the few meetings I went to were exactly what I thought they would be, which was impossible, and I was sort of always in the middle because I never really—all I wanted to do was show because I felt at that point— [Sirens sounding.]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:07:22.16]

Well, I have no idea how I got scheduled [dog barking] for the show. I do know that there were certain little that happened which are interesting. [Splits down the middle on policy between Pat and Felix. -Ed.] And as I said, Capricorns never forget. And I remember once being very furious because I was doing a lot of pastels, and I had a very—not a very large thing, but larger than they wanted for their Christmas show. And there had been another invitational at some other point, and I put it in something very small because that's what I wanted to put in at that point. And this was another one.

[00:08:00.42]

Then I remember the first show, there was a large Norman Bluhm, at least as big as the one I put in the Christmas show, if not larger, and he was not a member. He was a guest, right? And I got to the opening for the Christmas thing, and my thing was not on the wall. It had been taken down by one Ray Spillenger, now more or less departed from the scene.

[00:08:23.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [They laugh.] I haven't heard that name in years.

[00:08:27.45]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, well, I hadn't seen him for ages. And I was furious because I thought, okay, so you have a limitation, but the fact was, that that wasn't that big. They had put in some at least as big by the guest. I had put in something very small the time before, and there ought to be some allowance for what you want to show at a particular point, because there is a variety. You know, you usually stay within the limits. But if I wanted to show something slightly larger, no one had the right, especially since it was me, to take it off, and especially without telling me.

[00:09:02.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:09:02.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, so I arrive there and don't even have the choice of saying, "Well, okay, I'll bring it in something smaller." But in any case, I had a show, which has a review that's hysterical if you'd like to put it in the record, because when I did the bibliography, I came across it. And it was written by Edith Schloss, then-Burkhardt.

[00:09:20.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

[00:09:21.75]

MARCIA MARCUS: And do you want to read it into the record, or is it not necessary?

[00:09:24.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, if it's printed, we can find it, yeah.

[00:09:27.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, hysterically funny. Anyhow, I thought [the show -Ed.] was very good. Nothing, I need hardly say, happened, because people hardly ever sold things in those days except under the most unusual circumstances.

[00:09:41.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Once in a while, \$50 or something.

[00:09:44.98]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. But it was interesting because I remember something like being there one day and Kerkan walked in. And you know how he'd go, [hums] and he sort of stalked up and down the gallery, looked at me, nodded, and went out, you know. [Laughs.] But he was obviously impressed, and a lot of people, mind you.

[00:10:07.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think, in retrospect, of being a part of that gallery, and the Tenth Street situation in those days, meant or produced? Or did it do anything for you, or—

[00:10:18.59]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, for me personally?

[00:10:19.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:10:21.29]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I think—I really don't know in terms of—like, how can you measure something like that? I mean, interesting things happened.

[Now it seems like the start of a natural progression from young artist to going uptown with the community of artists surrounding almost the only possibility of showing—a place for people. To see your work before reaching the maturity to move uptown out into the larger world—step by step.]

[00:10:32.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, was it successful, or—

[00:10:32.37]

MARCIA MARCUS: Like, I remember that—I told you I hired that guy to pose for me once, right?

[00:10:38.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:10:38.30]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I wanted to put that drawing in a show, and Pat Passlof said, "I don't think you should do that," because it was a nude, and whoever did a male nude?

[00:10:46.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In those days.

[00:10:46.77]

MARCIA MARCUS: In those days.

[00:10:47.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:10:48.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I thought, but I want that to go in. And she said, "Well, there might be a lot of flack," or whatever she said. And I said, "Well, if I go down, I want to go down fighting, you know, on my terms." Like, I want that drawing in there because I thought it was a terrific drawing and I still do.

[00:11:02.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you put it down?

[00:11:03.29]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Of course. [Cross talk.] Do you think I would've allowed anyone to tell me what to do? [They laugh.]

[00:11:08.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I wonder why she was so against it.

[00:11:12.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because she's really basically a conventional person [and was worried about police and bum reaction, and of course nothing happened. -Ed.]. I mean, I like her a lot, and she is my semi-astrologer because she's very into it. And actually, unless something drastically wrong goes on, everything's working out about a month sooner than it's supposed to, because everything's supposed to be, in general, like under a pall until December, and for Capricorns, even more so. I mean, Milton [her husband -Ed.] is a Capricorn. She's surrounded by—

[00:11:39.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: By them, yeah.

[00:11:40.68]

MARCIA MARCUS: So she's almost a Capricorn expert by—[laughs]

[00:11:43.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, you know, what do you think of the whole ambiance? Because I remember that if it was a Friday night, all the galleries would have openings, at one point, and there would be a lot of people and milling about.

[00:11:54.96]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I think it was very important. I mean, for me it was, because part of—well, just to be frank, when I went to the club and stuff like that, I wasn't interested in the art or the discussions. I was interested in the guys. You know, like—

[00:12:10.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where's the action? [Laughs.]

[00:12:11.19]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, where's the—exactly. That's where the action is.

[00:12:15.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:12:15.93]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, and now it's very diffused. I mean, I'm not looking for anybody at the moment, so. But that's really not even it. You know, and it's really the purpose that I'd go to SoHo most of the time, is just to see people, except that you don't—it's not the same feeling. I mean, maybe for the younger artists, it is.

[00:12:36.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you differentiate? Because I find SoHo terribly different.

[00:12:41.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it's different because there is not a place to go. And I think for us it's impossible because we can't walk into the Spring Street Bar and see maybe more than two or three familiar faces, and we usually—it's not the same kind of easy, interchangeable social scene. Going to the Cedar was like going to a party.

[00:12:59.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, all the time.

[00:12:59.87]

MARCIA MARCUS: You had to buy your own drinks, but you knew almost everybody, or you could talk to people. And even though other people thought it was a very male chauvinist crowd, I was luckily insulated by my stupidity, so that I felt completely free there. And I remember once, somebody did an article on it, which, of course, was like the worst thing they could do to anything that's functioning, and it was hysterical because—like, I went with—when Lee lived downstairs, we had a roommate.

[00:13:34.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

[00:13:35.29]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right, who you probably don't know. But anyway, she and I went to—

[00:13:39.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

[00:13:40.92]

MARCIA MARCUS: Willie Van Ness, Wilhelmina Van Ness.

[00:13:43.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:13:43.56]

MARCIA MARCUS: Actually, I saw her a couple years ago. And we went to the movies, I think, and afterwards, we went in there. And she was really like a scared rabbit. I was not, because I was used to that scene. I mean, this was rather late. This was like maybe '58 or '59. And I mean, I might have even been married by that time. I don't even remember. And it was absurd. Some horrible college kid came over. And we were sitting in one of those two-seat tables, right, and we were talking.

[00:14:13.83]

And this guy came over and said, you know, my name is "blah." And we looked at him, and first—I mean, she didn't say anything because she was totally freaked out. But at first, I started joking him away, and then it didn't work. And I said, "We really don't want to talk to you." [They laugh.] Like, we're not here to be picked up. And he was just startled and hurt, because he had read this thing and he thought all he had to do was walk in and he could talk to anybody he felt like. And it was—I felt totally free there.

[00:14:45.57]

I have met women my own age who could not go there and who did feel odd. One was Black, so maybe she had that extra problem to deal with. But I have known other people who did go there and felt that it was a terrifically male chauvinist crowd, and think that I'm incredibly dense for not having recognized it.



[00:15:05.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I think that's in retrospect, though. I don't think anybody at the time —

[00:15:09.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, no, well, they claim they knew it at the time. At the time, as I told you before, I knew there were these guys who felt—you know, Felix Pasilis was like that. Paul Georges was certainly—although, I don't remember him being around the Cedar so much, just maybe at openings. But you just knew that they preferred that women didn't pick up a brush or sculpt or anything, you know.

[00:15:32.97]

But those were not my friends, and I never felt that, because if I was invited to a Stable annual or something, obviously ten out of ten times, it was by some guy who knew my work, you know. And the only feminist meeting I ever went to, which was rather hysterical— [it started as a writers' group [...] artists to be invited. Needless to say, the artists took [...] the writers were obviously not thrilled. -Ed.] I remember Elaine de Kooning being there and saying something very interesting which, of course, had never occurred to me. And she said that at the Stable shows, there were about forty percent women artists represented, and then when it got to be like an uptown gallery scene, the number dropped to maybe ten percent of women represented in the gallery.

[00:16:14.11]

So the economic thing made a great deal of difference. And I'm sure a lot of the experiences I had had to do with that, because unless you were somebody exotic or in some way connected, whatever variation or possibility that means, then probably most of the rejections I got had a lot to do with my being female, which at the time I didn't realize, and I'm glad I didn't, because I think if I thought there was something [outside of myself -Ed.] that I couldn't cope with, I would've given up. But the fact was you could always find someplace, you know, [to show your work. -Ed.]

[It was crucial that there was a big show at St. Mark's in the Bowery. I was sitting my turn, and a couple came in and started talking to me. They turned out to be Sally and Milton Avery. Next summer by lovely accident, I lived next door to them in Provincetown and we became friends. The piece in had in their show was a wax model of a horse and sold for \$30.

[00:16:51.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that still seems to be true.

[00:16:52.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: Hmm?

[00:16:54.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, if somebody wants to show, they're going to—somebody'll pick them up. They'll find a place here and there.

[00:16:58.79]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, because the gallery is less discriminatory than when you get to the museum scene, and certainly less than when you get to the school scene, which has opened up only out of necessity, you know, so that it's—I mean, it didn't bother me. It was very useful, so.

[00:17:15.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just wanted to talk about some of the exhibitions, as long as we started on the March. You had a show at the famous Delancey Street Museum.

[00:17:22.71]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was much later.

[00:17:24.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was in the '60s, yeah.

[00:17:24.51]

MARCIA MARCUS: That was '60s. And actually, when I did the bibliography, I discovered a lot of shows that I'd completely forgotten I was in. They were little galleries like the Fleischman, the Nonagon, and I was in a four-man show at the time [laughs] at the Fleischman—

[00:17:39.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:17:40.20]

MARCIA MARCUS: —and then, I think, a two or three-person show at the Nonagon. One of them was Bob [Beauchamp], I remember, and that pleased me because we've always remained friends.

[00:17:49.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what about Beauchamp? Because you've been friendly with him for a long, long time.

[00:17:53.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I've been kicking him in the ass for the last few months because he's very discouraged. I mean, he's very good. And I actually stopped over there a couple of weeks ago and saw his new work. I'm not totally crazy about it. I think it's sort of toned down. But he's very discouraged because he sort of missed the boat in a way, just the way I feel I have to a certain extent. But I'm finally realizing that there are a lot of things I can do.

[00:18:24.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean, in terms of—

[00:18:26.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, considering the number of people I've known for the same period of time, more or less, who've become really quite rich and famous, in terms of quality of work, he certainly should be among them, and I think I should also.

[00:18:47.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I always find it interesting, because he's highly respected amongst a very broad range of artists, but somehow the dealers have been very unsuccessful with him.

[00:18:58.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it's—a lot of people can't cope with him. Like, I was with Charles Alan for a very long time, and at that point, Bob had a gallery. So there was no question about it, and he wouldn't have wanted to go down anyway. But I know—I can't remember now which, either Charles hated it or Howard hated it. And I can't remember now, but one of them absolutely hated it. And then much later, when he had his show at Graham, there was someone with whom I become friendly who bought a few drawings and paintings of mine, and I wanted her, of course, to go there. And she loved the drawings, and she couldn't cope with the paintings, and probably didn't buy a drawing simply because she couldn't cope with the paintings. [They since bought a very powerful self-portrait. -Ed.]

[00:19:42.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Still the—yeah, the same kind of reaction, still the—

[00:19:43.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but he's a Scorpio, like Picasso. It's a very rough image to deal with, like Richard, too. There's a kind of crazy image. I don't like to get too astrological, but apparently, I've become more and more so and it annoys a lot of people. But there is—you know, and I read the biography of Picasso by one of his ex-mistresses. Aside for maybe a certain male chauvinism, which has probably more to do with his being Spanish than Scorpio, there were some similarities, I mean, to Richard, that were hysterical, you know, like the messiness, the incredible disorder, and this crazy kind of image, except that Richard is a much steadier, emotional kind of person. Well, I suppose Picasso was steady for the time that he was interested in, you know, but there is a kind of crazy image. It's not like other people's mainstream kind of things, like I—

[00:20:42.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:20:43.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: But he also doesn't do things. He could easily have a show at the Everson, for example. And I even spoke to Ron about it when I went up to my opening, and all Bob has to do is write a letter. And instead, he says things like, "Well, it's just a lot of hassle and you do all this negotiating and it ties up your paintings for a long time," and blah, blah. But the fact is, it does get a lot of publicity.

[00:21:06.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, that's [inaudible].

[00:21:07.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: But the fact is, it looks good on a resume. It looks good as another credit even if you don't sell anything. You sort of—at least you're doing something and keeping things active. You know. And, I mean, at least I got him to the point of writing a couple of letters about visiting artist jobs, because he needs the money.

[00:21:28.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:21:31.80]

MARCIA MARCUS: But he sort of—I don't know. But I think he's not as bad as he was last year. He was totally depressed. But it's sad. But you can—I mean, when you think of the people you know, who are really kind of rotten and they're rolling in dough—[Laughs.]

[00:21:52.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Doesn't that happen, a lot?

[00:21:54.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I prefer not to die like Rembrandt, thank you very much.

[00:21:59.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But what did—you know, what did, a show at the Delancey Street offer in those days, I mean, 1960?

[00:22:07.83]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that's very specific because that was like the beginning of anything that happened to me, in a sense, because first of all, Red [Grooms] had already achieved a certain amount of fame in general, but that wasn't the reason. I mean, I happened to have known him for some time.

[00:22:30.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you met him in Provincetown?

[00:22:32.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. In '58. And he had already seen a painting of mine, and he liked it very much. And we became friends, and I still see him. And he was the best—he didn't do this haircut because he's been too busy on that New York project for about a year or so, but he was the best hair cutter I ever had. [Laughs.]

[00:22:51.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:22:52.45]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the first time, he did such a fantastic job that people really turned around in the street to look at me. [It was like a perfect bubble. -Ed.]

[00:22:56.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

[00:22:58.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: I mean, he really did. I mean, aside from it being more fun, obviously, than going to a hairdresser, because most people can't cut my hair very well, he did a terrific job. You know, it's not easy to deal with this. [They laugh.]

[00:23:16.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I didn't know he had a profession on the side like that.

[00:23:20.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, he doesn't cut that many people's hair, and especially now, when he doesn't have any time. But you know, like he enjoys it because it's like working on a sculpture, you know, and it doesn't have to be done too often, usually. But no, it really opened up everything. I mean, for one thing, by that time I was married, which was a great steadying influence on my life, not just because I went out a lot before [and had to have jobs -Ed.], but also because that's what I wanted. And that meant that I stayed home and I worked consistently, and I guess it was the second personal show I had. I don't think I had another one.

[00:23:59.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. [Inaudible]

[00:24:00.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, because you—Right. I mean, my mind is becoming blank in certain areas now.

[00:24:05.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] All over.

[00:24:06.89]

MARCIA MARCUS: Okay. What happened was that I had the show, and he had already achieved a following on his own terms because of the happening. I mean, I even did one there, you know.

[00:24:24.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah?

[00:24:24.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, I was highly pregnant when I did it. I climbed up on—I mean, he had this place that had a whole bunch of boxing photographs. I think it had been some kind of—

[00:24:33.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Weightlifter.

[00:24:33.99]

MARCIA MARCUS: —a strong person, I guess.

[00:24:35.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

[00:24:35.61]

MARCIA MARCUS: I don't know. Anyway, I turned it into—I mean, I did what I called The Ballet, and I think it was quite good. Unfortunately, I only have one photograph of it because it never even occurred to me to record it at the time. And that was taken by Fred McDarrah, and I didn't even know he took it until he used it in an article. [They laugh.]

[00:24:54.71]

And I've been trying to get anything else he might've taken since then, trying to get a real photograph of it. But I had the show there, and at some point—oh, I know. It was like—Well, okay, this is a perfect example of how something can work, right? In the winter before I had the show, I had been friendly with someone who used to sit in the Tanager, whose last name I can't remember now. But her first name was Enid, and she was English.

[00:25:22.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Furlonger.

[00:25:22.92]

MARCIA MARCUS: What?

[00:25:23.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Furlonger.

[00:25:23.76]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. That's right. What happened to her?

[00:25:25.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: She lives on 13th Street.

[00:25:26.95]

MARCIA MARCUS: Really? Oh. Anyhow, she was going away, and as usual, I was broke. [Laughs.] I'm always broke. It doesn't matter. It's just at different levels, but I'm always broke. Anyway, she called me up, knowing I was broke, and it was from time to time, I would ask her if anything was going on in the way of group shows I could be in and things like that. And she called me up and said, would you like to sit in the gallery for either a week or two, when she was going on Christmas vacation to visit somebody. And before that, somewhere in—I guess the show opened in December at the Gramercy Arts Club, but the junior division, which must be about 90 as opposed to 202—[They laugh.]

[00:26:20.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:26:21.61]

MARCIA MARCUS: —had asked about ten to twelve artists to recommend three artists each for this show, and I was recommended by Milton Avery. And I went to that opening and did a painting that I'd done in the summer—I mean, I put in a painting that I had done the summer before. And during the time that I was sitting in at the Tanager for Enid, she told me

that John Bauer would be coming in to look at a work of Pearl Fine's. I don't remember now if it was a drawing or painting.

[00:26:55.24]

And he came in on the day he was supposed to, and I showed him the painting. And he knew who I was because she had apparently said, "Marcia Marcus will be sitting there." And he said, "I just saw a painting of yours, and I liked it very much." We shook hands, and he looked at the painting, and took it or whatever he did with it. I don't remember. Okay. End of, like, phase 1 of the total operation, because even now, although I've become more active in the determination of my own career, I can really only do what's comfortable. So this is important that he'd come in and said he liked my work.

[00:27:34.81]

Anyhow, I had the show [at Delancey -Ed.] scheduled for April, and it went up. I was, by that time, extremely pregnant, and I had to sit in the gallery because Red, of course, wasn't there. And I knew that the Young Whitney thing was coming up, and I wrote to [Bauer -Ed.] and said, something like, "You seem to be interested in the painting you saw, blah, blah, blah, and I'm having a show now. Will you come by?" And I sat there. The first week, I sat there from time to time, and nobody came in until, like, the evening or on Saturdays. So finally, I thought, oh, this is ridiculous, [laughs] you know, because I didn't know when I'd be carted away, and I'd better get as much work done as possible, because there was no phone there either.

[00:28:25.09]

So I was here working, and the phone rang. And it was him, and he said, "I've tried to find it a couple of times, and I can't." [They laugh.] So I said, "Okay, I'm not far from there," and I told him how to get there. And I went down and met him and he looked at the show, and then, indeed, I was carted away. And I got a letter while I was in the hospital saying that I had been chosen to be in the [1960] Young [American] Whitney show. And then, of course, it all went pow, and it was like winning a Monopoly game, because we went away for the summer with no money, as usual. And we got back to New York, I think, on ten borrowed dollars.

[00:29:10.22]

And we arrived at the opening looking fantastic, of course, but with three dollars in Terry's pocket. And I walked in and got off the elevator, and there was John Bauer, and I don't know who else. And there were my paintings right outside the elevator. And he came over to me and he said, "We've already sold two paintings." And I think the third, someone had bought one for the museum, and there was a painting of the dunes that I didn't want to sell. And then finally, the woman who was interested came down here, and she was pregnant. And she was very nice. [Laughs.]

[00:29:47.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good. [Laughs.]

[00:29:47.56]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I sold it. So I ended up selling, like, the three or four paintings that I had in the show. I don't remember now how many there were. And after that, all kinds of things happened. You know, Hirshhorn came down and covered this place from back to front, and Terry was building a room for one of the kids. My mother was here, and on the way upstairs, he told me about how his mother worked in a handbag factory. And he bought two paintings, one of which he later returned. But he walked back and forth three times, stayed for a cup of coffee, paced back and forth, bought the paintings, and then informed me that he'd better go because the cab was waiting. [They laugh.]

[00:30:29.01]

And he had to take his kids to lunch or something. But then all kinds of people started calling me up, and it just was like an explosion, because when people started buying paintings—and then I had a show at a gallery which will be nameless forever because I made a very bad

mistake. Hirshhorn, when he left, said I should go with Charles Alan, which didn't please me because I always found the place depressing, and I did all the time I was there. But obviously, that was probably why Charles took me, because of that recommendation, eventually.

[00:31:03.76]

But in the meantime, I didn't want to go there, and someone else offered me a show. And it was a new gallery, and I thought, well, maybe that'll be good. I now know that that is not good. Better to go with an old, established firm, unless it's something extraordinary with some kind of backing, whatever. Anyway, they really screwed up, even though Hirshhorn bought a lot of paintings and they did sell some things.

[00:31:28.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you eventually went to Alan very soon thereafter, didn't you?

[00:31:31.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, because I lasted at that place only through the summer, because they were really impossible.

[00:31:39.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like Charles, I mean, as a dealer and everything?

[00:31:42.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: Charles really did—the person who really did anything with my work, I found out later. At the time, I really didn't know. Later, I found out it was really Howard Rose who actually did the selling. Charles was impossible in many ways. On the other hand, he was impeccably honest, and I couldn't get really angry at him the way I have with other dealers because he was always open. Like, if he didn't like something, he told me. If I didn't like something, I told him. And it was like that. And once, I remember wanting—other than his usual crummy announcement, which he had because he liked picking up an announcement he could put in his pocket, right?

[00:32:25.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And would fit in the mailbox without getting bent, folded, spindled, mutilated. [Laughs.]

[00:32:30.62]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. Okay, but I wanted something more impressive. [It was the wild '60s. -Ed.] And I remember having a little altercation with him about that for my next show. And Howard muttered under his breath, "Go take a walk in the park, I'll fix it." [Laughs.] So I went and took a walk in the park, and we had some horrible compromise, which is that announcement over there, the double.

[00:32:50.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: With the [inaudible], yeah.

[00:32:52.27]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, like the second one down, which is not what I wanted, but it was better than his thing, at least. I mean, at least you could see the paintings. But the thing was, he let everything [the publicity -Ed.] go down the drain, and I was too dumb to realize that I should take an active interest. And he did a lot of bad things that ruined my career. Like, when I went and did the bibliography, there was all this until about 1963, so that must have been like the residue of the Whitney thing. Then there was this desert until about 1970 or '71, and he didn't believe in things like publicity. I found out—

[00:33:31.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or advertising, or—yeah.

[00:33:33.19]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, and he was very rude to people. I mean, I remember once going up there with Bob Thompson, who I'd met on Madison Avenue. And he sort of looked out with his usual glare, and I said, "He's with me." "Oh. Mm." And it wasn't just because he was Black, because he did that with everybody. [Laughs.]

[00:33:52.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know. I know. You were—

[00:33:54.51]

MARCIA MARCUS: You know, he'd look down with a glare.

[00:33:56.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were always interrupting something mysterious.

[00:33:59.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. Right. So then he—his manner was totally unfriendly. And I found out things like someone had bought a painting of mine and they'd wanted to meet me, which is normal and natural. And I found that out through another dealer because I was beginning to get dissatisfied, and then contacted someone else. And that dealer brought these people up to meet me.

[00:34:19.66]

You know, and I thought, okay, so he doesn't want to set up a meeting, but if someone wants to meet me, the least he could do is tell me about it and let me make that choice. And I found out [later—too late –Ed.] there was someone in Boston who wanted to show my work. And he said, "Well, there isn't enough work to go around," which might be okay, but it's bad in long terms, because then if things die down in New York, at least there's some other outlet. And at least I should have that choice of knowing that somebody was interested.

[00:34:46.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. He was also sort of mother-hennish about some of these people, too.

[00:34:50.23]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, he's mother-hennish about everybody. You know, but on the other hand, I was devastated when I heard he committed suicide. And I spoke to Howard about it at a party, actually, last summer. And he felt very badly, except that apparently Charles had called Wolf so often that this particular time Howard said, "I just can't go up there another time." And he was always being depressed, and you didn't know which was up or anything. But, I mean, there couldn't have been a more honest, fair person.

[00:35:25.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened to Howard?

[00:35:27.24]

MARCIA MARCUS: He's just writing, as far as I know.

[00:35:29.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. Yeah. I thought had seen—

[00:35:30.30]

MARCIA MARCUS: Maybe he's working someplace. I should know.

[00:35:32.49]



PAUL CUMMINGS: He used to be a Kennedy for a while, but he's not—

[00:35:34.38]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but he was [inaudible]. But he really did me in, in a way. Well, I did myself in by not realizing that I shouldn't have left myself in his hands, because everything that he believed in was counter to keeping me current. And that's why I got left out of so much, and still am, for that matter. You know, they've had self-portrait shows all last year. I wasn't in one of them. And if I'm known for anything, [laughs] you know?

[The whole subject of self-portraits is irrelevant to me. These are basic categories of figurative art, and self-portrait is one, and why I do it is not crucial to me. The question is "why not," and "is it good?" I also do landscapes, still lifes, other people. Paintings, like artifacts that don't quite categorize—an interior landscape? Who cares. It's someone else's problem. I get really upset [...] slide lecture, I ask, "Would you question Rembrandt about why he uses so many self-portraits?" -Ed.]

[00:36:05.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There are a few of those.

[00:36:06.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: There are a few of those. You know, people have even been disturbed by the numbers of those I do. You know, I'm not that hooked into it, but from time to time, I do.

[00:36:18.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you start doing them?

[00:36:21.22]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well—

[00:36:24.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because there are quite a few.

[00:36:26.77]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the first one, which you probably have a photograph of—because I do think I sent most of my early photographs to the Archives—well, I don't know that it's the very first, but it's the first painting that I remember. And that was something like 1950 or '49 or something. And I remember the pose.

[00:36:45.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's been a continuing—yeah.

[00:36:46.69]

MARCIA MARCUS: Hm?

[00:36:46.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's been a continuing—

[00:36:47.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, yeah. But when I discovered that I was—had to be me—like in '57, I have one that's really quite funny, which I don't know—I don't think it was in my show at the March because I think I did it after that, but it's very funny. And starting during the summer before I got married, I think I started doing quite a lot, because I was there.

[00:37:15.83]

I was out alone on the dunes, and I just—you know, I sort of liked—oh, I know how that thing you started, because I posed for Alex Katz, and my hair was like—and I felt he was doing

much too tame and [too] pleasant a job. And I wasn't doing any painting that summer, because the house on the dunes was minute. And I was working in a hurricane house next door and just doing pastels because it was so small.

[00:37:42.04]

And then I was very dissatisfied with what Alex did. So, I thought, hmm. I came by one day, borrowed his mirror, and he wasn't there, [laughs] and left him a note. I mean, I really do have chutzpah. But I figured maybe he wouldn't mind. I think he did mind, but in any case, it was too late because I already went out on the dunes. And I did a painting then, which is one of the ones that Hirshhorn bought and then later returned, so it's still in my possession. But actually, I kind of like it.

[00:38:11.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What do you think—

[00:38:11.91]

MARCIA MARCUS: I did a whole bunch.

[00:38:13.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. What do you think of this? I mean, you're in the one painting with—how many people is that? I can't—

[00:38:21.07]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I'm in both panels.

[00:38:22.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

[00:38:24.77]

MARCIA MARCUS: I'm the white figure on the right.

[00:38:26.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:38:26.36]

MARCIA MARCUS: And also the one in the cape on the other side. ["Two Friezes," 1964. -Ed.]

[00:38:29.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right, in the Alan Gallery announcement. But what is the—I mean, the fact that you've done so many portraits of yourself in so many different ways over the years. Why? What—

[00:38:41.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I never thought of that until recently. Other people seem to be so involved with it. I don't think that I ever attached any psychological—or conscious psychological significance to it. But actually, I did a number of before that summer, now that I think of it—starting with one that I love, which I'll show you as we were talking, because I had a costume party which was apparently a wild success, except—

[00:39:11.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is what year?

[00:39:11.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, I don't have it because I sent it to the Guggenheim.

[00:39:14.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. Yeah.

[00:39:15.48]

MARCIA MARCUS: '58. Well, the party, I think, was Halloween of '57. I dressed myself up as Medusa, and I was so authentic, nobody would dance with me, I was so—[They laugh.] Anyways, an incredibly wild party. There were three barrels of garbage left the next day. It was unbelievable.

[00:39:35.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where was this?

[00:39:35.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: Here.

[00:39:36.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, here?

[00:39:38.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: It went on 'til about five o'clock in the morning. I left twice because I couldn't stand it. [They laugh.] And you know, and when I came back the second time, I found a completely different set of people. Well, Dody was going with Kerouac at the time, so that there was all that group, right? And they were trying to play their kind of music while they were stoned.

[00:40:04.15]

And the painters wanted to dance. So there were, like, two different kinds of music going. The place was a madhouse. I was giving it with Miles Forest, who didn't show up until well after the party was over. And I am a person who, when I give a party, I want everything done yesterday so that I can enjoy it, too, right. So I was drunk before the party started because I was so mad, because Miles was supposed to show up with the club soda or whatever he was supposed to show up with.

[00:40:31.39]

And it started around ten, by which time I was already half gone. And then people showed up in weird costumes, which I only figured out the next day. I found an unbelievable number of belt buckles the next day, and I thought, what the hell is that? Then it turned out that Edward Avedisian had come as Attila the Hun, [laughs] and they were all his belt buckles. [They laugh.]

[00:40:52.08]

And I had only the vaguest recollection. The wildest things happened. People stopped me on the street for weeks afterwards and said what a wonderful party it was. I hated it. [They laugh.] I mean, I just hated it. And one of the funniest things that happened is the first time I left it was with a friend of mine who had come as Ilsa Koch, because all it meant was wearing a blue Serge skirt and a white blouse and a bunch of keys. I don't think she had on a skin lampshade.

[00:41:20.58]

But she and my brother-in-law and I left. And he had an Isetta, if you remember those, the car. And when we got downstairs, we had discovered that someone had lifted the car up and put it on the sidewalk because they wanted to park. [They laugh.] So we started off down the street, and we got, like, two buildings away. And then he couldn't get through between the lamppost and the cars. So he backed all the way down the street and we went to the Cedar. And when we were there, we were sitting there having a drink, of course, but needless to say, I'd taken off my costume and put on a dress by that time and washed my face and—which is very authentic.

[00:42:03.13]

And Sam Francis came in, and my brother-in-law was in his "romanticism about artists" period. And there was Sam Francis, who I had just heard had this enormous commission in Japan, and he came in carrying the Sunday Times. And he just stood at the booth for a second, and I introduced him to my brother-in-law. And he said, "Oh, are you a painter?" And he said yes. My brother-in-law said, "Oh, something like, it must be so difficult, [laughs] you must suffer. You know, like, it's so hard to be an artist and you never have any money."

[00:42:36.34]

And Sam sort of looked at me with a raised eyebrow and went—you know, stood there. Anyway, John, I think, sold us an illegal bottle of Jack Daniel's, and we came back here, by which time the whole party had changed, not for the better, because there were practically nobody here that I knew. And the three of us went into the bathroom to have a drink because people would drink everything, including, like, a half-gallon of stale wine that I was keeping for vinegar. [They laugh.] They also ate a pork roast that I had in the refrigerator for the next day. [They laugh.] And we came out of the bathroom, which must have appeared suspicious to somebody—

[00:43:17.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All three of you.

[00:43:18.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: —because within, like, two minutes, there was a policeman at the door about the noise. So we said, "Would you like a drink?" And we went back to the bathroom, and I swear, not more than five minutes had passed. We'd hid it in the hamper. It was gone. I mean, the whole place was ravaged. And my sister had disappeared with somebody. And so all night long, my brother-in-law went back with my friend, and the phone calls kept coming in 'til, like, six o'clock in the morning, a bunch from my sister saying where she was in case her husband called. [They laugh.]

[00:43:49.28]

He wasn't there. He kept calling to find out where she was. [Laughs.] Some guy offered to stay and help me clean up, whom I'd never seen before, and he made it quite clear that this was a friendly gesture, as one of his friends was carried out bodily [laughs] with a bear facsimile on his face. And he actually did. We kind of, I guess, what amounted to bundling, because I didn't— [And the next day, lots of sweeping. -Ed.]

[00:44:13.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic. Yeah.

[00:44:14.09]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. It was unbelievable. I mean, it was absolutely unbelievable. That was really a wild party.

[00:44:20.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. [Inaudible] a party.

[00:44:21.68]

MARCIA MARCUS: That was the wildest party I ever had. [Laughs.] Apparently, Dody got locked out of her place and had to stay at Allen Ginsberg's place. And I was so drunk when he showed up that I thought he was wearing a tea bag on his nose. It turned out later it was a false nose with a price tag hanging off of it. [They laugh.] And then all these things, I mean, really emotional things were going on. Like, Bob had a fight with his girlfriend because he kept dancing with my friend, and I kept picking them apart on the dance floor because Bob was my friend and I didn't want him to be giving his girlfriend a hard time. [She went home and it took three quarters of an hour 'til she let him in. -Ed.] And it was—ah.

[00:45:00.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah, all the—all the hassles from parties. But anyway, going back to the gallery—

[00:45:06.40]

MARCIA MARCUS: Anyway, I finally figured, so it shouldn't be a total loss. [They laugh.] I used that costume as a self-portrait, so I guess you could say, in a way, that that was the start of—or at least the continuation. The one in '57 was probably, in a sense, the beginning. But then after that, I did a number of them during that winter, about three, and then the next summer, I did a number. And after I got married, I did a whole bunch. [Cross talk].

[00:45:32.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you start using the photographs as kind of—

[00:45:35.75]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I've used photographs—as a matter of fact, it's another self-portrait. One, I've always taken photographs, and I've often taken photographs of myself which include the camera. And one—the first summer I was—I don't know, the second summer—I don't know, but I know it was '57.

[00:45:56.31]

And I took a photograph of myself in the studio, and it was hot as hell, needless to say. It was a rotten photograph in a way, but when I got it back, I liked it. It had something kind of stark and weird about it. And I did a painting, that actually this friend that I've been talking about has. So I think that's the first time I used a photograph, and it was a self-portrait.

[00:46:22.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What got you to use photographs, or what started you taking them?

[00:46:25.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I've always loved photographs. I mean, to start with—I mean, as a child, one of my greatest pleasures was to look at old photographs of family and stuff like that. And we—my father always took photographs, and I guess he gave me a camera when I was about 12. I just liked photographs. And it was—and unlike maybe some of the photorealists, my interest in using the photograph is the quality of the photograph, because I think for them it's more like a postcard image or a kind of trying to make a dumb record. At least, that's what they say.

[00:47:08.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the actual—yeah, so the actual quality of the photograph would influence your use.

[00:47:10.90]

MARCIA MARCUS: The feeling of the photograph, just the way I would use a person or a thing or a landscape or whatever, that became the subject. The actual photograph became the subject, unlike using it as a snapshot type of image—not that I haven't used snapshots, but it would depend on the photograph. The photograph doesn't appeal.

[00:47:34.33]

But I do think that probably that was the first time I ever used a photograph, but I've used them periodically throughout. A big painting that I got my fur coats for, which I did in France—I mean, it was a painting of the family, and it included a photograph in the background that was part a wonderful old card that was in the yard at this place—

[00:48:04.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I remember that—

[00:48:05.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah.

[00:48:05.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —with all of the—yeah.

[00:48:06.98]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right, I don't know where it is now, because I've waited a little too long to find out who got it when they auctioned off Jack Kaplan's things when, you know, when he sold it to Kenton Industries. The—

[00:48:20.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh-huh [affirmative]. FPD, yeah.

[00:48:21.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, so it was sold privately, this one. Right.

[00:48:26.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, I've always loved that one. Marvelous.

[00:48:27.81]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right, and so it had, you know, really to do with that whole year in France when it was on the billboard, the Acropolis because we've been to Greece.

[00:48:37.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what about the composition of a painting like that? Would that take —

[00:48:40.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Sheer instinct. [They laugh.] I mean, I don't sit down and think—I mean, I studied with Hofmann, like, two weeks and I just couldn't do it. There's no push-pull, or if you do this over here, you do that over there. [I think of what elements to use, basically. —Ed.]

[00:48:54.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but some of them are so filled with images, one thing and another, one wonders if you make many studies or drawings or you just—

[00:49:05.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. If it feels right, I do it. [They laugh.] You know, nothing mysterious.

[00:49:12.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I often wonder about—what is that, a walking stick, [inaudible]?

[00:49:15.36]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, so I bought that—I still have it—in the Salvation Army in Paris. I mean, the coat, I borrowed from Dody, who later gave it to a friend. And she had it—and actually, it was very useful because that place was the coldest I have ever been in my life, so that while I was working, at least on the self-portrait part, it was marvelous because it was a warmest coat I've ever had on. [Laughs.] It had—actually, later I realized that the fur must have been Afghani lamb, whatever it is. Anyway, long, stringy thing. And then, obviously, it's the family. And then this also is a dress of Dody's that I borrowed to use in the painting because I liked it, the gold—

[00:49:55.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's really a gigantic photograph with people in front of it, isn't it? I mean, in a way.

[00:50:00.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Well, I mean, I call it "Souvenir," like from the French "to remember," kind of thing—I mean, which I hope doesn't make it a sentimental painting. But they're all things that I liked, so it was not—You know, like the boots, the whole—I don't know, just like the composition of things. But I don't set out to do a—well, maybe I do sometimes—a certain division of space or something.

But I would say it's more—well, every time—see, I've become very self-conscious lately, because I always used to say I was very unconscious, and then people have said, "You're a liar," [laughs], you know. That you pretend not to think about anything, but actually you do. So it's possible that I just didn't feel that people had to know what I really thought or how I really arrived at it. Like, this was a commission for *LIFE* that was done in France also [for a Western issue -Ed.]. That's Gorky there, who I never knew.

[00:51:03.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. right. Yeah.

[00:51:04.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: But I happened to have an art magazine that had a—*LIFE* commissioned me to do something that had to do with the Old West in that issue.

[00:51:12.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

[00:51:13.57]

MARCIA MARCUS: They never used it. And this is obviously a self-portrait, right?

[00:51:17.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:51:18.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: And the pose was like the Marlene Dietrich thing, you know, "see what the boys in the back room would want" thing, right?

[00:51:24.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:51:24.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: And they picked it up. I sent it back to New York with Mike Goldberg, actually, and I came back to America. I was paid the commission. And the phone rang one day, and the person who commissioned it, who I think was Dorothy Seiberling said, I don't know how to tell you this, but the person who's editing the issue is from the South. And she saw that painting and she said, "We can't use that, that's a mulatto or something." And then Dorothy, of course, had never even thought about that. You know, she had had the painting in her office ever since it had gotten there, three or four months, and so then she started asking people as they came in—

[00:52:08.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Doing a survey.

[00:52:09.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, like, What do you think that is? And they said, "Oh, a mulatto in a bordello in New Orleans," or something. [They laugh.] So anyway, it turned out—financially, it turned out okay because I sold it twice in that case, because they returned the painting and it eventually got sold. But in terms of publicity, it was bad because they didn't use it in the issue. And of course, it turned out it was before my time, because two or three years

later, that book came out on Black cowboys, so one would assume, if they had Black cowboys, they probably had Black girls in the whorehouses. And in any case, it's me, and any imbecile can see that. So the whole thing was really extraordinarily funny, and I was going to write to the NAACP.

[00:52:51.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Carry on. But you've painted your friends and people around you a lot, haven't you?

[00:52:55.68]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, because those—aside from still lifes, I did that at the same time, ever since, oh, like, 1960 or '61. And this is '61. This must be '60 because it was right—oh, I don't know. I forget years and—because that was painted partly before I went to the hospital to have Jane and partly afterwards. I guess that's '60 also.

[00:53:22.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I remember you did a—

[00:53:23.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: This is the one [inaudible].

[00:53:24.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. I remember you did a marvelous portrait of Lucas Samaras.

[00:53:28.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, yes. He liked that one. [Laughs.] He didn't like another one that I did.

[00:53:31.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] How did that come about? Yeah.

[00:53:33.61]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, this is a photograph of my happening, because that, I put in the painting—

[00:53:37.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Right. Right.

[00:53:39.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, and Hirshhorn [inaudible].

[00:53:42.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how did come to paint Lucas?

[00:53:43.99]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because I've known him, I guess, since the time the Rubin Gallery did Happenings. The first time I ever saw him was—it was a wipe-out because it was one of Whitman's happenings, and I think we discussed that last time. And actually, I spoke to him, and I forgot to ask for his address. It was a fantastic number, and he was doing a big speech kind of thing, and it was incredible. And I don't think I met him that night, but during the course of that time, I met him. And so we knew each other quite well, and then I asked him to pose for me, the way I had practically everyone else I knew.

[00:54:21.94]

And, well, I mean, you remember, that was an incredible time, because everything was going on, and it was all very lively. You know, Claes had his Store, and then there were



Happenings all over the place. And it was just a wild, wonderful, creative kind of time. I mean, I didn't even look at it until '65, but I knew all that time. And I actually saw his show a couple of Saturdays ago.

[00:54:47.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, with the [inaudible].

[00:54:48.01]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I think a lot of the things hark—well, the day I met him, went back to the beginning, even if in a different forum, at least there were things I felt—

[00:54:58.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, yeah, he goes back and forth through his work, in a way.

[00:55:00.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but this show especially, I felt really went all the way back, like to those kind of collapsed plaster figures he used to do. But that's what I like a lot.

[00:55:13.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let me ask you about some of the things like the Fulbright, because I think first you—

[00:55:17.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, that was a [inaudible].

[00:55:19.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] It was. But you'd gotten an Ingram Merrill grant, one of those nefarious—

[00:55:28.30]

MARCIA MARCUS: Is it nefarious? Tell me.

[00:55:29.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I don't know.

[00:55:30.85]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, tell me, because if something weird happened—

[00:55:33.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, I'm curious. Everybody has a funny story about how they got their Ingram Merrill grant.

[00:55:37.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't have a funny story about how I got it. I have a funny story after I got it. [Laughs.]

[00:55:42.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Oh, well, you see it's part of the—

[00:55:44.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was just my naivete, because then the little extortion was attempted, which I was too dumb to recognize immediately, so I said, well, go to the gallery and get something. And of course, he never did, because that was really extortion, and I will probably never get it again. [They laugh.] Because I didn't know about the extortion until

relatively recently. As I said, I've been very dumb.

[00:56:12.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: One of the basic ploys in the game, yeah. But what about the Ful—yeah?

[00:56:16.89]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, so what am I supposed to give you for this interview? [They laugh.]

[00:56:20.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the Fulbright, though? Because that's a whole ritual, too.

[00:56:23.96]

MARCIA MARCUS: Ugh. Well, I think they had to give it to me because if they had waited I would have been too old, [laughs] at least for that kind.

[00:56:32.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:56:33.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: But I tried for it, and it was very peculiar because I was not—well, as I said, I'm always broke. Terry was working. But of course, if you have a family, you have to prove that you can sustain yourself for the year, because what they gave at that time was minute. I don't remember exactly, but it was really very small.

[00:56:58.76]

And the painting got sold just about the time I was informed, but I was up for it. And I had to have a letter saying that there would be enough money and everything, and I was trying to make a decision. The painting turned out later not to be sold because the guy who bought it made two payments and then went bankrupt, and it still is in my possession. It's not here now. It's in the show at Pratt—which is okay because it's one of my favorite paintings, [laughs] so it wasn't a total loss. I mean, even though I bought it back, I got more than I got paid for to get it back.

[00:57:34.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But why did you try for a Fulbright, and what was your plan for it?

[00:57:39.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: I wanted to—well, I had been in Europe the year before. After this Monopoly game episode where everything was selling, I planned to go to Europe, and then I found out I was pregnant. And in the meantime, Terry got a job because, as I said, we were both absolutely down to zilch, and so he couldn't leave.

[00:58:00.21]

But when I found out I was pregnant, I thought, well, if I wait to go until he's through at school, then there's no point in my going because I'll be so close to having the baby, it's not worth the trouble. So I went by myself in April with Jane, who was then just under a year old. And I went first to Rome [where he had a Prix de Rome -Ed.] where Lennart Anderson and Mimi were, and I stayed there about ten days [at a pensione they found. -Ed.]. And I bought a car, and I drove to Florence.

[00:58:33.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was on the Fulbright?

[00:58:34.36]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, this was on the Marcus. [Laughs.]

[00:58:36.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, your own grant.

[00:58:38.21]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. And it totally was about five months. And I took, like, [five days -Ed.] to get there because I went all kinds of places like—oh, I can't even remember the town. It was really spooky. But, you know, I went by way of [Perugia -Ed.], Assisi and Arezzo.

[00:59:00.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Every—all the little—yeah.

[00:59:01.15]

MARCIA MARCUS: The whole thing, so it took me a week to get to Florence. When I got to Florence, Red [Grooms] was there and living with Mimi, and he knew someone who was just vacating a big place. And by that time, I was tired and ready to work, because I'd been gone almost three weeks and had just had a show when I left.

[00:59:21.47]

And anyway, he took me out to this place, and I took it. There was one huge room in a villa with a fantastic [terrace -Ed.] overlooking Florence, and that's when I did the painting in the garden, which [is in the Neuberger Collection. I did that outside and took it in at night. -Ed.] And anyway, he helped me get all the stuff together and stretch the canvas for me with a friend and—you know. So there were people I knew there, basically then. [And Red and Mimi -Ed.] And then Terry came over at the beginning of June, and we traveled around a lot. And then I had—originally, I was supposed to go to Switzerland, to some famous doctor who delivered, like, Princess Grace's babies and things like that.

[01:00:11.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Yeah.

[01:00:11.92]

MARCIA MARCUS: But then as the time got closer and I was working on this huge painting, it just seemed ridiculous. To go, I would've had to leave two weeks before, and sit there. And you never know, obviously, when this great event is going to take place. And then I'd probably have to stay another two weeks 'til I could come back. So I went to the American [consulate -Ed.] and got the name of a hospital that was considered okay, because from what I'd heard of the Italian hospitals, like, no way. So I went to this hysterical little hospital run by, I think, something like the Little Blue Sisters [laughs] or something. [The Sorelli Azzuro -Ed.]

[01:00:47.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Good thing it was [inaudible].

[01:00:48.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: They were English—well, it's like that. They were English and Irish nuns.

[01:00:53.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic. Yeah.

[01:00:54.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: Tiny little hospital, but it's marvelous, and delicious food. And I worked up until the moment I realized I had to go to the hospital, and resumed when I came back. But I wanted—so we were there, and we traveled a little bit when we left Florence. Then we traveled towards England because Terry's family was there, and we stayed there about ten days, I guess, and they came back. Then I wanted to go again, and the only way I figured I could go was with a Fulbright.

[01:01:26.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

[END OF TRACK AAA\_marcus75\_8069\_m]

[00:00:03.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side five. Florence? France. No.

[00:00:08.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. Still in Florence.

[00:00:10.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

[00:00:11.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: When I got the Fulbright, because of the sale of this painting, I decided to go. And I wanted to go to Greece, I always had. So we went to Greece first. We drove from England [through France -Ed.] to Greece through Yugoslavia.

[00:00:34.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

[00:00:34.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: On all those wonderful roads you hear so much about. And actually, I was very disappointed because Yugoslavia was so extraordinary. I was sorry we only got a visa for a week. And I did think of extending it, but I was really anxious to get there. It's extraordinary, because you have feelings about work and people in that country that are extraordinary.

[00:00:59.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

[00:01:00.66]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, you just have a feeling of people doing things constantly. I mean, the first thing, it was very mysterious. And I guess, in a way, I've never really been prone to that kind of reaction. And maybe that was like the first time that ever had happened. When we went from Trieste to Rijeka—Rijeka? It's like through an incredibly barren area. Like you don't see anybody, which was true through lots of Yugoslavia, because we took the coastal road. And I had weird images like death, and that there were craters, which I later understood better. But at the time, driving through this kind of woods 'til we got to Rijeka I just had all these—

[00:01:51.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Craters from [inaudible]?

[00:01:52.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I thought it must have been from the war. And you can see little green things at the bottom, and you think people cultivating something, you know. But there was a strange feeling of really mysterious—And then you'd come through places that were more populated and see people. And we happened to pass at a time when I guess people were getting off work, because it was late in the afternoon.

[00:02:15.19]

And first of all, they were the most beautiful people in general that I've ever seen any place. You know, those brilliant blue eyes, mostly, and extraordinary intense features, and just unbelievably healthy. I mean, I later saw some very ugly Yugoslavs [in Titograd—Ed.] but to

start with, it wasn't like that. And then as it got darker, you'd see people like working at obviously their own houses, like cutting wood or doing something.

[00:02:41.66]

I mean, you just had a sense of work and activity. And I mean horrible things too, like there was a big detour at some point because the army was going to be using the coastal road, and we had to go some wild way. And of course you had to keep looking at the map because there were gas stations like God knows how many miles apart. And it was, I mean, I mean, if I started to tell you, like all the things that happened in Yugoslavia, that could be like four hours right there.

[00:03:12.63]

Very peculiar experience, some of which are good and some of which are kind of horrible, but very evocative of all kinds of things that I didn't even know that I was capable of feeling, like very mysterious, psychic, almost things. You know, like you walk when the day we got to Rijeka. We walked out after this hideous dinner that we had. And the streets were just about empty. And we looked at some shops and the place was just deserted.

[00:03:48.01]

And then suddenly, we heard some guy playing a recorder or something. Like, really, wow, I mean, it was like constant movie in a sense, you know. Or going to hotels that obviously had been super luxury hotels in the old days, and staying there for very little and very, very—or my getting into a bath after a long journey. And then I stepped in and was ice cold, you know, because there was no hot water. [Laughs.]

[00:04:13.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just what you wanted.

[00:04:14.51]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it was one of those places that obviously kings and royalty had stayed in, like there was two of everything, like two washstands and huge fixtures and a fantastic terrace with wonderful—the only decent food we had on that trip. And it was—that was in Split. And we would arrive like 11:00 at night or something, barely having gotten there in the car, and the car broke down, you know, all kinds of things which had nothing to do with Yugoslavia. I mean, that part. But adventure after adventure, you know.

[00:04:47.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why did you want to go to Greece? What was the—

[00:04:50.62]

MARCIA MARCUS: I've always wanted to be an ancient Greek [they laugh]. And I finally figured out what it was. Two summers ago, I read the book on Kerouac. And during the course of it, they talked about Dr. Sacks, which I never read, but he talked about the effect of comic strips and things on his on that particular book.

[00:05:19.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:05:19.72]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it's possible that I remembered this before, but I probably wouldn't—as I said, didn't acknowledge it, right. I like to prefer to pretend to be unconscious. And I think I really did forget. And then when I was reading that part, I remembered that when I was a child, my parents got the *Journal American* and the *Daily News*. I was really brought up with the best of everything. [Laughs.] And in the *Journal American*, they used to have a thing every Sunday in which this woman would go into an old jewelry store or something and look at some gem, and be transported back to ancient Egypt or Greece or Rome or something, right.

[00:06:11.23]

And also at about—not about the same time, but when I was about eleven or twelve, my father picked up some books at a sale at Macy's. And my mother was very upset because one of them, I don't remember the name of, but it was what in those days would probably be considered a dirty book, but it was about a courtesan in ancient Greece. And I don't know which started the interest, because I think I was interested even before. But just the clothing, the whole thing, because I remember as a child going to the library maybe at 11 or 12, and looking up like the costume. And I knew about like how to make it—like I have never actually made one. [A chitan -Ed.]

[00:07:02.23]

I looked it up and it was like a wonderful thing. And when I read that book, I could just it was fantastic, walking down the street in this, you know, yellow, whatever it was. So I've always loved it. And I've loved Greek art. I don't think I knew very much about it because my interest in our history, as I told you, was minimal, mostly because it's so boring.

[00:07:25.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what happened once you got there and saw this type of place.

[00:07:28.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, you know, when we got to Greece itself from Yugoslavia, it was horrible [and barren -Ed.].

[Making drink.] At least this is better than a fire engine.

When we got to Greece, we didn't speak for about three hours because I guess we were both in a kind of state of shock because the contrast between this incredibly vivid, exciting, workmanlike atmosphere and this kind of flaccid Greek countryside, I mean, there—

[00:08:01.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you come into Greece then?

[00:08:03.82]

MARCIA MARCUS: At Salonika. Salonika? But like when you went through Yugoslavia, you know, you'd go along the road and suddenly you'd look up on this road that was on one side, like straight down to the sea. And the other side was, you know, part of a mountain or something. And there would be like a plot about maybe two feet by seven feet or something, with a tree in it.

[00:08:35.57]

And it was cultivated. And there was a cow, you know. Or you even looked down and there would be this tiny little plot of land, and it was like worked. And you'd park the car because Jane was at a period when—later I found out that it wasn't that she was being toilet trained, it was that she couldn't stand the hot car, but she would say—she was just over two, and she said, "I want to pee now first."

[00:09:00.88]

So we'd stop the car and take out the traveling potty and put her down. And it would be like an incredibly deserted area, like at the edge of a cliff overlooking the Adriatic, that's the one that's between Greece and—okay. And then within seconds, about four or five people would appear. And you don't know where, like you didn't see a house or anything. But somewhere they were there.

[00:09:26.57]

And, you know, there was like a whole scene one time with these two women having this incredibly jealous thing about who was to hold her. And it got really creepy. But that's what I mean, like almost nothing that happened was like normal or casual. It was either very, very good or very, very bad, but all like, with overtones of strange vibrations.

[00:09:48.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what happened in Greece? I mean, finally you do arrive.

[00:09:50.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, we got there. And of course, I loved the art. I couldn't stand the people, the food or the place because later when I went to Crete, which I went—did alone, because by that time it was obvious the check wasn't going to arrive and we had to change our plans. But I really wanted to go. So Terry said, "Well, you go." So I went. And I met someone that I had seen at Delphi, which is where we stayed for a month.

[00:10:20.53]

We went to Athens first. And when we saw the check wasn't going to be there, we changed our plans and we started traveling towards Delphi. And I remember spending time like near where the spring was and sort of picking the little things out of the ruins and seeing this girl who was sketching. And when I went to Crete, I saw her again.

[00:10:41.44]

And she was from California. So she explained, like why I found Greece unappetizing as opposed to all the descriptions. Like, Lennart who had been there a couple of years before and Wolf had been there. And they'd all had like rave stories, but they'd all gone in May or April or something. And I was there like in from June to August 1st, and it was totally arid and hot in a way that I had never experienced before.

[00:11:07.58]

And this girl was from California. So she said, "Well, you know, I'm used to it because that's how it is in California, like the hills are barren." And I'm used to like green lush things. So I was terribly disappointed from the description in terms of the physicality. Like where we lived in Delphi, probably 100 people out of 101 would think it was like heaven. And I really didn't like it. I mean, we had a view of Itea and the bay and the mountains and the whole thing, and we were like on the last street. As a matter of fact, one morning we got up very early and walked up to the stadium from where we lived. So it was fantastic. And I did work there, because we stayed there a month. But the art absolutely knocked me out.

[I knew at the back of my head that that mountains we looked out on would be considered wonderful, but it was not what I expected, so the reaction was kind of on hold. And we walked all over the ruins and took short trips to other towns and Olympia and a wonderful town on the way up—I think was called Latoria? Anyway, it was where the buses stopped and we stayed over one night before we got to Delphi. -Ed.]

[00:11:54.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the climate and everything? What didn't appeal to you? I mean, the dryness of it, or the—

[00:12:03.14]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because everyone's description had been the lushness, and the flowers and—

[00:12:08.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They'd been there in the spring.

[00:12:09.51]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. And I got there. And like they were—actually we went back the next spring. And we went back to Delphi. And then on the road, there were places that during the summer I had thought were deserted and abandoned stone houses. And I realized that they there were people living there. But in the summer, like, everyone stays inside, it's so hot. And it was just glaring, you know. But the art absolutely wiped me out. So and that was the primary purpose of the—

[00:12:40.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you dislike about the food and the people, and the rest of it? Was it just the atmosphere—

[00:12:44.93]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, you got in the butcher store and of course, we didn't speak Greek, except we learned "please," "thank you," and "milk," you know. But you'd go and you'd point to—for instance, when we lived in Delphi, and we go into the butcher store. And I remember Terry describing his trip, because strangely enough, the men do a lot of the shopping in Greece. And he went in, and he said how he described the lamb chops, you know, like that.

[00:13:15.44]

And the guy said, "Oh yes," and then he went, "chun, chun, chun, chun." And so we'd end up with the lamb chop that was like this thick at one end, and, you know, it was impossible to cut. But in the restaurants, it was mostly dreadful, except that was touristy too, because when we ate out in Delphi in the summer, when we lived there, it was awful. And we went back in the spring. We ate in some of the same places and we had a fantastic meal because there was nothing except for one table that had some tourists. And first of all, there were like ten people in the whole place, but there were mostly Greeks. And so he was really cooking, and it was delicious.

[00:13:53.87]

On the mainland, except for one place where I had the best artichoke I've ever had in my life—it was near the Agora—the food was all greasy. Like to me it was a miracle I never—I never got sick. But you'd get, like meatballs swimming in half an inch of oil, and—but I didn't get sick, so maybe it was all right, but it wasn't, you know, delicious, especially coming from France. Also I was—because of the incredibly cold winter—it'd been the coldest winter they'd had in Europe, like in 50 years, I also had a cold most of the time when we were, oh no, that was the second trip, I'm sorry. You know, but the first time, it just wasn't good. That's all. It was—you know.

[00:14:37.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have you been back since?

[00:14:40.62]

MARCIA MARCUS: Not for that second spring.

[00:14:46.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Another time.

[00:14:47.57]

MARCIA MARCUS: But I'm still living on them [ph]. [They laugh.]

[00:14:49.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, I noticed—

[00:14:51.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, well, that actually is a tiny little statue in the garden of the woman who did the article for *Arts* when I had the Everson show. -Ed.]

[00:14:58.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The "Phantom."

[00:14:59.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. It's a tiny little thing. It's only about this big. But when I went up there, she wanted me to see what she'd written so far to check it for factual errors and stuff.



So I stopped on the way to take Kate to camp.

[00:15:12.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

[00:15:12.91]

MARCIA MARCUS: Noel Frackman.

[00:15:14.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:15:15.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I stopped off, and it was kind of a great day. So I took some photographs of that because it looked pretty nice.

[00:15:26.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, Fulbright, what are you what do you think of those? I mean, was it useful for you in some ways?

[00:15:30.77]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, luckily, Charles—because once I got back to France, I mean, I was strapped the whole summer. And even though we did a little bit of traveling, it was very rough, like Charles sent me money, mostly because he expected to be paid for this painting. But once I got to France to start with, it was rough. But around December, like the money started rolling in at regular intervals because he started selling paintings again. And then we really could operate and take trips and things. And I found it very cheap place outside of Paris. Cold. I have never in my entire life been so cold.

[00:16:17.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whereabouts was that?

[00:16:19.43]

MARCIA MARCUS: It was in a town called Bures sur Yvette.

[00:16:22.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How'd you find it?

[00:16:23.87]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because you have to be oriented, right? And we were so broke that we—I had put in my application that I wanted to stay in the South of France, because Dody was living in France at the time. And even though I didn't know her that well then, we were in vague correspondence. I mean, she had posed for me [in New York -Ed.], but I still didn't know her that well.

[00:16:46.53]

And she said that the prices in Paris were enormous. So I had put in my application I wanted to stay in the South of France. And when I had my interview, I said it again, you know. So when we got there, and it was obvious that we were really in bad shape, Terry stayed with the children in a little resort town that of course, was totally deserted. It was almost like a development, like it was developed into a resort area. So it was totally empty. And we had this disgusting little place.

[00:17:22.05]

And he was going to stay there and maybe look around for a place that was better while I had to go up to Paris to be oriented. When I got there, it was the usual bureaucratic garbage. And it turned out I was supposed to stay there. And I said, "But I did this." And he said, "Well,

if you want to [stay in the South -Ed.], you are going to have to write a letter." So I wrote a letter, but I never got to send it because, Max Kozloff was there who I hadn't known before [and he was talking to someone who knew of this apartment in a broken-down chateau. - Ed.]

[00:17:50.22]

And I stayed with Dody like three weeks, which is extraordinary, because except for one—look, I didn't really know her well. And I am not easy to live with, as we probably established by now. [They laugh.] And I didn't know how long it would last. And it was a lot of nerve for me to ask to stay with her. But she's very generous and she, I don't think is so easy to get along with either.

[00:18:16.04]

But aside from one sarcastic word, it was unbelievable. And the day I decided I wanted to paint, I thought oh my God, when she comes back and sees that I've gotten some canvas and some stretchers. And no problem. I mean, we've worked in this big room. And we like step back from our work and say, "excuse me," as we passed each other, stepping back. And it was incredible. Anyway, one after one of these sessions, there was a guy who someone had put me in touch with because he was going to go straight from New York. There was a complication about getting work or getting supplies over there, because since I wasn't going to wait until the time when they send you, I was going three months early so I can go to Greece.

[00:19:00.69]

He brought a lot of stuff over for me, so I had met him briefly. He had a Fulbright too. And the three of us were standing on the corner one day, and I don't remember whether Max had heard about this place or this other guy had. And he said he was going to go out there. And I heard like \$50 a month. And luckily, this guy said he wasn't going to take it.

[00:19:27.17]

So I went out there to look at it. And it was perfect. I mean, it was perfect for the money. And it was in an old broken down chateau and it had a huge kitchen, one bedroom, a thing they called a bathroom which nothing but a sink and a bidet, which became my studio. And then a large thing they called the granary. [Telephone ringing.]

[00:19:51.07]

So there was this thing they called the granary, which is a huge room. It was totally uninsulated. So it was out of the question to use, I had to—And it was an incredible scene with this dreadful woman who was like a witch. And we—I was there in September to be oriented. And the place wasn't going to be ready 'til November 1, because they had to reparation it, say, because Peter Saul had been there before and apparently there were burn holes in the floor and like all kinds of things. And they wouldn't let us just come in.

[00:20:26.24]

So for a month, like it was obvious that I couldn't hassle this whole letter writing thing and this whole dumb bureaucratic garbage. So [Terry] came up. And I guess we must have gotten some money from Charles by then. So we—I think we went to Belgium, Holland or something. And we kind of tootled around. We stayed like a week in Paris and whatever. Anyway, we sort of managed to stay occupied until we could get back to this place. And we arrived in the rain.

[00:21:01.71]

They did a whole number because we were a day late and they thought we had gotten killed [and said that the children might fall in stove -Ed.]. I mean, Jesus Christ. I mean, you don't know what that woman was like. And she said, "Your car is messy, you'll probably, you know, ruin this place. And you can have it for a month." I, you know, hysterically called the person in charge the next day. He was like a typical awful bureaucrat. Or I wrote him or something.

[00:21:24.90]

And I said, you know, "I have to have some assurance that I can stay here. Because first of all, we waited until November to come in. Second of all, I obviously can't start working if I know that she can kick us out in a month." And he wrote back a letter, which unfortunately, I destroyed, because that would make a great addition to the Archives. It was one sentence long.

[00:21:45.51]

And it was something like, if I "maintain a level of cleanliness commensurate with what Americans are known for, I'm sure you'll have no trouble." Like that was it? Right. And I had written like a four page, you know, letter full of feeling about how I had asked for the South of France to begin with. And then I had, you know, done this, and I'd been traveling around waiting for this place and this whole thing. And I get back to this one crummy shithead statement.

[00:22:14.53]

I mean, that's why I should really control my anger, because, you know, whoever he is, I'd like to send him a copy now. He's probably working for the State Department and the CIA or something. Maybe he was then. Anyway, it worked out. So I stayed there, and I did an enormous amount of work, considering I was freezing to death. But it was also a nightmare, because even though as everyone will tell you who knew me, Terry was very helpful, you know, with the kids.

[00:22:44.93]

But he never did everything. In there, he really had to do everything. Like now I know why the French are so mean. I mean, it's dark until about ten o'clock in the morning. And it gets dark again around four. So the only way I could work, more or less—and we were all sleeping in the same room, and it's two kids and one of them, you know, it's like a flophouse or something, you know?

[00:23:07.15]

It was unbelievable. And we were freezing to death. And in the kitchen there was a coal stove. In the bedroom, there was a kerosene heater. So I'd put that on about an hour before the kids went to bed, but I wasn't—I couldn't leave it on because I was afraid they'd get killed or something, or we all would. So I would put it out. I'd put them to bed fully clothed with hats and sweaters and the whole shmeer.

[00:23:31.75]

There were so many times that we would sort of stand in front of the stove and warm up and then race into bed. And I'd have something on, like tights, sweatpants, two sweaters, a sweatshirt. And then if we only touched like a hip and an ankle, and our heads to the bed, after maybe about a half an hour, and clung tightly together needless to say, we could start removing a few layers of clothing after about half an hour. [Laughs.]

[00:23:58.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredible.

[00:23:59.21]

MARCIA MARCUS: I've never been so cold. And I worked in what they called the bathroom, you know. The bathroom was like two or three flights down, which was great on a cold winter morning. Anyway, so I worked in this thing. And I did a landscape. And we took the window out because the only way I could really see properly. So it was freezing cold. And I'd keep that kerosene heater like about a foot away from me.

[00:24:23.98]

And if Terry brought me tea, I could work for 40 minutes. If he did not bring me tea, I could work for 20 minutes. And then I'd have to go back in the kitchen, stand in front of the stove and warm up again so I could go back. I'd stay in bed 'til like ten, 'til it got light. It was the only way I could work [and keep my concentration -Ed.]. It was a nightmare because I'd lose track of, like, where the kids were. And, you know, like, every now and then I would take a

day off and do something human, like walk them around the yard or something or go across the street and go shopping.

[00:24:55.36]

And of course, the French people were all very funny because he did all the shopping except for those rare times when I decided this was getting ridiculous and I had to stop, because you know, my kids were doing things. I didn't know what they were doing. I wasn't watching it. It was absolutely horrendous, like truly horrendous. I felt guilty as hell because I'd disrupted everyone's life.

[00:25:17.20]

And I figured the only way I could compensate was to work, because it was the only—I mean, at that point, like to work meant to sell because I was doing fairly well that way. So it was the only way I felt that I could justify this dreadful thing. And of course, we didn't even go away in the wintertime because the weather all over France was so terrible. Like there was snow in Marseille for the first time in 50 years. Then there was hysterically funny story in the *Herald Tribune* where there was a town that had been snowed in for something like two weeks. And the first truckload got in, you know, it was filled with?

[00:25:52.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What?

[00:25:53.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oysters. [Laughs.]

[00:25:55.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous, perfect.

[00:25:59.17]

MARCIA MARCUS: Anyway, so when spring came, we take a trip. But I tell you, I was so cold to the bone, that I don't think I warmed up [until Greece. -Ed.] I took an extra week, which I got penalized for, like, I never got a check for that. And there was no way I could explain. I mean, they were, you know, really pussycats. I said I didn't go away in the winter, for Christmas vacation because of this—I've been sick, which I really was. And we picked up a lot of wine in France to take to Greece, which we never used because I was too ill to drink. And that's it, right?

[00:26:35.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

[00:26:36.09]

MARCIA MARCUS: I felt like I didn't warm up until the last week in Greece. We were there, I think three weeks. And unfortunately, the day we left was the day that it was fantastic, like it was May 1st and all the little flowers were—I missed a lot because I should have actually stayed because I never saw the Temple of Bassai. I mean, I think we started going there, and then we couldn't find it. We didn't know how far it was. And we were afraid we would miss the boat that we had already booked, unfortunately. So we didn't see that, although we did go to Corinth and that was marvelous and I loved it.

[00:27:13.39]

But we went back and it was just cold [and dreary -Ed.]. I mean, it was good. I mean, I wouldn't knock it, but, you know, like the guy who had told me about this place and who then decided to stay in [Paris]. Like, I try to figure out one day how he made it. He was paying \$40 a month rent for one room. Of course, he was freezing to death, too, because everybody was. And I thought he has only that, like he has no other income.

[00:27:45.01]

And I figured out that when you took the rent out, he had something like two dollars a day to spend on food, which was pretty incredible because I don't think he had a place to cook. Like he might have had a hot plate or something. And if you have to eat out, there's not much you can do with two dollars a day. Plus, you know, there were two materials allowances during the year, so that even for one person, that was rough. And we never would have made it if there wasn't something coming in otherwise. But I don't know what they're doing with it now. But you know, if it's the only way that you can get to Europe, of course it's worth it.

[00:28:25.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You do. Yeah. What about your Walter Guttman Foundation?

[00:28:31.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was only \$500. And that was the year before when I went to Florence. And I've never been Walter's type, so I guess getting \$500 was like a great concession on his part. [They laugh.]

[00:28:43.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean, you've never been his type?

[00:28:45.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I'm not strong enough. Ambitious enough. Although once he kissed my big toes.

[00:28:50.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah-ha. [Inaudible]

[00:28:52.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: He doesn't dislike me. I'm just not, like his type of person.

[00:28:58.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, he does have specific kinds of person, doesn't he, Walter?

[00:29:05.33]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah.

[00:29:05.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the Fulbright was what year again?

[00:29:09.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: '62 to '63. And I stayed on after that because—

[00:29:16.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For how long?

[00:29:20.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: I think I stayed at the Chateau 'til, like—I think the end of July, the beginning of August, because I was finishing that big painting. And then we went to England again to visit. Actually, we stayed with friends this time. And that was very pleasant. And then I saw all the things I didn't see on the first trip when I went to the Brooklyn Museum—not Brooklyn Museum, the British Museum. [They laugh.] Well, they have nice ancient things, too, but not quite the same thing.

[00:29:59.50]

And that totally freaked me out. And it was interesting for other reasons, because obviously

in Greece, the marble is all the color of Greece and warm and like flesh. And in England, it's become gray, like London, you know. And I presume that stone was the same color as on the Acropolis to begin with. But it's—even though it's in the museum, so weathered. Well, it's a fantastic museum, as we all know. I mean, it's no original statement, but I really loved it because I think we spent the whole time, except for one—I think we spent the whole time in London, that time, either ten days or two weeks.

[00:30:47.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But once you came back here, you were with Alan for a while, then you switched to Graham some years later.

[00:30:54.80]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because, you know, by that time, he really hadn't done anything dramatic for quite a while. And I had a show that I thought was very good. I think those two were in it. And he really wasn't selling paintings. I think Howard had left by that time.

[00:31:16.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've forgotten what it was.

[00:31:18.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: I've forgotten, too. But it was obvious that he hadn't been doing well. And I went to a number of places. And of course, it was a horrible shock when I settled in with Graham and then went up there and discovered I was on the second floor rather than with the contemporary artists, because I felt that was [inaudible].

[00:31:37.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why did that happen?

[00:31:39.27]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I had never even thought to discuss it with him. Like he just came down to the studio, said yes, he was interested [in showing my work -Ed.], and I settled it. Charles didn't speak to me for two years, even though he sent me a complete photostat of all the records, which I didn't ask for, needless to say, and was part of like his scrupulous honesty, because it never would have occurred to me to ask for something like that.

[00:32:02.46]

And it never occurred to me that anyone ever did. You know, he just sent me, like all the ledger pages of my time with him, but he really hadn't done anything for quite a while. And I think Howard might have left, because afterwards is when I found out that basically Howard was the one that did the selling, because Charles is just alienated everybody. And also didn't believe in all the things that are necessary. And I was too dumb even then to realize—

[00:32:33.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible], yeah.

[00:32:34.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: —exactly what was at stake, and how much I had to do in my own thing. And I still didn't think that I had to do it. And the time with Graham was kind of a disaster also, because that there was no communication. Particularly after I—you know, the guy that was in charge of the second floor was like a nothing. And I remember coming in one day and someone was looking at I had a little landscape and then show and I walked in unexpectedly. And this guy had one of Lennart's landscapes next to mine. [Laughs.] So he obviously was trying to sell Lennart's rather than mine. And that really, you know—obviously, you know, Lennart's a great friend. And he's helping me move tomorrow and everything.

[00:33:21.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But still.

[00:33:21.74]

MARCIA MARCUS: And you know, like, I know that's how it works a lot. But that's not one of your favorite things to see. And I, as far as I can remember, I sold nothing out of the show. And the only time they sold anything, it was like hell trying to get this minute amount of money out of him. You know, even though he was—and that was out of a show I had in Rhode Island which had nothing to do with me.

[00:33:41.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that show come about at the Rhode Island School?

[00:33:44.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Lucas?

[00:33:46.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:33:46.36]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because Lucas was posing for me then. And as a matter of fact, he tried to get me into Pace [actually with the [...] in Columbus. -Ed.] and they weren't interested. But I said, you know, like, I really got to do something. I mean, he's posing for me for five months, so I assume we discussed everything in depth. And he said, "Well, there's this Ford Foundation thing." And so I found out about it, like, you know, like, I really don't know about anything unless somebody tells me.

[00:34:13.12]

And he told me that this thing was going. And I told the American Federation of the Arts, and I called like halfway through the program, like I hadn't heard zilch about it. And they sent me a letter saying that, you know, I spoke to Robert Bloch, who was very nice. I didn't know where he is now. Anyhow, he, you know, got the information. I told him I wanted the Southwest because I'd never been there. So they sent me Rhode Island School of Design [they laugh], which actually turned out better because I had friends there. And Terry and the kids came.

[00:34:48.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, was it, the teaching project or?

[00:34:50.60]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, it was a weird thing the Ford Foundation did to use up their money, I presume. And I was a visiting artist to the museum. And people were sent to all kinds of wild places. So when I found that out, I realized I was actually luckier to be in Rhode Island where it was attached to a school, and therefore they could give me a good studio. I had friends like George Morrison was teaching at Rhode Island School, so that I was very—like I practically lived in his house, and in Hazel's, and Hazel [his wife -Ed.] posed for me. That was like the one major painting I did while I was up there.

[00:35:28.37]

And I spoke to the students a little bit. And nobody knew what to do with you. Like I arrived the day that I was supposed to. When I went in to see the publicity director of the museum, and he looked at me and he said, "Exactly what are you supposed to do here?" [They laugh.] And I didn't know. I mean, in the letter they said to you, you're supposed to kind of shake up the community and bring—and I did.

[00:35:53.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Other ways. [Laughs.]

[00:35:54.92]

MARCIA MARCUS: In other ways, right? Like they give you a one-person show and supposedly—Now, I figured that there was an allowance to the museum to buy something. I figure now, after they bought the smallest painting that was in the show, that probably Danny Robbins, who was the director then, finagled and probably used a small portion of what they gave him, and probably used the rest for something else, because I can't believe the allowance was as small as the painting they bought. To try to get the money out of Graham was unbelievable. That's how he was so rich, and I was so poor.

[00:36:34.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's always the way though, isn't it?

[00:36:36.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, those are the worst, like the dentists and doctors. Well, they're not so poor, either. But, you know, like, your friends who work for a living manage to make regular installment payments when they buy something on time.

[00:36:49.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. How was that show? Successful, though, from your point of view, at Rhode Island?

[00:36:53.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the students loved it. And I think it was a good show, because that was one of the—I mean, that was right after one of the best painting years I've ever had, which was '65. And that's how I shook them up, because they had me talk to—I didn't know here was a word called docents. Apparently, there are people who take people around the museum. And so there was a whole group of women that I was supposed to talk to.

[00:37:20.69]

And as I said, being dumb, I figured out afterwards that I was supposed to tell them about my work so they could tell those poor, unsuspecting kids that would come about it. Instead, I talked about the whole process of going to museums. At that point, the kids had been up. And Jane, who was six then, totally freaked out.

[00:37:47.03]

I mean, they have a fantastic collection in some ways. They had one of the best small ancient art collections I've ever seen. Then they had—I was looking at that and she came in and she grabbed my hand. "You've got to see. You've just got to look. You've got to see this!" And she pulled me into the next room. And there was like a 4th or 14th century—I can't, you know, I don't know. But this incredible wooden crucifix from Germany. It was just beautiful.

[00:38:14.40]

And then I remember we went around the rest of the museum and got to this great big room. And the other end of it opened back into this place, and she went racing down the whole thing, went back in front of it and stood in front of it and put her hands behind her back, and [deep sigh]. Anyway, so I used that as an example of like how art should be looked at. Because in the course of my being there, the first few weeks, I'd seen this dreadful woman who really was like Ilsa Koch, and who really did wear a blue Serge skirt, and this huge thing of keys talking to groups of students.

[00:38:47.45]

And it was like the usual museum scene where someone's talking at them, and they really want to go down there and look. But they're polite. And this was like private school kids, because I remember there was like ten boys in suits and, you know, all the same jackets and stuff. So I started talking about the process of museum going somehow. And this woman was sitting slightly behind me, and Hazel was there at the far walls, and she could see this woman.

[00:39:17.16]



And she said she was getting more and more livid by the moment, you know. [Laughs.] But it was interesting because I did do what I was supposed to do, even if inadvertently. Because at a cocktail party at Danny Robbin's house about two weeks later, like there were two women standing in the doorway. And one of them looked reasonably human.

[00:39:38.76]

So I turned to her at one point, because there was a lot of flack going on, right? And I said, "Well, when you go to a gallery or a museum with a friend, I mean, don't you find that you want to look? And if you discuss anything, it's usually after you've left. Like you don't want anything standing between you and the work, because that's simply a distraction." And I said, if it's necessary to tell these kids about something, then they know who to ask. It's just the way, you know, if you take your kids to a good nursery school, they're usually left alone. The stuff is all there. They know who the teacher is. They don't have to be guided to do like all kinds of things.

[00:40:25.81]

So then she sort of had to nod, right? And she's the one that told me later that I had split them straight down the middle. [They laugh.] I mean, like straight down the middle. This fight went on like, you know, endlessly. And finally towards the end—well, at one point, Hazel said the woman who was next to her left in a complete huff. Like she just darted out of there like—

[00:40:49.57]

Anyway, this horrible lady who ran the place—At one point, after I was winding down a bit, said—well, first of all, she said, "You know, your child is different." And I said, "Well, I've never made a special effort. Of course, she's been around art and she's going down to galleries with me, but I really don't think it's different." [And I've taken their friends. -Ed.] Of course, I was making all this up, right? [They laugh.] So I wasn't sure that was true.

[00:41:15.12]

But in any case, at some point she said something like, "Well, if you just let them loose in the museum, they'll just go look at the mummies." And I said, "What's wrong with that? I love mummies." And then she really got furious, right? [They laugh.] And I do love mummies. And if a kid comes to the museum to see a mummy, then the chances are he'll come back to see the mummy, and in the process, see something else and get familiar—

[00:41:42.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: On the way in and out.

[00:41:42.78]

MARCIA MARCUS: —and enjoy the museum, right? Okay, and that's the whole point, you know, and I said, well I go to the Met in New York. And I see young kids like ten or eleven. And they're obviously not there with a group. And they're looking all around the Egyptian.

[00:41:57.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everywhere, yeah.

[00:41:57.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. And they're going there. You know, you see school groups and it's hateful, because they want to stop and look. And the teachers say, "no, no, no." And I said, of course you don't let them loose in the whole museum.

[00:42:06.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: 200 things in 200 minutes. Yeah.

[00:42:08.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Like you can take them to a room, and say, "You know, you have to

stay in this room." But if they want to ask questions, they will. They should turn each other on. And the interesting thing was that a few days later I walked in, and the lobby of the museum had a lot of beautiful ancient things in it, like it was part of the museum, really. It wasn't just the lobby.

[00:42:28.57]

And I walked in there. And off in one corner, there was a lady clutching a purse and looking very suspicious. And thank God it was working because all these kids were all over the room. There was not a sound. They were not rowdy or anything. And they were doing exactly what I said they would do. You know, they were looking, and tugging at each other, and showing each other things, or reading the labels, but looking, instead of this horrible herd crap that goes on that stuff. Of course Ilsa Koch didn't, but you know.

[00:43:01.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, you've had some shows in Provincetown, right?

[00:43:04.15]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, many.

[00:43:04.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And how are they? I've often wondered, you know, [Tirca] Karlis and various people who do exhibitions up there. Do they sell things? Is it just for the artists, or—

[00:43:15.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, I mean, the whole scene is so completely different than it was, say, ten years ago that it's really kind of depressing. I didn't show at all this year. Well, I did. There was a show at Karlis' of women artists early in the season. He invited me to that. But in general, it's really pathetic, because when I first went up, the first year, the guy who had the jewelry shop showed a few paintings—like it wasn't a complete thing. You know, it wasn't a gallery.

[00:43:49.66]

But he did, that summer or the next summer, I think it was the next summer—it was '53—show, I think, Wolf Kahn and Lester Johnson and Gandy Brodie. And I think that was about it, because it wasn't really a gallery. And I don't know when the Sun Gallery opened, but that was the most vital, because that's where Red [Grooms] showed first. That's where I first showed, you know, it all in Provincetown. And they showed all the young artists.

[00:44:25.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who ran that again?

[00:44:27.34]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yvonne Anderson and Val Falcone. He was a poet and she was a painter. But now she's done that Yellow Ball Workshop, which has become unbelievably successful. I mean, she spends more time traveling around.

[00:44:40.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know what that is.

[00:44:40.63]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it started out by her, I think, running—I don't know if she worked for a school system because they moved to Everett, Massachusetts. And I don't know if she had a group privately, you know, with—started with her own kids. Like her daughter is just Kate's age, and boy is about two or three years older. And they did sort of cartoon animation film. And it became like a whole thing. I mean, she travels like all over the place, setting up this kind of program and telling people how to run it. And she showed some films in Provincetown a few years ago. And she's really good.

[00:45:23.06]

But when they had the gallery, it was really exciting because it was the only place the young artists could show. I think Kootz opened up there for a while. And then Nat Halper took over when he popped down, right? And there were a number of galleries. You know, then it exploded like around 1958. And there were, I don't know, maybe six or eight or ten galleries all over town.

[00:45:45.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did anybody ever sell anything in the summer?

[00:45:47.38]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, sure.

[00:45:47.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who bought things?

[00:45:49.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, during '58, when Chrysler opened up its things, it was like another Monopoly game in which I didn't participate, unfortunately. But I remember, there was a guy that I was seeing. And I went out to the store to get some groceries. And when I came back, he'd sold like, I don't know how many thousand dollars worth of paintings. Like one of the collectors had come in and bought something in the 20 minutes I was gone. [They laugh.]

[00:46:13.22]

And it was like that for about two or three years, like it was just an explosion. And people bought—you know, even I sold a few things, but not much. But there was just an enormous explosion. And some people who know more about it than I do said that when there was a particular hotel that was run on very old grand lines closed, then there was no place much that collectors wanted to stay. And maybe the scene was so strong in New York by that time that they didn't need it, or whatever. But gradually it disappeared into almost nothingness.

[00:46:50.31]

So there is a market for a certain kind of thing. Karlis apparently did very well because it's the first year, of course, that he's running himself since Tirca died last November. He was sort of freaking out, but he sold sort of odd things. Like not—the people he used to sell well did not sell. And then he sold kind of odd things, but apparently did very well. You know, I don't think it could have all been sympathy sales, but money, all the same.

[00:47:21.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, one of one of the things that you did, as I guess everybody has done, is the teaching circuit, one school after another kind of thing.

[00:47:32.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: That—

[00:47:32.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: what started that?

[00:47:34.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: —is not really true.

[00:47:35.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No well, I mean, but you've been to various—

[00:47:38.09]

MARCIA MARCUS: Only recently.

[00:47:39.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but when did that start?

[00:47:40.71]

MARCIA MARCUS: The very first thing I did was a visiting artist thing, I think, in 1964, because someone that I knew in Provincetown, Tony Vevers—Have you ever been to Provincetown?

[00:47:54.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

[00:47:54.95]

MARCIA MARCUS: Really? Never? You poor darling.

[00:47:58.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I keep putting it off. [Laughs.]

[00:47:59.38]

MARCIA MARCUS: Go over. Go up at Christmas. But anyhow, he went out to teach at Purdue.

[00:48:06.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:48:08.03]

MARCIA MARCUS: And he invited me out for what amounted to, I think, two and a half days, or something. And that was the very first thing I did. And it was the most casual thing because it's—well, except that I did the Rhode Island School later that was similar, where you just go around to the classrooms, talk to the students very informally. Then the last thing I did, which I was very annoyed about because [I was shy and he promised to stand up with me. -Ed.] There was a guy who was sort of taking me around to different classes and to see some of the graduate student work. And they'd set up like an auditorium session at the end.

[00:48:46.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was for—

[00:48:47.42]

MARCIA MARCUS: This is Purdue, still. And I had never really spoken in front of people. And I didn't—the idea made me very uncomfortable. So I said, "Okay, if you stay on one side and Tony stays on the other side and you don't leave me up there alone," right? So of course, they brought me into this—luckily, a small auditorium. Took me up to the front and then sat down. [Laughs.] So I was left up there alone.

[00:49:14.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There you were.

[00:49:15.53]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. And the classroom scene had been fine, especially in this other guy who I can't remember the name of the class, because the students were good. Actually, the best student was a guy who'd switched from engineering, which must have killed his parents because he was from somewhere out there in Indiana and probably had never known about art until he got to Purdue, and then had gotten his first taste and switched over, right? And he was certainly the best student in the class. I vaguely remember like another girl who was

very talented.

[00:49:52.89]

Then I went into Tony's class. And Tony is a goof, and as long as no one's going to—especially Tony's going to hear this—because I went into that class, which was supposed to be more advanced. And in the first class, like they were honest, straightforward, no bullshit. And I brought like two or three small paintings with me so that they could see what the real paintings looked like, because I don't even think I had photographs with me or anything. And certainly no slides. And they asked questions that were completely direct, like about the surface of the painting, like things that were real, right?

[00:50:32.20]

I go into Tony's class and he's asking me things like how I live. I mean, the dumbest questions in his class were asked by him. And there weren't many good ones, partly because the teacher sets the tone, right? Like in the first class, the guy didn't, as far as I know, didn't do more than introduce me, or talk very informally. Like, I really don't remember. But it wasn't much.

[00:50:57.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That always seems to be the best.

[00:50:59.22]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. Because then the students—

[00:51:01.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You're on your own and they do their thing, and you do yours.

[00:51:03.48]

MARCIA MARCUS: And they ask like real questions, because they were complete innocents, especially since I presume most of them were from around there. So their contact was really minimal. And they didn't have any of those pseudo sophistication like the Cooper bit, which I told you about, or any of that. And of course that was earlier, besides, but it was very straight and fine. And then I went into Tony's class and of course, the dumbest questions he asked, but then he tends to do that anyway.

[00:51:37.05]

But at this—it was very sad in a way, because he gave me a party on the evening of the first day I was there. And I was having a fine time, because I like parties. [They laugh.] And I'm really a party type. And I'm having a marvelous time until at some point when I guess everyone was getting drunk and they started coming up and apologizing for it being Indiana.

[00:52:01.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All right.

[00:52:02.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: And to me, Indiana was very exotic. Like, I'm a native New Yorker, right, so I'm like, to go out as far west as Indiana, which is still as far West as I've ever been, was extraordinarily exotic. So I, you know, just kind of blinked. And then I started feeling like, blah. And when I did this auditorium thing, in that case, the students were not very vocal, because most of them aren't unless they've been primed, like this last thing I did at Parsons with a teacher had the first session said, like, "How would you like to be up there and show your slides?" And then it ended and nobody opens their mouth.

[00:52:39.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

[00:52:40.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: So that was like the easiest thing I've ever done, because all during the course of the slides, people were asking questions. And it just continued and it was, you know, marvelous because—

[00:52:49.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was the Parsons?

[00:52:51.09]

MARCIA MARCUS: It was about three weeks ago. So I, you know, perfect. That's the way it should be. You know, when they feel free to ask everything, including like coming to the painting class, which I refuse to answer [they laugh], but at least, you know, they felt free.

[00:53:05.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They always ask that.

[00:53:06.62]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, this is the first time that ever happened.

[00:53:08.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Cause most people say that's a question they always get asked. "How do you figure out what are you going to charge for that?"

[00:53:17.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, no, he didn't ask that. He just asked how much that particular painting was. But in any case, what was sad is that when the only question [at Purdue -Ed.] I really remember is one guy asking, "Do you have to be in New York to be a painter?" You know, I don't remember my precise answer, except Tony reminded me of it a couple of years ago. And I think I said that sooner or later, like you have to face it. I mean, you have to face it. If it's not in New York, like one of the big centers, because, I mean, I presume at a certain point you could live somewhere else. But I think you can only do that after you've kind of established, and you gone through the thing.

[00:54:02.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, yeah.

[00:54:02.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: And I don't mean just in terms of like contacts or professional things, but I think just in terms of your development, you have to like meet that challenge, because if you don't, like, you don't have that feedback. I don't know what that means, but, you know. I mean, you don't have that kind of—

[00:54:21.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've got to meet other artists.

[00:54:23.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, you have to see how you shape up in terms of what's going on, and whether you like it or not, you know? But you have to, like, face that scene. But it was rather sad, you know. That part of it is sad. But I really haven't been on the teaching circuit in that sense. I mean, I've tried a lot.

[00:54:43.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, you were at Vassar, and you were somewhere before that.

[00:54:45.05]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but that was all in the last, like, five years, because when I needed to financially, but also felt ready to because there was a point at which I was offered a job like three times removed, like two people turned it down and then someone told me about it. But it was to Kansas City, and what they offered wasn't enough to disrupt everybody again after that French experience. You know, like, I wouldn't have made any more money than my husband did, and to disrupt all of us for a year, just go to someplace that I didn't really want to be, it just wasn't worth it.

[00:55:22.31]

And also, I didn't really try for a long time because I didn't want to teach, because I didn't feel that I could verbalize very much. And then like after the Rhode Island thing, the next year, George invited me up as a visiting artist for two days, you know, to do essentially the same kind of thing, but even more informally, because that was really awful. Because they didn't even know what my work was like.

[00:55:48.50]

And luckily, I brought a book with me. But I walked in, and in half the students I found out later, like they seemed very weird, that I found out when I got back to George's house where I was staying, that they were probably high as kites. [They laugh.] You know, like one girl couldn't find her paintings [she had a huge painting of a whale -Ed.], you know, and it was a quite small studio space. So it was a little peculiar. But then, you know, there were a few good experiences, still, because as I said before, there were always like two or three people who are really serious and that you can offer something to.

[When I separated from my husband and decided to not take any more alimony (which was minute) I took a substitute teacher's exam and failed the performance part, which, as I remember, was to do a figure, landscape, and still life in watercolor, a medium I could never do, and only recently have approached in a different way with sometimes good results. -Ed.]

[00:56:21.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what about Vassar? Because that was a lengthy adventure, plus your exhibition.

[00:56:26.14]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was through Lennart, because I needed the money, because by that time I was separated from my husband. Certainly I couldn't afford to do two things. But that was after Baton Rouge. Baton Rouge, I got because Bob was offered it.

[00:56:45.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Bob?

[00:56:45.91]

MARCIA MARCUS: Bob Beauchamp. And I wrote to him. We had just bought a house, and I needed money. But also, I think in the back of my mind, I needed to get away, even though consciously I was just concentrating on the money part. But I wrote to him and said, could you suggest me as possible visiting artist? And he did. And the guy knew my work and was one of the few people who had never discriminated against women in the school system, which was refreshing. You know, like not that he made a point of it, but it simply was not a problem.

[00:57:19.00]

Like, he wasn't hiring women because he had to, because I think that was even slightly before it became federally necessary to have a certain number of women or minorities hired. And I went down there. And ever since then, I've been teaching at least more or less. But the last thing was through Lennart.

[00:57:41.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. How do you like that?

[00:57:42.23]

MARCIA MARCUS: I mean, well, it's extraordinarily boring, which people I've talked to who were, like, real artists [laughs], you know, have the same feeling about. Like after about—like, a month would probably be the right amount of time. If after that, the students were sort of on their own—like, you still can herd them a bit after that. But you've really said, essentially, everything you have to say after about the first two or three sessions, and then the rest of it is repetition. And it can be extraordinarily aggravating, which it was at Vassar, where the structure was pathetic. I mean, there was no division between beginning, intermediate and advanced.

[00:58:30.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? You mean all in one place?

[00:58:31.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it was on paper, but if you couldn't register for one—and that was like the worst scene of all. But also there's great antagonism because of this creep who finally retired, who had wanted a real separation between the art and art—I mean, the studio and art history department, which is standard in most schools, but in this case is really ridiculous because the studio department consisted of three people in three miserable studios.

[00:59:03.65]

And if you've spoken to Sidney Geist—you know, he's been there for a long time—you know, it's pretty pathetic. And I'd asked some students—first of all, the classes were completely overcrowded. And I asked a few students, you know, like, why are they taking it? You know, especially the ones who wouldn't listen to anything I was saying, and didn't want to even hear anything. And they wouldn't even say for relaxation, which is a valid reason. They would say for therapy, you know. [They laugh.]

[00:59:32.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: A-ha. Their analyst said. [Laughs.]

[00:59:34.37]

MARCIA MARCUS: But still, there were like the two or three students. And I fought like hell, especially with one guy who reminded me of Lennart, so I had a special feeling towards him—like physically he looked like Lennart, but also he was very talented. And I fought for months to get him to remove the garbage from his work. And then after about three months, he finally came up with this incredible drawing.

[00:59:58.16]

And I said, "That's what I'm talking about." He said "Oh, that's the way I used to draw." And then I realized that this creep, who is—I mean, he had set it up so that he was teaching the other half of this course, which meant that we had to get together on grades, which is really absurd. And he had destroyed this guy's natural thing with all this overlay of shit, like dots and dashes and activated surfaces, which is like the handy way of saying like all this stuff that has nothing to do with anything, right?

[01:00:26.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[01:00:26.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: So was like three months of hard, desperate work on my part, because this guy obviously was slightly male chauvinist by nature, so that he tended not to feel that I was, you know, as believable in terms of teaching as this creep was. But finally, I got him to that point. And then, of course, he was very happy after that. And he's now, as far as I know, at Boston Museum School or something, where he belongs, because he's extraordinary.

[01:00:58.66]



PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[END OF TRACK AAA\_marcus75\_8070\_m]

[00:00:03.82]

MARCIA MARCUS: [In progress]—because then—

[00:00:05.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side six—

[00:00:05.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: —you're not dealing with so many extraneous things, like making dinner, getting the bills paid. I mean, you are, but you're alone and you have the time to do it. And part of it is boredom, so you do all these other things.

[00:00:19.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that's where the growth really comes, don't you think? I mean, sitting there, doing it by yourself with—

[00:00:25.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I think it's also important to be alone. At this point—you know, in the beginning, you're alone and you don't like it. Because you'd rather be with somebody. But when life gets very complicated, every now and then, you really have to stop and kind of—just do—in a sense, this is like doing nothing. Because, for one thing, I'm enjoying it. And I'm incapable of doing nothing.

[00:00:57.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, something's always happening.

[00:00:58.57]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Like, I'm always doing three things at once if I can manage it because it's more efficient.

[00:01:02.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Even painting—with the children, who are in school now and away most of the time—so you're here fairly undisturbed except for a cat and a dog.

[00:01:16.82]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well—

[00:01:17.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or are you locked up?

[00:01:18.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: That's actually good for my figure. Because even walking the pathetic creature twice a day—just walking up and down stairs at least puts me that much ahead of when I never left the house for days at a time.

[00:01:31.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But do you find that you work more now, that your work—

[00:01:41.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: No.

[00:01:41.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —is different, or—

[00:01:43.10]

MARCIA MARCUS: It varies. Because—this summer, I worked, like, enough to kill myself.

[00:01:47.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:01:47.96]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because I wanted to do one more painting. Well, I also—

[00:01:50.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is that a standard summer procedure or—

[00:01:52.89]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. I'm not a person who works either in the summer or in the winter. It depends on the situation. I had gotten into a thing where I was married, where—Well, as I said, my husband helped a lot so that—but I was always aware that, at some point, everyone was going to be home, and I would—if not actually make dinner, prepare it. I function best in the morning. And he would always say, "I have to make dinner." Making dinner meant putting in the casserole in the oven that I had made in the morning. So it's not exactly the same thing. Like, I'm really not that bad.

[00:02:33.81]

But you're aware that something's going to take place. And when you're completely alone, there really is no distraction except the ones you make yourself. I had a rather complicated first half of the summer, which I didn't have to. It was by choice. I'm not making excuses. At the end, I realized that if I didn't just stay put, I would just never finish that thing in time for the show. And I wanted to, desperately. And then I was working like a maniac. Because for one part of it—and then there are dead times. I can only work at that fever pitch for a certain point, and then things fall apart.

[00:03:13.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you work every day, generally, or so many days—

[00:03:16.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I can't say generally, because—

[00:03:16.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —or so many hours or—

[00:03:18.38]

MARCIA MARCUS: No, because—

[00:03:18.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's no given pattern.

[00:03:19.45]

MARCIA MARCUS: —it depends. No. Like, I haven't done a thing on that since this whole apartment thing has taken place. And, obviously, I'm not going to do anything until I move. But I don't mind—I mean, there's nothing that I have to do it for. Like, I did have a very disruptive last year because of Cornell.

[00:03:44.74]

And therefore, I felt that I—I was working on a very large painting when I left. And I was absolutely distraught because I hated to leave it. And the first time I came back, I was frantic and tried to work, and it was a bomb out. Like I just drove everyone crazy, including myself. The second time I came back was more or less by accident, like I wasn't going to come back.

[00:04:09.58]

I went to Poughkeepsie, where I'd left a screen with a friend of mine to have stretchers made for it. And I went to pick that up. And that was the weekend that the New York Telephone Company exploded. So I came into New York because I didn't want the kids coming down here unless I could sort of survey the scene. And I came in—certainly not expecting to work, because my coming in was an accident. And I worked more and better than I had when I had come back especially to work. You really—

[00:04:44.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You never know, in other words.

[00:04:45.54]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. This is the one that I was working on when I—and I hated to leave it. And it's enormous. This is the one I worked on this summer on the—

[00:04:54.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's the screen.

[00:04:55.94]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Yes. Jane was very impressed, too. She'd never seen it, because only if you've been to Syracuse, you've seen it.

[00:05:04.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how did the Everson exhibition appear and all that come about?

[00:05:09.52]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because I was at Cornell. I had forgotten that someone I'd met in Provincetown, who had a frame shop, lived in Syracuse. And sometime last December, I got an invitation from Lila Katzen [ph] to a party honoring this guy. And just before we left the house to go to the party, I ran back to look at the name because I didn't want to be embarrassed. Because I'm terrible with names. And I've gotten worse with age, as everyone else has. So it's not as embarrassing now when you realize nobody else remembers anyone's name either.

[00:05:48.92]

Like, even though I didn't, it's conceivable. Even though I've known you 20 years, I could meet you on the street and not introduce you—either decide not to introduce you if someone else was there because I couldn't remember your name or have to ask you. But it wouldn't be too shocking because everyone else is like that, right? So now you don't take it personally. Because I'm sure it's happened to you before.

[00:06:09.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the time, yeah.

[00:06:10.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: All the time. So it's not that bothersome. Anyway, so I get to the party, and I'm talking to people. And all of a sudden, I see this guy. And I go, oh my God. That's Ron Kuchta. And even though I didn't know him well, I certainly knew him to nod to him Provincetown because he was Chrysler's curator. And, needless to say, Chrysler never bought anything of mine. But I did know him, at least to nod to and say hello.

[00:06:40.44]

So then I felt—well, it was then I went up and talked to him. And he introduced me to his assistant, who became the person who actually did my show. And he said to me, "Someone told me just the other day, we should have a show of yours." And I said, "Who was it?" And he said, I can't remember right now. And I said, "Well, I hope you do, because it's always good to know who your friends are." Because I do like to know who my friends and enemies are. It's better that way.

[00:07:10.06]

Anyhow, that was the end of that. And it was casual. And then I went to Cornell the next month. And then, of course, at that point, I finally—at the end of the party—remembered who it was. And then I thought, oh, that's right. He lives in Syracuse. So I woke up one morning at Cornell, and the sun was shining brightly, even though it was cold as hell. And I called this guy. And I thought, this is a good day to go to Syracuse and visit. Because I did a slide lecture at Syracuse. But when they asked me, Did I want to go to the museum or did I want to go for a ride in the country? Before, I said, "I want to go for a ride in the country," which I did. So I'd never seen the museum.

[00:07:56.77]

Anyway, I called Roy Simmons, who was the guy that I had known, and he wasn't there, but his son was there. So I said, "Tell him that Marcia Marcus called and I'll be starting for Syracuse, and I should be there." Anyway, of course, as soon as I got toward Syracuse, it started to get grayer and grayer. [Laughs.] And then it finally started snowing. Anyway, Roy picked me up at [a garage -Ed.].

[00:08:20.80]

And just as a kind of afterthought—not really like an afterthought—like, I consciously did it. On the last trip to New York, I brought up a book—well, this book of photographs. Because my students didn't know what my work was like, which I think is an indication of how the people who hire you for these jobs really don't want you to be there. They kind of have to. They couldn't care less about the students and about how important it is for them to meet a real live artist, who functions as a real live artist.

[00:08:54.46]

So I put up an announcement, and I brought a couple with me. And, of course, it immediately got stolen. So only about three people ever got to see it. [Laughs.] So I brought some more up with me the next time then and my book. And when I called Roy, I thought, well, why not? So I brought the book with me to Syracuse.

[00:09:15.11]

And Roy, who in his sleepy, casual way, is really kind of fantastic—and which was not my real purpose in going to Syracuse. It was just because I was bored, right? Okay. Said, "Oh, I'll try and get in touch with Ron." And he called him up, and he couldn't get him. And he tried to get him in touch with Sandy, who's the assistant director.

[00:09:40.07]

And, finally, we went over to her house. And I left the book. And she had Ron's number, but he wasn't home. Anyway, I left the book with her. And we spent the rest of the day in Syracuse, and it was very pleasant. And, of course, it snowed all day, naturally. And I'm going up there in January. And I didn't want to really go up there [laughs] because I know it's going to snow all the time.

[00:10:04.43]

Anyhow—and I went back to Cornell the next day in the sleet and the snow and the whole—and I completely forgot about it. Because I came into New York, and my kids had a week off for winter vacation. And they were going to come back, each with a friend. And I had arranged for them to stay at the house where I was staying because no visiting artist was going to be there that week. So they have a room of their own, which was heaven, because I

had a tiny apartment. And they made their own breakfast. And the room was like—you can imagine with four girls, regular teenagers, right—like a nightmare. [Laughs.] I didn't even want to go up—

[00:10:48.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Party, party.

[00:10:49.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it wasn't a party. It was just a raving mess. But it was great because I didn't have to deal with—[Telephone rings.] [Dogs barking.]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:10:57.91]

Okay. So I brought the kids back with me for their thing, and I got to, like, the first day of teaching after I came back, and I picked up my mail and there was a letter saying they'd be happy to have the show. And it was so easy. Like, it was the most painless thing I ever did in my life, which was fantastic. Because I really had made no particular effort except bringing the book up there. Roy had paved the way.

[00:11:24.32]

He's so extraordinary, in a way. He is an artist in what I would consider a small way because he doesn't—like, everything in his show—which he had in April, I think—sold out because he doesn't do anything unless he's having a show. And he does kind of constructions, which are not really like the Bagosian, but they use elements like that, that kind of natural wood, plus other things. And they're really quite pleasant.

[00:11:57.20]

And he's very modest. And in his lazy, quiet way, he showed me a fantastic day. Like, we casually dropped in on people, and we casually went out to dinner. And the people there—he assumed I was going to drive back to Cornell. Because for him, driving for an hour at 11:00 o'clock at night is nothing. These other people immediately figured I wasn't very happy. [Laughs.] So they invited me to stay at their place.

[00:12:25.79]

I was going to ask Roy, except when I saw his place, it was much too small. It's a tiny house, and he's got three kids. So it was impossible for me to stay. So I was very happy. But in his quiet way, he had paved the whole thing and made it easy. So I'd almost forgotten that I'd even made the effort. And I think whether anything financial comes of it or not, it was an excuse for me then to write to Noel, who I met at the same party, who had just done a review of mine. We happened to sit down on the couch at the same time. And she introduced herself, and I introduced myself. And she said, "Oh, I've just seen your show. You're in the review." [Laughs.]

[00:13:08.33]

So when this happened—and now with my new awareness that I've got to do for myself, I immediately wrote to her and said, I'm going to have a show. Would you like to do an article? Because Richard Martin had come down, and that was a real, let's say, salt in the wounds kind of scene. It was like when I got the distinguished but unrecognized thing and got \$500 less than everybody else, right? Okay. He came down here to do an article on me the previous fall but before I had the show at ACA. And he looked around and said, "How come you're not more famous than you are?" And then, of course, his article never came out. So I wrote him—

[00:13:48.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You called him.

[00:13:49.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: —a note. I didn't call him up. I wrote him a note. And I said, "Well, you're not doing the thing. It's a perfect example of why I'm not—" you know, how could you be that—I didn't say that—but how could he be that sympathetic and aware? I have my own feelings about why he made it, wanted to meet me and do a thing.

[00:14:06.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened?

[00:14:07.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I suspect certain things—you know, not overt. But in the back of my head, there's that possibility. Because, certainly—his excuse to Noel was that he didn't feel as managing editor he should be writing individual articles. But the fact is he's written a number of articles. And it was really extremely irritating.

[00:14:34.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But sometimes those things come out eventually. Like this. [Laughs.]

[00:14:40.66]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, but eventually is not good enough for me. I want it, and I want it now.

[00:14:47.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, I was going to ask you, since you mentioned the ACA, you had a show at Zabriskie at one point.

[00:14:53.76]

MARCIA MARCUS: A-ha, yes.

[00:14:54.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then we'll get to ACA.

[00:14:56.99]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because she is kind of incredible. I'll tell you the facts and my conclusions and the sequence of events because I think they're really connected. I had a show there, and it was only because of the extraordinary effort on the part of the person who works for—who I don't know if you know—Sue [Suzanne -Ed.] Vanderwood.

[00:15:22.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:15:23.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, she and her husband had bought a painting of mine at Tirca's in Provincetown a few years ago. And she saw one painting in the show. It was a very good show—not as good as the last one, which I think was the best show I ever had. The Everson is that much better because of the two new paintings. But it was a good show. And it's obvious that anything that she shows, Hilton Kramer falls flat on his face and does a whole number for it. People speculate on why. I have no idea why. Because when I had a show there, his review was quite cool. The previous summer was when we bought the house, and we were dead broke. And I mean dead broke.

[00:16:03.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The house is where?

[00:16:05.06]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, it's in the Irish Catskills, which I didn't know existed—

[00:16:09.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Irish Catskills?

[00:16:10.30]

MARCIA MARCUS: I didn't know they existed until I bought the house. Anyway, she had sold a drawing, which was another sheer accident because it was during the course of my show. And I walked in there one day, and there was a guy there from Utah. Actually, I should put that down because I guess that's a good collection to list as [inaudible].

[00:16:32.96]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sanguineti?

[00:16:33.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Who is it?

[00:16:34.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sanguineti?

[00:16:35.89]

MARCIA MARCUS: I don't remember the name.

[00:16:36.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, [inaudible].

[00:16:37.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: What collection? What [inaudible]?

[00:16:39.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: University?

[00:16:40.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Oh, then I should add that to my biography. [Laughs.] Right? Anyhow, he was there. And then he liked the show, and he said, "Do you do drawings?" And I said, "Well, not many." I have very few because I just don't do it anymore. But I had a few, and I brought some up the next day. One of them was one actually I did in Florence, which was a self-portrait, and that's the one he bought.

[00:17:04.57]

Anyway, I wrote to him in the summer, and I said we desperately needed \$500. "Could you advance me the money or lend it to me or something?" And we all know that she's not impecunious. And I got a letter back, which said that even though she had not been paid for the drawing yet, there was \$360. And she's always liked my little landscapes, meaning she would buy a little landscape for \$140.

[00:17:36.35]

Well, I don't sell anything to my best friend for \$140, right? And I wrote her back a very careful, quiet letter saying that when I was with Charles Alan and he bought anything—which, of course, was true, because we all know that I don't lie—that he would take his gallery discount, plus maybe 10 percent—or sometimes not even. He once commissioned me to do a portrait that he gave to his mother. And then he just took the third off.

[00:18:12.23]

Anyway, she stuck me with \$360, and I ended up having to borrow money from a friend. And I think that set the scene for her future antagonism. When my show came out, Hilton Kramer did review it, but very coolly because he doesn't like my work—probably naturally. But I

think that if she had been feeling better, she would have gotten him some—

[00:18:36.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tickled him under the chin.

[00:18:37.75]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the thing is, when he did that extraordinary review on Nadelman a few weeks ago.

[00:18:42.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but that's one of his things. I mean—

[00:18:44.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: He likes them? You mean, he really likes them?

[00:18:47.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

[00:18:47.49]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes, but my—

[00:18:48.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the review.

[00:18:48.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: —first reaction was, this is the kind of thing he only writes for Virginia. Then, of course, I found out she was having a Nadelman show, too. [Laughs.] Or when he did that thing on Zorach about the bunnies, I was going to write him a letter. And I'd say, everyone loves bunnies, but no one likes sculptures of bunnies. Besides, Zorach isn't that great a sculpturist. I mean, it was a hysterical review. It was really ridiculous.

[00:19:10.42]

Anyhow, during that same summer, I went to visit someone who had bought a painting from Charles years before and who, years after I met at Charles's gallery—he was one of the most astounding people I'd ever seen in my life. And that's Lawrence Bloedel. He was a collector who you probably know. He has one of the most fantastic faces ever, right?

[00:19:34.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't met him, but I know his wife, and she's incredible.

[00:19:37.76]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, he's unbelievable. Anyhow, I looked it up on the map. We were going to Provincetown because I was having a show there. And I wrote to him and asked if it would be okay if I stopped by, because I hadn't seen this painting for a long time. And the kids, of course, had never seen it. Because it was, like, 1962 or something. And in the back of my head was, I really want to do a painting of this guy because he's so fantastic. And I did take a picture of him, which I use in my slideshow, partly because I don't have a slide of the actual painting, and partly because then I follow it with the painting I did of him.

[00:20:21.38]

And I went there—I took the photograph first because I wanted to do a painting. And then when I got to Provincetown, I thought about it. I mean, I was quite well aware of the pitfalls of doing a painting of a collector, right? And then I thought, well, this is ridiculous because I do not want to work from a photograph from him. Because he is just absolutely incredible person and fantastic looking. And if it was anybody else, I would have asked them in a second, right? So I thought, well, the hell with it. So I thought about it for a week. Then I



wrote to him, and I said, what I really had in mind, I do want to do a painting of you. And he had said as we left that he comes to New York from time to time. And I think maybe when I took the photograph, I had mentioned that I would like to do a painting. I'm not sure about that.

[00:21:17.50]

But in any case, I wrote back and said that he did say he came to New York from time to time, and I really wanted to do a painting of him. And I did not want to work from the photograph. Would it be possible? So he did, and he sat for me. And he went in there one day and mentioned it to her. And then I got a phone call—and he ended up buying it. But that was definitely not my motive. And, in fact, that was almost a deterrent because I felt very peculiar about that kind of thing. Like, when I did one of Walter, I did it because I wanted to do Walter. And he brought up the possibility of buying it halfway through. And I said, please don't say that. Because every time that's happened, I've screwed up the painting—

[00:21:58.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Chrysler.

[00:21:59.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: No.

[00:21:59.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Walter.

[00:22:00.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: Walter Gutman.

[00:22:00.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Gutman.

[00:22:01.11]

MARCIA MARCUS: Are you kidding, Chrysler, pose for me?

[00:22:02.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you never know.

[00:22:04.68]

MARCIA MARCUS: First of all, I wouldn't want to do him. But besides that—

[00:22:06.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Walter Gutman. Yeah.

[00:22:08.60]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. And I didn't really want to discuss it, because I just didn't want to do that. Anyway, he mentioned it to her. And at that point—it might have been towards the end—and he had mentioned something. And I said, again, I don't want to talk about it right now because I want to work on the painting.

[00:22:28.10]

Anyway, so she called up and demanded a full commission. And I said, "Well, first of all, I don't think that's fair because he is a collector from a long time ago. I did not meet him through you. It is not a commission painting." Maybe at that point, I didn't even know if he was going to buy it. I'm not sure. But Sue called me up because Virginia tends to get other people to do her dirty work. And she got on the extension and said, "Pick up your paintings."

[00:23:02.01]

Anyway, so he felt very badly about that. But I'm sure the fact that I wouldn't sell her painting for \$140 had something to do with it. And then, immediately, I got on the phone, and I called Mary Franks and said, "This is confidential," because I don't want to get her into anything. And I said, what's your arrangement with Virginia about studio sales?

[00:23:20.32]

And that's always a funny thing. Because the dealers know that you sell to your friends, for example, without ever telling them. And most of them—like, she said, "Well, I had a contract with 20 percent, and now it's just sort of understood. But, needless to say, things take place that don't ever get to the gallery." Okay. Then I called up Red and asked what his arrangement was with Johnny Myers, and he said 15 percent. And I called up a few other people. So the fact that she demanded a full commission was absurd, to start with, and unfair.

[00:23:53.59]

Then, of course, I got an incredible number of other kinds of stories, because you always do in a situation like that. And I wrote her a long letter and told her exactly what I thought about her methods of dealing. And it was extremely unfair. Unfortunately, for my career—apparently, you're supposed to eat shit a lot. This is not my style. [Laughs.] I prefer not to.

[00:24:16.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

[00:24:16.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: Right. Okay, but it was bad in the sense that they had just moved. And it would have been a good place for me to stay, even though they hadn't done much. But Sue likes me a lot, and she likes my work a lot.

[00:24:33.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And she sells when she wants to. I mean, really—

[00:24:36.49]

MARCIA MARCUS: Virginia? Oh, she sells the things she owns.

[00:24:38.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but Sue pushes stuff too.

[00:24:40.58]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. I mean, the only reason anything got sold is because Sue knocked herself out, to the point where Virginia said that it made her sick to listen to Sue on the phone selling that painting, right? Okay. So at that point, it was really very difficult for me, partly because I was working at Vassar, and I was working on his painting a lot—so that I didn't have time. I put some things with ACA. I can't even remember how it happened. I think it was through Benny Andrews because I was calling him about the forum. And it turned out he had moved to ACA. So I put some things there on consignment. And they did sell a couple of things.

[00:25:23.25]

And I really felt I needed a show because I hadn't had them for a long time. And I approached a few of the places I had gone before with no results. And at this point, I've approached almost everything that's within reason, plus a number of others that other people recommended me to. And nobody was having any, right? And I was terribly depressed, as I need hardly say. I also didn't have time.

[00:25:50.17]

And they wanted me to go with the gallery. And they wanted me to have a show. And fortunately, or unfortunately, as the case may be, I bumped into Charles on the day—actually, finally, I got honest with him with Sidney Bergen, who runs it. And I told him exactly why I didn't want to go with him. And he said, "Well, the image we have is something that I felt I had to maintain because of people who started the gallery. And I'm going to change it." Obviously, he hasn't succeeded.

[00:26:25.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, but he does do a lot of backroom dealing with things that move.

[00:26:27.40]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but he does things that are on the market, which I found out recently, which is like another scene, which makes all the things that I said about Virginia to him rather amusing. Because she'd rather deal with dead artists. Like, you buy something from the estate, and it's cheap. And then she—because I found out, during the period when I was so curious, that—like, when she used to buy things from Lester Johnson, for example, then he'd have a show. It was great for him to have things being bought by his dealer because it meant he could survive. But when the show came, she would push the one she bought.

[00:26:59.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure.

[00:27:01.00]

MARCIA MARCUS: All right. But she doesn't really need the money, you know? And, obviously, the artists do, constantly. [They laugh.] Except for the big-timers who sell their things for, like, \$80,000 a throw. And I've never gotten to that, ever. It's a whole other number. So it hasn't been very good financially. And also, well—

[00:27:30.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you did show with ACA, though. I mean, often—

[00:27:32.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I had a show last November.

[00:27:33.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:27:34.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the thing is, as I walked around thinking about it, I bumped into Charles. And of course, I should have—

[00:27:39.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Charles—

[00:27:39.88]

MARCIA MARCUS: Alan. And I should have known that his advice would be in terms of his own thinking. And Sidney was honest, and it was a long-established gallery. And Ivan Karp had told me that nobody cares where anyone shows anymore. But, of course, that's Ivan. I've known him for a long time, and he never did zilch. If anything, I have suspicions that he's probably, like, put me down in terms of other things, which is maybe not true. But there is a kind of mafia going, as we all know.

[00:28:12.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right.

[00:28:12.85]

MARCIA MARCUS: So I did, simply—partly because I couldn't stomach the whole process all over again, because I'm in a very difficult situation now. Because I do have a certain reputation. So approaching galleries is almost more difficult than if you're totally unknown—I mean, at that point, before the big bust. Like, if you were young and talented, you had more chance of finding a gallery right away or having a good splash than if you were in my category, which was like, if you haven't made it by now—[laughs.] So I thought at least it was moving laterally, if not up. I don't know that that's quite true now.

[00:28:55.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I always think it's important to find a dealer who can sell one's work.

[00:29:00.49]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, but they can't. Because they're people—when they buy really contemporary things, like cute little things, people playing ball on the green or sitting in a boat or something, you know. And they really—

[00:29:15.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Has he been able to do anything for you?

[00:29:17.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: No.

[00:29:18.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it still isn't resolved then.

[00:29:22.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. But I thought, of all the places—I mean, people said I should have gone back to all the other places again. But I had no stomach for it at that point because I was working two days at Vassar. I was painting like crazy—so that I had—I had practically no social life because I'd be painting. And then, all of a sudden, it was Sunday. And the next day, I had to go back to Vassar—so that I had very little time to do it. And I felt I must have a show.

[00:29:49.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How many days do you teach at Vassar?

[00:29:51.12]

MARCIA MARCUS: Only two. But it was totally disruptive. I am not the kind of person who could do it. Like, Sidney told me something that I thought was astounding—but then he's not the best sculptor in the world either, which may have something to do with it. But he would teach his two days at Vassar, come back to New York, and the next morning teach at the studio school, which would have totally killed me, because even though it's only a two-hour trip, I'd be just wiped out when I came back. And I just couldn't do anything.

[00:30:21.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but he does it in a kind of offhand way, I think, after all these years. And he's got his—

[00:30:26.95]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't.

[00:30:27.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —patterns and—

[00:30:27.84]

MARCIA MARCUS: And especially there, it was the worst thing outside of Cooper because it was such a devastating scene. The best experience has really been Cornell because the students are smarter. I did my usual thing, came in the next week, and looked around in a state of shock and thought, my God, they're doing it. They were actually doing what I had said. And that was the first time that ever happened, you know? [Laughs.] And I mean in general. There were always like a couple who tried something. But they really did work hard. And they really were smarter in general, even though there were the usual freakouts and stuff like that. But it was really—

[00:31:10.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. One thing that intrigues me is the fact that there are these two paintings here, one of Red Grooms and—

[00:31:16.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, it's not one of the best paintings in the world.

[00:31:18.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but it'll serve a purpose. And this recent one, which is—is that Pallas, Athena or something?

[00:31:25.48]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, it's a terrible little sculpture. But the day and the photograph really worked out.

[00:31:32.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, that painting is much more dimensional.

[00:31:37.96]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because, first of all, that's an acrylic.

[00:31:40.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The Grooms, yeah.

[00:31:40.93]

MARCIA MARCUS: Second of all, I started it, and in four days, it was fantastic. And then I went away and took it to the country, and I was going through a very difficult time. So after these first four fantastic days, it was like nightmare alley for the rest of the painting. And it just is not one of the better paintings.

[00:31:56.99]

It's only up on the wall because somebody was supposed to come down about ten days ago, and he didn't. And I've been clearing out the racks. And otherwise, I'd just—actually, Red wants it. He wants to trade it for a head that he did of mine. Mimi doesn't because she really has a problem about portraits for some reason.

[00:32:16.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really, in what way?

[00:32:18.49]

MARCIA MARCUS: She doesn't want them around. There are people like that.

[00:32:21.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder why.

[00:32:22.99]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the thing is—like, another form of my naivete, which a friend of Walter's pointed out during the time—Walter Gutman—

[00:32:32.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:32:33.67]

MARCIA MARCUS: —was that when Walter posed for me—first of all, I think Walter is marvelous. He can be absolutely horrible. He can also—like, at a time when I didn't know him, when I was in a very bad state, like in 1958—as I said, I never forget an enemy, but I also never forget a kindness. And I hardly knew him. I was walking down the street [in Provincetown -Ed.], and I was extraordinarily upset.

[00:32:57.07]

And he met me. And I don't think he asked about the state of my mind or anything. [Laughs.] But we met. And he said, Would you like to go to the A-House? which was the big deal in Provincetown. And he took me to upstairs at the bar. They used to have good singers and jazz things. And it used to be a really terrific place—which is now just about defunct. And he was unbelievably sweet and kind—and can be. He's one of the most intelligent people I've ever met.

[00:33:32.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's true.

[00:33:33.41]

MARCIA MARCUS: The only thing that's wrong with him were his weird sexual things, which he sometimes visits on you. Like I've been to parties where he reads from pornography and stuff like that. [Laughs.] And it's extraordinarily boring. He also can be one of the most incredible people in my life.

[00:33:50.06]

Anyway, when he was posing for me, I mentioned to someone who had known him much longer than me how marvelous it was that he was posing for me. Like, brought down his own cushions and everything, because that was part of what I wanted to do about him, right? Because he had a particular kind of posture type thing. And she looked at me like I was really out of my mind.

[00:34:16.70]

And she said, well, people pose for you because they're egotistical. And I looked at her and I thought, "Oh, I thought people posed for me because they were doing me a favor [laughs] and they weren't egomaniacs." Anyway, I don't have the photograph. But that was the first time it occurred to me that any ego was involved. I really thought my friends were doing me a favor and it wasn't because they liked the flattery of being asked to pose.

[00:34:49.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, lots of reasons.

[00:34:51.13]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, the thing is, a lot of people asked to pose for me during this time. And probably I should have done some of them because it could have been beneficial, shall we say, to my career.

[00:35:02.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Have you done many commissions of—I mean portraits of people—

[00:35:06.86]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. The one commission that was really in terms of commission—I still cannot believe how I fucked up. And that probably made an enemy for life out of Henry Geldzahler, who arranged it. And I won't even go into the details because they're still painful—and this is well over ten years ago—because I can't believe that—because I never did that to anyone in my whole life—like, not be here. There were certain reasons that I thought it was all right, and I did keep calling back. Unfortunately, there was a point where I didn't call back. And the woman showed up, and I wasn't here.

[00:35:44.72]

And most of the commissions—I would say all of the commissions I've had—have either been friends, or they have been people who had known my work and collected it and then asked me to do a painting because of their knowing my work, and therefore—like, no one has ever walked in off the street, seen a whole bunch of portraits of myself or other people and said, "I would like a painting"—like, a total stranger.

[00:36:18.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They all had some familiar—

[00:36:21.02]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, like this. Because they knew they would be getting a painting, not just a portrait. Like, if I went—

[00:36:28.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Portraits [inaudible] or something, yeah.

[00:36:30.15]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Actually, I was very angry once with Sally Avery because she suggested I go there. And, of course, those people make unbelievable amounts of money.

[00:36:38.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, they just grind them out.

[00:36:40.70]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, when Terry was working in a very fancy boys' school, we went up to someone's house. Because the guy had liked what he'd said in a school meeting and hired him for someplace on Fire Island to do the athletic program. And we went up to these people's houses, and there was a portrait of their kids on the wall. And it was, you know, like a pleasant drawing.

[00:37:06.77]

And I looked at it. And they were sort of collectors, in a way. She ended up buying like a very tiny flower painting, which was very important. It was pleasant and nothing—and I looked at it. And I was a little surprised. Because they had—like, her favorite artist is Mary Bauermeister. And she had a whole bunch of other things of similar ilk on the walls. And then there's this very conventional drawing. And she said, Oh, well—I can't remember the guy's name now—but his mother had given it to them as a gift, this portrait of her and the kids.

[00:37:46.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, standard, standard item.

[00:37:48.84]

MARCIA MARCUS: And it was very small. It was something like—I don't know—12 by 16. It was essentially a drawing. And it cost \$4,000. And it killed me because it was—it wasn't as bad as some, like this thing that's at Bergdorf's now and Vita Davison or something. And she probably gets, like, \$25,000 a portrait. [Laughs.]

[00:38:14.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, she's a social—portraitist.

[00:38:17.03]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't know about that whole scene. But I was very annoyed with Sally when she thought of that as a way for me to make money. But then there was a point at which our friendship really deteriorated. Because it was one of those things where it was like the artist's wife becomes the artist and forgets who really did the work. No doubt she helped his career by supporting him and standing by him and all that. But there was a certain—like, I found myself for about a year doing double takes constantly by the things that she said.

[00:38:49.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is which? Yeah. How do you find this thing now that you don't have a husband here, watching the girls when you're working? Or don't you—

[00:38:58.46]

MARCIA MARCUS: What do you mean?

[00:38:59.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I mean, your working schedule now, is that—

[00:39:02.43]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh. Well, I was living with someone [Richard -Ed.] up until last week, and he's coming over later. He's moved into another place because he was an incredible slob, and I just couldn't stand it. And we had constant fights. He's much younger than I am, which is not the problem. The problem is a personality one. [They laugh.] [His and mine. It was actually the most mutual relationship I ever had and lasted five years. -Ed.]

[00:39:21.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what about the girls? Because they're big enough to fend for themselves now, aren't they, pretty much?

[00:39:26.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: That's what they think. No, they were primarily living with Terry. Now, at least, the older one is delighted that she has a place. She really wants to live with me. And there are things that have been happening lately that are just unbelievable. And I'll put this on the record because it may be important for someone who really cares in the future. But she told me something the other day when she came—well, the day she came down, when she ended up making dinner—she'd come down primarily to help clean. But I was in no condition to tell her to do anything. [They laugh.]

[00:39:57.64]

Okay. Well, later, after you left and after the guy downstairs, who I had invited to dinner, left, we talked. And Terry, apparently, only recently had said to her, "Well, your mother never wanted children." And that, of course, was a total lie. And I said, "Jane, that's just not true." And she said, "I know." And it's devastating. And she's felt that way for quite a long time. And she wanted to live with me, but she didn't want to be here.

[00:40:21.37]

And when they started school, I think she might have even stayed here, despite the horrors of the neighborhood. And she's developed an ugly walk around here so nothing goes wrong. But she's wanted to live with me because he's been very strange the last couple—well, I suppose he was strange all the time. But I am a very strong person. And he did what I wanted. And that was part of the problem. Like, if I asked someone an opinion—I may not like it, but I really mean—like, if I say to you, "Do you like this dress?" You can say, "I hate it." And I'll say, "Well, I happen to like it." [They laugh.] But I'd rather you said you hated it and tell me the truth. And he was constantly telling me what he thought I wanted to hear.



[00:41:05.81]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Yeah.

[00:41:06.80]

MARCIA MARCUS: And that was part of the problem but not, obviously, all of it. But when I heard that, I was just devastated. Because there's nothing more important for a teenager than a good relationship with their father. And nobody knows that better than me. I did not have a good relationship with my father. When he died, it was devastating. I was 27, but that didn't mean anything. Because there's no way to remedy it.

[00:41:27.44]

But at this point, it's horrendous. And I think it's been upsetting her for quite a long time now. Because when I came back from Cornell, for example, the first thing that happened was she came down here and she burst into tears because he was being so weird. And it's very, very unfortunate. Because she feels she can't talk to him. Like, whatever problems we have—and she's very free to tell me what's wrong with me as a parent. On the other hand, we can talk about everything. And she understands the work thing. That's why I'm not worried about working in the living room or anything like that.

[00:42:00.68]

First of all, they will be gone most of the day. I've always had to contend with that during the time they were small, so that's nothing new. And it's better now because they can go into the kitchen if I'm still working, which is not too likely. Because I have a certain point—unless there's something I really want to finish, like the thing this summer—I have a certain time span which is preferable.

[00:42:23.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you usually use daylight, generally, or—

[00:42:24.88]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, only. Yeah. I haven't worked at night for years, except under very weird, unusual circumstances. But I would say—almost without exception—not.

[00:42:35.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long would you say you've been using just daylight?

[00:42:41.35]

MARCIA MARCUS: About fifteen years. [Laughs.]

[00:42:42.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? That's a long time.

[00:42:44.84]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah. Actually, I guess since—maybe partly it had to do with my not having to have jobs anymore. When I had had a job, obviously, I had to work at night. But even then I think I prefer daylight. I'm a day person in terms of work. One of the horrible things about Vassar was having a class at night. And I hated it, partly for that reason.

[00:43:13.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

[00:43:13.64]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I don't function. I tend not to do anything at night if I come and—

[00:43:18.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The day's over with then. Yeah, yeah.

[00:43:21.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: And then I finally collapse. If I'm alone, then I find I can do things, simply because I can do it at my own pace. And I can putter a lot and get things done slowly, whatever, if I have to. But certainly, in terms of work, I don't.

[00:43:36.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, one of the things that we haven't really touched on is kind of an underlying concept—[Telephone rings.]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:43:54.21]

—an underlying concept of what goes into your paintings or how you make them. Or is each one such a separate—

[00:44:02.31]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, it's really by feel and instinct. And I've said it more and more to students as I have become more and more aware of—that is really what it is. I don't think I use the word as much—I think probably I did if people ask me about my own work and they said something like "composition." Like, I would never teach it because I don't know what the hell it is. But it's not something that interests me, how art is [inaudible]. Empty an ashtray. Anyhow—

[00:44:39.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. So—

[00:44:40.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: No. Like, when students have finally gotten to trust me and then have finally opened up and began to talk about other teachers and what they said and how they didn't feel comfortable with it, I'd say, "Well, your instinct is right." I mean, this is obviously with the best students, right, who do have something. Like, there was a girl in Baton Rouge who was extraordinary. And I got her to work on one painting, essentially, for the whole term, so that at a certain point she and a friend came to me virtually in tears. Because the teacher who happened to be the head of the department had canceled the model after two sessions. Having studied with me, they had barely gotten started. So there were all these starts and no completions.

[00:45:30.46]

And it was not until at least halfway through the term that she began to talk about how upset she was about him. And I said, "Well, you're right." I don't think I said it that flat. Like, I am a better artist. And, therefore, basically, what I can do is save you time by pointing out that you are the one who can judge what feels comfortable to you. You have to trust your own instincts.

[00:46:01.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think—

[00:46:02.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: It's like the placement of things and what I want to do. I know that something is right for a certain thing. And I've been right—like, in terms of portraits, I think of it as paintings. But they've worked out psychologically so many times after the fact that it's extraordinary.

[00:46:17.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean that?

[00:46:18.17]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, to get astrological again, I did a painting of someone in 1968. And this is an example. Okay. She was not someone I knew well. I met her through a friend of mine who has that shop, Knobkerry on Spring Street. She was working there. And she was extraordinarily beautiful. And she was about 17 at the time or something. Anyway, she came up and posed. And when someone does that—I really don't do that anymore. Because I haven't wanted to do that for at least two or three years. So I haven't asked anyone to sit for me or anything since then, really.

[00:46:58.43]

And they move around or whatever. Or I've seen them in a certain kind of thing. Like, the person who just called is somebody that I had asked to sit for me one summer when we visited her. And then I let it drop because nothing struck me after that. And I realized at some point that she looked fantastic during the summer. And nothing really worked out.

[00:47:20.21]

And one day, she took us to a concert. And she had had her hair done a different way, and she was wearing a fantastic coat. And I asked her to sit for me then because it was visually interesting. And eventually, actually, her husband bought the painting for their anniversary or her birthday or something. But this girl, for example, would move around, do the certain things. So I decide how to do it. In this case, I posed her against a mirror which no longer exists because a cat knocked it over. [Laughs.] It was a very large mirror—about seven feet tall and about two and a half feet wide with a big, heavy frame—gone because of a small, rotten cat. [They laugh.]

[00:48:08.68]

Anyway, she posed in front of it, and we talked. And, of course, [inaudible]. And the painting was over, I think, before I found out she was a Gemini. One thing I don't know—which maybe you can find out—is Henry Geldzahler. Because he's one of the few other people I ever posed against a mirror. I don't know. But it's like a double image kind of thing.

[00:48:28.96]

And it was funny because this girl was basic things, and she was so young. There wasn't a strong personality. Like, she is, but it wasn't really developed at that point. It was more the beauty. Like, visually, she was interesting. But that way, that's very superficial. But this person who just called, it was interesting. Because I went to a party at her house. And she's the best cook I know—and I know a great many, which is why it's hard to keep my weight down. [They laugh.] But she's the best because she is the kind of person who would dare to make an incredibly simple meal because everything she does is perfect, right? I vividly remember many meals in her house in detail. [They laugh.] And you don't often do that.

[00:49:20.51]

OK. I painted the painting. She was happy with it. Obviously, her husband was. I was at a party at her house. The painting's in the living room. Some guy came over to me very belligerently and said, "How can you paint Barbara like that? She's a vivacious person, and you've made her look angry." So another guy who was standing close to me turned around and said, that's not angry. It's tense. And Barbara really is tense. And so I gradually eased away and let them fight it out, right? [They laugh.]

[00:49:46.92]

But the fact is, in relaxation, she is tense. Like, she's told me—which had nothing to do with how I felt doing the painting. I just did what I saw, right? But I didn't require her to have a certain expression or anything like that. Whatever anyone falls into is what they do. The pose is something I decide on, in terms of what feels right, whatever that means, which means it feels right to me in terms of whoever it is, whether I know them well or not well.

[00:50:17.25]

And the fact is that she is tense. And she's told me before some of these incredible parties

that she's given in which she's the perfect hostess and is cheery and smiley and gay, she is literally sick. I mean, I knock myself out for three or four days before the party and everything, but I don't get sick over it. Because I don't feel that my reputation is at stake if something doesn't go right. I prefer everything to taste good and be okay, and I'm tense in a different sense.

[00:50:48.50]

But the fact was that the second guy, of course, was right, that there is a tenseness there. And I never thought about it. I don't think about things like that because I don't think it's important. Because I think you can't avoid that kind of thing getting into your work, whatever it is, whether it's non-objective or something.

[00:51:06.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean it's just—

[00:51:06.79]

MARCIA MARCUS: You can't aim it. I mean, I don't want to aim it. A few times, I have, but it's rare. Let's say those are the exceptions, and then I had a very strong feeling about it. But, in general, I do not aim a painting—like, in terms of someone, if it's of a person or even—well, myself, it's a little bit different. But then I can manipulate myself into whatever thing it is. And that's confused people. I don't know. [Laughs.]

[00:51:32.87]

Well, because some people have been astounded by the fact that—well, actually, in that article that Noel wrote, she said I paint myself—in everything, I'm a withered crone. And I try to think of something better than that because I can't think of anything—like a withered crone—or a young, innocent girl. And I don't really think of it that way when I'm doing it. There's a look that appeals to me. I look at myself in the mirror and, you know, sometimes. I know I look marvelous, and sometimes I look hideous. And in terms of painting, it's interesting to me because I'm flexible that way, in terms of certain paintings. I don't know. But I don't really think about it in terms of, like, "I am going to look this way because that will fit in with this painting" kind of thing.

[00:52:30.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. But what about the ones where you wear, say, cloaks or a Greek helmet or—

[00:52:36.26]

MARCIA MARCUS: Because I like it.

[00:52:37.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

[00:52:38.32]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that was really like the start of what we can refer to as my Greek period. [Laughs.]

[00:52:43.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which continues.

[00:52:45.04]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yes. Because once I got into it, then I thought—I really felt at home. I think part of it was like coming out of the closet, in a funny way. And that book on Kerouac really helped. Because I suddenly realized, why am I denying this thing that really struck me as a child? I loved those stories. It's the only thing I can remember. I guess I read the comics, or my parents read them to me. But that's not anything that meant anything. I read all those things. And I remember reading my cousin's *Hardy Boys* books because they were

certainly more interesting than *Honey Bunch*, which my mother bought me. [They laugh.]

[00:53:22.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

[00:53:22.97]

MARCIA MARCUS: But that really had nothing to do with the work or any fantasies, or anything like that. But that painting was interesting because Terry found the dress—like, a whole [big -Ed.] box out on the street near the school one day. And he brought it home, and it had an unbelievable 1930s dress—it must have been a wedding dress. Because it had a huge veil and a kind of headdress. It was pink.

[00:53:43.82]

And the whole thing is net. It took me about an hour and a half to iron that thing. And I knew I wanted to do a self-portrait and do it that way. I had no conception of what I was going to do other than that, in terms of background. I don't like to use words like that because it makes—like, maybe I have an illusion about my work, but I don't like to think of it in terms of background or foreground. The whole thing should just be there all at once. But it's handy in a way.

[00:54:11.87]

Within like, three days, the whole thing was put together. Because one of my kids came back with a book on Athens, which I still own, because I tried to get—I borrowed it first. I told the school that I wanted to use it. And then they tried to get another copy, and they couldn't. So they sold it to me and bought something else for the school.

[00:54:32.54]

Anyway, I looked through that book, and I found one of the best photographs of the Acropolis that I'd ever seen in terms of—again, using it as a subject for a painting. And I've always loved helmets ever since I was in Corinth—and maybe before that, but I don't remember particularly—but that drawing I did in Corinth from a helmet. And I looked through the book, and it had the thing. And I had to make it up somehow between the drawing and the one in the book because the pose wasn't [inaudible]. And it was a little difficult since I'm not very good at that sort of thing.

[00:55:08.34]

But it somehow all fit together because the way the dress was made was so precise and so beautiful. Because when I was in Greece—well, I told this to Noel. And I don't even remember now if it got into the article, but—the egg-and-dart patterns on the columns were as exciting as the sculptures. Because as much care and love went into defining those shapes as went into the whole sculpture. And the dress was like that. It was incredible. So it all fit together all of a sudden. Like, in three days I had the whole painting. I mean, I had the idea of it.

[00:55:42.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. How long does it take you to do one of those large [inaudible]?

[00:55:44.90]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, that one took a long time because I wasn't really working a lot, because things were going on in my emotional life that were—

[00:55:51.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Interfering at the same time?

[00:55:52.01]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, exactly.

[00:55:52.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —taking time? But if you start a painting that has, say, four or five figures in it, that's fairly large.

[00:55:59.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, well, those took—God knows how long—maybe six months—or maybe more than that. Because I worked on them both—I mean, this whole room. Because they're each about seven by eleven. [The "Friezes." -Ed.] And there was one on this side of the room and one on the other. And there was a narrow thing through which I could pass so I could get to the rest of the house without crawling underneath.

[00:56:18.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you work on many paintings simultaneously or usually one at a time?

[00:56:21.30]

MARCIA MARCUS: That's a question that, actually, the students at Parsons asked. And occasionally I do. When I was at Cornell, obviously, I worked on something up there. And then I came back and worked here. But, in general, it's rare, unless I'm doing something like the flower things that are going to die. And then I'm just trying to get the flowers. And then I kind of leave the rest of the painting until I've done that perishable part. And that's a whole other thing.

[00:56:45.20]

But, in general, I don't. Because I found—well, I'll say the same thing I said to that student—that I think as you get older, your energy level might go down, but your concentration gets greater. And, therefore, if I'm really involved in something, then I really don't want to work on something else. When I was working this summer on that screen—

[00:57:05.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's a focus on one—

[00:57:06.39]

MARCIA MARCUS: There was a painting that I had kind of started, which had to do with roses. And I had done it here. I brought them back from Provincetown, and I was here about four days or something. And so I had to do the roses part all in one day in the thing it was in. And it was sitting there on the wall all summer long. And especially towards the end of working on the screen when I was going through all this nightmare of working on it—I began to wish that I could do something which was almost like a relaxation from what I'd been doing. Then my mind is a little bit divided. But I really don't work on two things at once.

[00:57:43.81]

Because if you're really in it—unfortunately, I rarely have—there's usually some kind of distraction. I can't shut myself off from everything because I'm just—it's like when people say stupid things like "the sacrifice," especially since women's lib and people have become more aware of women artists and mothers and fathers. And I remember someone asking me when I did a visiting thing at Moore College in Philadelphia, "was it difficult to be a wife and mother and paint?" And it wasn't until I was on my way home that I thought I should have asked him, is it difficult to teach and paint?

[00:58:19.78]

Like, it's a distraction, right? But it's a choice you make. I would not have wanted to do one or the other. And if I was just a painter, I would have been unhappy. And if I was just a mother, I would have been unhappy. And so somehow—but I don't think of it in terms of a sacrifice because that's stupid. I mean, it's a choice.

[00:58:37.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. Do you have anything we might talk about or touch on quickly, or do you think you've done your lecture today?

[00:58:44.09]

MARCIA MARCUS: It's like on television, ten seconds left.

[00:58:44.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, ten seconds left.

[00:58:48.65]

MARCIA MARCUS: Yeah, what do you want to ask?

[00:58:49.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, no, I'm not—I don't have a question.

[00:58:51.47]

MARCIA MARCUS: I don't think I've ever painted better in my life.

[00:58:53.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. You mean it improves as time goes on?

[00:58:56.18]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, I think it's more than that. I think it's more of a realization or, like, letting things come back, or be more open than I was able to do before. I don't know. I don't think my painting are as stiff as they were before. I don't know. That's something that—

[00:59:17.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you go back and look at older work, or not very often?

[00:59:20.21]

MARCIA MARCUS: Oh, yeah. I just got rid of three marvelous paintings I've had in my bedroom, like, I don't know how many years. And I like them. It's just the way I can say, I think that's one of the—not a good painting. First of all, it's acrylic, which is not a good medium.

[00:59:36.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You don't like that.

[00:59:37.73]

MARCIA MARCUS: It's too nervous-making for me.

[00:59:39.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean, nervous?

[00:59:40.28]

MARCIA MARCUS: Well, because I work slowly, and you have to work fast in acrylics. And even though I use them very thinned down to start with, it's still not—

[00:59:49.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's too—yeah.

[00:59:50.03]

MARCIA MARCUS: —comfortable. I like some quality color you can get in acrylics that you can't in oil. But no, probably I'll never do another acrylic because it doesn't— [It can't be

pushed around like oil, or at least I can't get the subtleties I can with oil. -Ed.]

[01:00:01.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Why don't we—

[END OF TRACK AAA\_marcus75\_8071\_m]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]