Interview with John Paul Miller
Conducted by Jan Yager
At the Artist's home in Brecksville, Ohio
August 22-23, 2004

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with John Paul Miller on August 22 and 23, 2004. The interview took place in Brecksville, Ohio and was conducted by Jan Yager for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

John Paul Miller and Jan Yager have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose.

Interview

MS. JAN YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller in the artist's home and studio in Brecksville, Ohio, on August 22, 2004 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disk number one, session number one.

John Paul, could you tell me when and where you were born?

MR. JOHN PAUL MILLER: I was born in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, in 1918, April 23rd.

MS. YAGER: Can you tell me the name of your father and where he was --

MR. MILLER: His name was Abram Brown Miller. And he went by the name of Brown all the time, which is a strange first name, but everybody called him Brown.

MS. YAGER: In what year do you think he was born? Do you remember?

MR. MILLER: I don't know. I think he was around 34 when I was born. So --

MS. YAGER: And where was he born?

MR. MILLER: I think he was born on a farm near Curryville in Blair County, Pennsylvania. And my mother?

MS. YAGER: And your mother, yes.

MR. MILLER: She was Mary Hershberger and she was from Everett, Pennsylvania which is near Bedford, Pennsylvania. And she died in 1919, just a little over year after I was born in the flu epidemic of that time. So I have no memory of her at all.

We had moved to Cleveland. My father had gotten a job teaching here and so she died here in Cleveland at that time. But she had been an artist. She had done watercolor paintings but she was the head librarian at the College of Juniata in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. And she had gone to library school in Philadelphia and installed the first card catalogue at the university. And she was one of six sisters in the Herschberger family and three brothers. So it was a big family.

MS. YAGER: Tell me what your father was interested in?

MR. MILLER: Well, he taught mathematics. He first started teaching in a one-room school house – everything, you know, in Blair County and he went to Juniata College. I think he was doing something at the college when he got the job here teaching in Cleveland. He came to Cleveland to teach at the Training School of Western Reserve University for teachers.

So he was teaching junior high, but he had training students from the university who were observing his classes and learning to teach in his classes. Actually three other people from the college came at the same time he did. They didn't teach in the same school that he taught in but they

all were living here in Cleveland at the same time -- college buddies of his.

MS. YAGER: So you were raised in Cleveland?

MR. MILLER: No. When my mother died, one of my aunts, one of her sisters, came and took care of me and then my father kept on teaching. But I went back to live with both pairs of grandparents who lived in -- one lived in Everett and one lived about 24 miles away in Curryville, Pennsylvania which was just sort of a railroad stop and I would live with one set part-time and the other grandparents the other part of the time. Amazingly, I -- whether it was the shock of the changes and so on, but I can remember a lot of things that happened in those early years still. I can remember lying in a cot beside my grandparents' bed at both houses and having to -- if I wanted attention or something, having to reach up and get their attention, then up on the bed.

I can remember being -- I had a cousin Betty who was born just a month after I was born and she lived with her father and mother in Everett and her mother died the year after my mother died. I don't know whether it was a whole year. But anyway, I can remember at the funeral that was held in the house and the casket was in the living room.

And my father had me upstairs because there were enough people there that the people were listening to this sermon all through the house and I can remember he gave me his watch on a gold chain that I played with up there. And then I can remember he carried me in his arms and I can remember going down that stairway. Of course, it was an unusual thing, but there was the casket in the living room. And so I can remember that.

MS. YAGER: You were a year old?

MR. MILLER: Well, no. By that time, I was about two years.

MS. YAGER: Goodness.

MR. MILLER: And then Betty came to live with the grandparents in Everett and we were just a month apart. So, some of the daughters were still in school and so they could help take care of us and my grandmother was a great, great person and so was my grandfather, for that matter. But -- so we grew up just sort of like brother and sister until when I was five. Well, my father would come back and visit every once in a while which was traumatic for me because I didn't want him to go back to Cleveland without me. But when I was five, he remarried.

He remarried a math teacher where he was teaching in Fairmont, whose name was Florence. And then they brought me to Cleveland. But I continued every summer well until I was in my teens going back to my grandparents in Pennsylvania and spending maybe the summer vacations back there mainly with them and eventually with some of my aunts who had married and were living back there.

I had strong ties with the mountains of Central Pennsylvania. I used to go out with my grandfather on the farm. I'd go out with him when they were bringing in the hay and ride the hay wagon through the fields and saw the rattlesnakes. They'd pick up the wheat sheaths, and often there'd be a rattlesnake in that. They'd throw it up on the wagon and then the rattlesnake would go out and they'd have to kill it with a pitchfork and so on.

And we'd lie under the wagon when a rainstorm would come on. I have vivid, vivid memories of all that early -- and I don't know if this is important -- things like the circus coming to town with my cousin Betty and I and cousin John who was older than we were. We'd go up and meet the circus train when it came in and watch them unload the animals. And then I'd go up -- and I had an Aunt Belle, and she lived right on the main street over a store and had a little porch. We could go up on her porch and watch the circus parade when it went through town. A lot of that early period was, I think, very important to me.

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller. This is track 2. Let's see. I want you to describe a little bit about your childhood neighborhood. You did some with the country

experiences. How about in Cleveland?

MR. MILLER: In Cleveland, I lived in a neighborhood that -- well it had mixed -- there were no blacks in the neighborhood. It's all black now. But there were no blacks there. It was fairly near the school where my parents taught and I went to Hough School. We had one black boy, Clayton Townsend, who was a wonderful guy in my class. It was a good school.

My mother, my stepmother knew some of the teachers in the school as Sorority sisters. She had gone to school at what was then Flora Stone Mather, a women's college which is now part of Western Reserve. But she'd also gone to Europe for two years -- I think just two years -- with her sister who was a singer. And they went to Vienna and lived in Vienna for two years. And she had heard [Gustav] Mahler conduct and the operas and orchestra and [Theodor] Leschetizky, who I think was living in the same apartment that they were living in. So she had a very strong interest in cultural things.

I remember -- the kids in the neighborhood, I mean, I was out with them. But I can remember one thing that surprised me now when I think back on it, that there was a house that was vacated, but a lot of the stuff was left in it. And I remember I was the youngest kid, I was left outside a window and the rest of the kids went in the house and stripped all the things, all of it that they thought worth taking out and handed them to me out the window. I don't know how much of this my parents knew. But anyway we moved from that apartment to another one that was within walking distance of the school. But it overlooked Rockefeller Park.

There was a whole system of parks that runs along a stream in Cleveland right up to the museum [The Cleveland Museum of Art] and on up into the Heights to the Shaker Lakes. It goes all the way up. So we overlooked this wooded area and a lake down there. A wonderful place to play. And there was an abandoned brewery, a huge building that was sort of a wonderful place that we kids weren't supposed to go over there. But we would get into it and a vast interior you could holler in and so on.

And there was skating on the lake in the winter and sledding because the park went down into where this stream was and there was a valley. And they closed off the road that went through the park in the winter so that you could sled down the hill and go out across the road. You didn't have to worry about stopping before you got to the road.

There were gas lamps all along the road at that time, and there was a lamplighter that came at night and lighted the lamps. And this isn't all that critical, but anyway.

MS. YAGER: Do you remember a favorite game?

MR. MILLER: A what?

MS. YAGER: A favorite game, or a favorite toy?

MR. MILLER: I remember I played marbles, you know, in the school yard. But I was never much of an athlete at any point in my life, so I don't remember -- I had a toy train, eventually, which was a big thrill to have that.

MS. YAGER: So you went to high school, what was the high school you went to?

MR. MILLER: I went to Shaker High. See, we -- I went through Hough School, through the first half of the sixth grade -- well, the last half of the sixth grade we moved -- this was 1929, we moved at the worst time. My family bought a house in Shaker Heights and the crash came. But I went into the elementary school, in Fernway School for the last -- my second year or second half of the sixth grade. And that was traumatic for me because you had to -- it was a progressive school, and they had an art teacher who sort of ran all the art departments.

And she had decided that everybody should print manuscript writing. And you couldn't -- I had struggled to learn Spencerian, you know, with all the exercises and so on, learning Spencerian writing. And here I had -- anything that I wrote had to be done manuscript, and I had to learn this and it was an awful struggle. You know, if I wrote I had to change my writing, and my manuscript

wasn't very good, but my long hand writing just went completely.

I've used printing ever since, except for my name. But it was a wonderful school system and I greatly enjoyed it. And one thing I think probably is important, when I first came to Cleveland at the age of five my mother enrolled me in Saturday morning classes at the museum. And at that time there wasn't an art class for Saturday morning students, it was a singing class. And so I was a little blonde toddler, but I took singing lessons every Saturday morning.

But that got me started at the museum. And my mother -- one of my mother's sorority sisters was head of the education department at the museum, Mrs. Louise Dunn. And she would take me to the lunch room at noon and cut my meat and so on, and so I had -- and then I roamed the museum until every Saturday afternoon at two o'clock there was a program in the auditorium, and it was usually aimed at children.

And I don't remember too many of them at all, but I got to know the museum because I wandered the museum with other kids. This went on for years. But we saw the changing shows and we picked out our favorite items, objects in the museum, and so I got to know it very well.

Then after that first year, then I got into an art class on Saturday mornings. These were for members' children, and the classes were wonderful. And I remember one of the very early ones was all on Egypt.

And usually the classes had a story time and then you drew pictures from the story or something like that. The Egyptian was a story called "Sokar and the Crocodile," but they taught us hieroglyphics. And I wrote a letter to my grandfather in Pennsylvania in hieroglyphics, I remember how proud I was that I could do something like that. And --

MS. YAGER: How did he read it?

MR. MILLER: I don't know how. Maybe I had to translate -- translation, I don't know. But anyway, those classes were fine. We had several on Greek mythology. And eventually towards the end of my classes there I took one that was a general course with Bill [William M.] McVey, who was a young sculptor at that time. And he had us doing my first -- well, my first and only dry point etching that I did with him, and we did some other sculpture problems and things like that.

But that was great. I mean, that whole relationship with the museum through those early years.

MS. YAGER: I noticed in some of the early catalogs from the museum that the art classes for children were free of charge and that they had videos or films that they would show on insects and nature and things. Do you remember them?

MR. MILLER: I don't remember -- that could have come later.

MS. YAGER: This was later, yes.

MR. MILLER: Because in the early days there were two classes of children. There were the members' children classes and there were the just general children's classes that anybody could bring their child in and they would be assigned. And you were assigned according to your age. There were different age groups for many of the classes. But it really was a great introduction to the museum.

MS. YAGER: Do you remember, you said, you know, picking out favorite objects, do you remember particular pieces?

MR. MILLER: Well, I was entranced by the collection of enameled boxes that the museum had.

MS. YAGER: Were these the Guelph Treasures?

MR. MILLER: No, that came -- that was exciting, but that came later [1930]. No, these were before that. These were French snuff boxes and things like that that were gold, and sometimes there'd be a medallion with a face on it or something of that sort. But they were sort of little jeweled boxes.

And then there was a -- the museum owned this fantastic table fountain that was metal. Of course, it -- well, I don't think it's ever been hooked up to any water. But it's a very elaborate thing, about 20 inches high with all of these sort of like gargoyle things that came out of it that the water would come from. It was something that influenced me very much too.

MS. YAGER: Did you ever do any drawings of pieces in the museum as a child?

MR. MILLER: Oh yes. I did drawings -- nothing that I ever kept, but we did have days when we would go around to a specific gallery and draw things. But I don't remember too much about that. I remember more about the stories and learning a lot about Greek mythology and drawing illustrations of Greek mythology.

MS. YAGER: So this may have started the classical interest?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And the other thing that probably is important too is that my parents, when I was six, they took me to my first opera if I promised to be quiet. And the Met [Metropolitan Opera Co., New York] came to the old public auditorium, and I can remember it was "Carmen," and I was entranced by the settings but, you know, I enjoyed the music. But then my parents were very fond of symphony music, so they took me to the symphony concerts. At that time they were all in the Masonic auditorium. It's where [Nikolai] Sokoloff and the Cleveland Orchestra played.

And again, you know, I really enjoyed -- I got to the point where I really enjoyed symphony music. Actually, in my grandparent's Miller's home in Curryville, Pennsylvania, when I would live with them, my aunt there was a piano teacher. A small town, but she had pupils, and they had a victrola. And they had Amelita Galli-Curci records and a lot of [Enrico] Caruso records and symphony records, things of that sort. And they allowed me to play -- it was one of these big, you know, high standing, old victrolas, but they allowed me to play the records if I was careful.

So even before I moved to Cleveland I had been -- sort of become interested in classical music, which is sort of strange. But I did love classical music at that point.

MS. YAGER: You said you still work with it on?

MR. MILLER: I've always worked with classical music playing. I go into the studio and the first thing I'd do is put on some records or turn on our local classical music station. Then I'd go to work.

MS. YAGER: What do you think -- do you remember an educational experience that just stuck with you, from some of those early training?

MR. MILLER: Well, this is something else that's important and we haven't mentioned it yet, but at that training school there was a wonderful art teacher. Her name was Mrs. Mills. And she was a fantastic person to be teaching in a junior high school, from what she could get out of junior high students. And she did projects with the students with marionettes.

She did "Petruska" [ballet by Igor Stravinsky] with the students using the -- you know this was in the 1920s, using a recording of the music and a staging, and it was done at the museum. It was done first at Fairmont, at the school, but then it was done at the museum for one of the Saturday afternoon performances. It just was incredible what she got out of those students. It was a big puppet stage with -- well, marionette stage, I should say.

She did Javanese shadow puppet shows with the children. She did full-figure shadow plays with very inventive, with lighting effects. And she took me under her wing, and because I was interested in the marionettes she gave me a couple of marionettes. And I put on at Hough School -- my father turned over a table so the legs were up and we put curtains around it, and I made some scenery and I composed this play. And it was put on for the whole school in the big hallway at Hough Elementary School.

I don't know now how if I ever had the courage to -- and the other crazy thing they did, I went to some art appreciation class very, very early at the museum. And they were asking -- they would put a slide on the screen and they asked kids to say what was going on in this scene. And from some of

my answers, I impressed these people to the point where they gave me a box of slides -- this seems absolutely crazy now -- that I took home and went through and went through. And then I showed these slides to the elementary school, again to an assembly, and commented on the slides. And I don't -- I can't imagine how I was very articulate, but --

MS. YAGER: What age were you?

MR. MILLER: Well, I would be, what, seven, eight, something like this.

MS. YAGER: And do you remember some of the images that you showed?

MR. MILLER: I only remember one, and I said, "This is a sea battle, that's all I can say about it." I do remember when they picked me out, there was a painting called *The Song of the Lark*, with a woman that's standing, and I don't remember who did it or anything. Is it Millet or -- I don't know [Jules Breton, 1884]. But anyway, they were asking us what we thought this painting was about, and I said, "I think she hears something like a bird."

And so they thought – [Laughs.]

MS. YAGER: Get him. [Laughs.]

MR. MILLER: But Mrs. Mills was wonderful. She was a big, big influence on keeping me doing things.

MS. YAGER: That's fabulous. Let's see. I have after you were training at the art museum, then you started doing a transition into the Cleveland School of Art [now the Cleveland Institute of Art]?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, well -- yeah.

[Audio break.]

MR. MILLER: I think when I started high school or junior high, I started Saturday morning classes at what was Cleveland School of Art at that time. And at that time they had their regular faculty was all Saturday morning teachers too. And the first class I had was with Otto Ege, who was a really, really brilliant man. He was the head of the education department for teacher training in art with Western Reserve University, but he taught the beginnings, first Saturday morning classes.

And he did -- well, he had us for one thing I can remember, draw the person next to you with a pencil, without looking at what you're drawing. Just do their profile. And I was amazed. I mean, here I had done it, and I couldn't believe that this was possible, to get this likeness without watching what you're doing. And he had us do all sorts of things with memory, looking at something just briefly and then re-drawing it.

MS. YAGER: Wow.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, he was a very brilliant man. He was a calligrapher. He taught calligraphy, and, well, letter design, which I had with him when I finally started going to school. And he collected manuscripts. He had this fabulous collection. I've got -- he gave me – Fred one and me one of these old manuscripts, beautifully illuminated manuscripts. He had I guess one of the best collections in the United States of manuscripts.

A really great person. And then I think the next year I went to a drawing course with -- figure drawing with Paul Travis, who was a wonderful painter. Paul had gone to Africa in the early 1920s by himself and painted and sketched through Africa, and later on I'll have more to say about Paul because he came back into my life very definitely later on. But that was just drawing from clothed figures every Saturday morning.

And then there was another class with a lady, and I can't get her name to come now, which also was a figure drawing class. But the Bates class --

MS. YAGER: This is Kenneth F. Bates?

MR. MILLER: Kenny. He'd just started teaching at the arts school, and he was building his modern house because I can remember he was always telling us how his house was coming along. And we did two enamel trays. And we did batik. I don't remember what else we did. It was sort of a design, craft design class.

MS. YAGER: Was that your first contact with enamel?

MR. MILLER: The first I knew anything at all of enamel.

MS. YAGER: Did you -- you mentioned his house. Did he bring you to the house? Did you see the house?

MR. MILLER: Eventually I went there a lot. It's a rehabbed building. The first sort of really modern house built in Cleveland. You'd go down the lake, and his wife had quite a bit of money, she was a wonderful person. It was a totally modern house with a wonderful little studio. Nothing like the size of ours, it was a bit small, but -- and he was a great, great person.

So I had him for Saturday morning too. And then in high school I had very good art teachers, or art teacher. And --

MS. YAGER: This was at Shaker Heights?

MR. MILLER: Shaker Heights, yeah. And I did my first oil paintings in that class and enjoyed it.

MS. YAGER: Do you remember the subject of it?

MR. MILLER: No, actually I remember, after I did the oil paintings in school I don't remember what they were, we worked on canvas board. But I got two canvas boards in that summer when I was visiting at -- staying with one of my relatives in Pennsylvania, I did still lifes with bottles and things like that. And then I came home and I did a portrait of our dog. And I don't know whatever happened to them, but anyway, they were the oil paintings.

And we did water color, but I don't remember too much about the water colors that we were doing then. And at that time -- well, in junior high I got involved with the stage. They called me out of class one day. They were casting a show, A. A. Milne's "Make Believe." And they thought -- somebody said I would be the person to play a certain character in that. So I was called down to the auditorium and auditioned for this.

And Shaker had hired a man, a director, who was to be the director of all the school dramatic programs: elementary, junior high, high school. And this was his first big -- he came from Colorado Springs, where he'd been in -- well, he'd been the director of the Broadmoor Theater in Colorado Springs. And the director of the Shaker school systems had formerly been in the Colorado Springs school systems and known this man, and that's why he came.

And his name was Sergeant, Mr. Sergeant, a wonderful director. Well, I was in the play, and it was a big production. I was thrilled to be in it. And then Mr. Sergeant formed this group, we were called the Shaker Guild. And you could be in the junior high or the senior high, and we put on independent productions that were not -- they were paid for by the school board but they weren't part of the regular school curriculum. And we would rehearse at night and Saturdays and Sundays and that sort of thing.

And the school board paid for production costs, of building scenery and that sort of thing. And it was extended over into the summer. There was a lake by the Shaker school, a little -- well, you'd call it more like a pond. But it had a grassy slope that went down to it like an amphitheater. And they built a stage, just a platform -- I don't know, maybe 15 by 15 -- that came out over the lake from a grassy area behind that. And so in the summer we put on productions down there.

I remember I was doing sets by that time, and I did a great big backdrop for "Ten Nights in a Barroom," which we had down there. And we did "Abraham and Isaac" with -- I did a stained glass window that was 20 feet high by about 12 feet wide, and it was done with scrim and that sort of

thing and painted with lights coming from behind. But at night it -- when it was lit, it reflected in the lake and it was quite a spectacular thing. I was having a wonderful time.

Another thing we did for one production, I don't remember what it was any more, but we stirred magenta paint -- there was a stream that came into this pond. We stirred magenta paint into the pond so that it all became magenta colored, and we had fake water lilies that we made that had a candle in them. And we floated these at this point in this production out into the lake, so that it was pink or magenta underneath of these -- it was spectacular.

MS. YAGER: Sounds like your first plique-a-jour.

MR. MILLER: But anyway, I was very entranced with stage. We did "Nathan Hale." They built a unit set that you could use in many different ways. There were columns, rectangular columns about 18 inches square and maybe 12 feet high, and some of them double that size and so on. You could paint and move them around to produce the sets.

And while I was still in high school, we took a production of some kind down to Higbee Company was a big store in Cleveland on public square. And they had a theater on the 10th floor, and we took one of our productions down there. And then I don't remember exactly how the ramifications of it came, but anyway, Mr. Sergeant got hired to go down there, and there was a Saturday morning children's theater. There was also a Saturday morning dancing class, and a former Ziegfield Follies girl ran the dancing class down there.

But I got hired to come down and do the sets for these productions down there. And also there was a book reviewer named Dorothy Fuldheim, who had a monthly book review, and she liked to have a set to come down -- she liked to go down steps or make a grand entrance before she did this, so every month I had to do a set for her. And the school, at that time there was a graduating class in January and one at the end of the year, in elementary and high school.

And I had started out -- because of my birthday I had started out early, because I had taken the test and so I started school in January rather than in September. So I was in this intermediate group. So the school, the last two years, gave me mornings off and arranged my schedule so that I could work mornings at Higbee's and extend my schedules so I would graduate at the right time, in the June class.

So I worked at Higbee's and did sets, and had a lot of fun in doing this until I -- well, I think I still did some work down there, must've been after school, even after I started art school. I think I still worked for them for a while. But --

MS. YAGER: Now, I read that when you were looking for college that you looked at a couple of places before you settled on --

MR. MILLER: Really --

MS. YAGER: -- or one other place?

MR. MILLER: I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I graduated. I thought I wanted -- well, I really thought I wanted to be a set designer. My folks were so relieved, and I never knew this until years later, because they thought I was going to go on the stage because I had done so many parts in all of these plays. And actually --

MS. YAGER: They would not have approved of that?

MR. MILLER: Well, my father's cousin, who he grew up with, was Hedda Hopper. And this was a rift in my father's family, you know, it was very, very religious. And Hedda stayed -- loved the farm in the summer, so she stayed with my fathers' family in summer on the farm. She didn't like the city.

And when she ran off -- when this theater company came through Altoona [Pennsylvania] and she ran off to become an actress, it just shocked this very, very religious family. And I'm sure that was

part of the reason my father thought I was just going to go to the devil if I became an actor. So that, I think, was the reason that they were glad that I was thinking about stage designing. Well they took me up to Yale because the Yale School of Drama [New Haven, Connecticut] was really the only place at that time that you could go to study theater and stage design.

And I had an interview, and whoever was the director of the school said, "You're never" -- well, of course this was the Depression time, this was 1936. And he said, "You're never going to make a living at stage design," and totally discouraged my parents. And there wasn't very much money in the family at that time, and so we came back and I said, "Well, I'll go to the Cleveland Institute of Art. I don't know what I'm going to do, but I'll go and get an art training." So that's how I got started there.

MS. YAGER: That was in?

MR. MILLER: In '36.

MS. YAGER: 1936.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: So that enabled you to stay living at home, which would have been some savings?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: What kind of -- the Depression, what kind of effect did that have on your family?

MR. MILLER: Well, it had quite an effect, because at the height of the Depression there were times when the school board didn't have money to pay their teachers, and they wouldn't know whether they were going to get paid that month or not. And we thought -- or my parents thought maybe they would have to give up the house and move into an apartment again some place, and they looked at others but we never made the break.

And the school board passed a rule that there couldn't be two members of the same family receiving a check from the board. So my mother had to stop teaching in the Cleveland public schools, and she was very -- she was Christian Scientist, very anti Catholic. I mean, rabidly anti-Catholic. I think it's typical of Christian Scientists, from what I know. But anyway, where did she teach? She got a job teaching in the Catholic seminary -- teachers' seminary here in Cleveland -- mathematics and how to teach mathematics.

And then -- she was only there for about a year or so, and then she got a job teaching in the Shaker schools, so she went up and she was teaching in Shaker Junior High after -- when I was in senior high.

MS. YAGER: And they never had any other children?

MR. MILLER: No, no.

MS. YAGER: In the Cleveland School of Art, can you talk about some of the classes that you took?

MR. MILLER: Well, you had basic -- first two years were basic courses, you couldn't major or minor in anything at that time, everything was basic. And we had drawing, water color and perspective, design, which was Kenny Bates. Several life drawing classes, one where we were doing sometimes just parts of the body, and another one which was quick sketch.

And we had – one very influential course for me, which was -- oh, what was it called? Historic Ornament. We had a very great teacher. And I don't know how we ever did it, because it was a half day course. We would go in in the morning; she would give us a short lecture with slides on the particular period we were involved with. We'd go back to class and she had a whole lot of plates, colored plates, examples of --

MS. YAGER: Sort of photo images?

MR. MILLER: Photo images of stained glass or sculpture, or enameling, or an art object, or just patterns from that period, and so on. And we had to pick out three and make a plate and render -- not totally, but in color and using different techniques in transparent and opaque water color and so on, place three of these artistically on a page by, you know, 12 o'clock in the morning. But it was a wonderful -- they don't teach it any more, and it was a fabulous course, I learned so much in that course.

MS. YAGER: Drawing is a way of internalizing those things.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: Rather than teaching history of art by text.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. But we had that too, and I would go to sleep and then Fred would have to punch me and wake me up. And we had another course called color and composition, which was illustrations. We'd get some sort of an assignment and we'd have to make an illustration of this idea. I don't -- I can't remember very good because then all of these things would be put up in the front of the room, and we had a teacher who would go through them all and criticize them in terms of color and composition. A very, very good course.

And, of course, Fred -- we were arranged alphabetically, so Fred sat next to me.

MS. YAGER: This is Frederick A. Miller, your long time --

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And that's how we got to know each other. And Fred asked if he could go to lunch with me because we -- there was no lunch room in the school or anything like that. You either brought your own lunch -- but there was an hour period that was close enough that we could walk over to 105th and Euclid, and there was a Chinese restaurant over there that had, oh, at that time, for about 40 cents you could get a whole chop suey and so on meal.

And he asked me whether he -- because he knew I walked over there to go to lunch, and he said, "Could I walk to lunch with you some day?" And I said, "Sure, but I'm a fast walker." So we got to know each other.

And then Fred was doing silver at that time, he was making fantastic, intricate watch cases. He would get the workings of a watch and then make a silver case for it and a band for it. He'd learned how to solder and saw because a friend of his, Jack McCausland, had -- no, wait a minute, it wasn't Jack McCausland. No, the name isn't coming right now [Garth Andrew].

Anyway, had gone when he was -- Fred lived in Akron [Ohio], the outskirts of Akron. And this friend of his had gone -- with a fairly wealthy family -- had gone to a summer camp where they had taught making simple jewelry. And he came back and taught Fred soldering and sawing, and Fred started making these pieces of jewelry.

MS. YAGER: Now, I noticed that Fred was about five years older than you [b. 1914]?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah.

MS. YAGER: What -- you came into college right from high school, what had he been doing?

MR. MILLER: Fred had been working as a photographer's assistant in Akron. Mabel somebody or other. And she was a very good photographer and Fred got a fairly good camera and he began doing his own photography. And he even did separation color prints, which -- and his family was not wealthy -- his father was a barber and his mother raised chickens in the basement.

MS. YAGER: In the basement?

MR. MILLER: Yes, the house used to smell very much, I'll tell you. But she would raise little chicks and then sell them, hatch them and sell them. But he had a good camera, I don't know, a three-and-a-quarter, four-and-a-quarter, something like that negative size. And he did some very good portraits and things, because that's what he'd been doing with Mabel.

But he also -- I don't know how in the world he ever did this -- but he did big photographic screens. I only think he did a couple of them, but with huge paper. And he projected them somehow or other in their house on these big -- and he developed and fixed the sections of print in the bathtub in order to get a large enough area that he could -- and he did one of tropical fish, that was a beauty. I never saw the actual one but I saw photographs of it, and as a result of that, somebody knew about these things and they showed his photographs at an interior decorating studio down on Euclid Avenue here. And the man, he finally, he eventually became director of the Metropolitan Museum, the man that ran that studio way back.

Anyway, because of this show, a very, very wealthy family in Cleveland saw the show, bought the screen with the tropical fish, it was a folding screen, and offered to let Fred or to have Fred go to -- they'd pay his tuition and his living expenses for four years in arts school. Their name was Hord.

MS. YAGER: How fabulous.

MR. MILLER: And so that's how he got started in art school.

MS. YAGER: Wow.

MR. MILLER: And he was really a genius. I mean, the things at that age that he could do.

MS. YAGER: You mentioned tropical fish, and I remember reading that you had raised tropical fish and guinea pigs and something else?

MR. MILLER: Rabbits. No, I loved animals. We had, I think, eight rabbits at one time and 14 guinea pigs in the garage in Shaker Heights, because they multiply. And eventually they were given -- during the WPA [Works Progress Administration] days, you know, you hired somebody to come and work at your house, to sort of help with the situation where there's so many people unemployed and so on. And eventually I think all my rabbits and guinea pigs went to that man, because he had a big family and he thought his kids would enjoy them.

MS. YAGER: Is this to eat or to play with?

MR. MILLER: Oh, to play with. And the tropical fish, oh, my father was interested in wild things a lot. And I remember we went to visit some of my stepmother's relatives up in Plattsburg, New York. And my father caught some minnows or little like little miniature sunfish in the lake, and he put them in a bottle, like quart jars, and we brought them all the way back to Cleveland and put them in a little aquarium.

And getting the water changed and so on meant we were driving all this distance and constantly getting this changed so the fish would live and so on. But then he bought the first guppies, you know, guppies came in way, way, way back. And he bought the first guppies that came into Cleveland, and we had a tank with some guppies in it. And this was about, well -- he had a crystal set. You know, our first radio was a -- do you know what a crystal set is?

MS. YAGER: No.

MR. MILLER: Well, I can't go into the technicalities, but all that mattered was there was a kind of metal that you -- you had a metal feeler that touches this and it picks up radio waves. You put on earphones like you've got on now, and you have a -- there's a little dial with a wrapped wire around two cylinders, and you turn that, and you get lots of static, but at some point we could pick up KEKA in Pittsburgh with, you know, there's no batteries or anything like that, you're just picking up radio waves out of the air. [Audio break; tape change.] My father was always fascinated by things of that sort. This is getting way off the subject.

MS. YAGER: Yes. Let's see. I'm looking at some of the teachers that you had when you were at the Cleveland School of Art. A couple that weren't mentioned, Viktor Schreckengost.

MR. MILLER: Yes. The second year, I had him for just an extension of basic design from Kenny's first year design and he impressed me so much with his lectures and his teaching. So --

MS. YAGER: What were his lectures like?

MR. MILLER: Well, it's just he would go over the work that we'd done. I remember we did an all-over pattern. I'd done them in high school, you know, and all the way through. But we had an all over pattern problem and we had a book jacket problem and -- I really don't remember all of them -- but just his -- I sensed that this man -- at this point I thought there must be some secret to design that I would eventually learn.

Otto Ege, I had him, too, as a calligraphy and lettering teacher, but he taught this theory of dynamic symmetry, the Magic Square and I sort of --

MS. YAGER: Is that like the Golden Mean?

MR. MILLER: The Golden Mean, yeah. And I thought that that probably had something to do with what design was all about and so at the end of the second year, in the second year, I had more life drawing. I had a full day of sculpture, which was very important. We worked from the model with an armature and for a whole year, every week, we worked with a new figure. I learned so much more about drawing the figure in that class --

MS. YAGER: By sculpting it?

MR. MILLER: Sculpting it, yeah. And we also had, of course, anatomy and interior design, where we did design. I remember we designed the interior of a restaurant. We had an interior design course and -- I don't remember too much. But anyway, at the end of the second year, I had to decide what I was going to major in.

By that time, Fred had taught me how to solder and saw. He was living in a rooming house with two old ladies and we worked on a card table in the living room at that place with an alcohol lamp and a mouth blowtorch. And that's where we worked. But I was making rings by that time that my mother was able to sell to friends.

MS. YAGER: What material were these?

MR. MILLER: They were silver. I bought a lot of zircons. There was a man in New York that Fred knew about, Mr. Meyer, who you could write to and ask for a collection of stones. And he'd send you a box of stones and you would go through it and pick out what you wanted to buy and send the rest of them back. And they were cheap. That came from him.

MS. YAGER: The ring you're wearing?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. I was making lots of rings because I set up at home in the basement a little studio. There was a workbench already there. I just worked at that and I had an alcohol lamp and mouth blowtorch.

MS. YAGER: Now, were you using sheets or wire silver?

MR. MILLER: I started out using a lot of wire but then I went to sheet and I worked mainly with sheet.

MS. YAGER: And these were pieces that you were selling. And was this helpful for your income?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, a little. Five or six dollars for a ring, you know, but it was still helpful.

MS. YAGER: And your mother was the --

MR. MILLER: Well, Mother was the main contact because the rings were pretty interesting. They were different than anything that anybody had seen before. So I got quite a lot of orders for rings.

Some place along the line, and I'm not sure when, I bought myself a little kiln and I started doing some ashtrays too. And I did a few because Kenny Bates was doing brooches with enamel designs on them. It was usually rectangular or circular with a bezel and that was it. So I did some of those too with that one.

Eventually somebody here in Cleveland came up with the idea of building your own kiln, using the regular bricks, ceramic bricks.

MS. YAGER: Fire bricks.

MR. MILLER: Fire brick. And I think there were four of them that you arranged and then you arranged two to give it the height. And then you put them across the opening. I think I could get a 9-inch circle into this.

MS. YAGER: Was there a heating element?

MR. MILLER: We brought the heating elements that you use for coffee makers at that time and you had one on the top and one on either side and then you made the door. On that, I had to get a piece of transite. You put this whole thing on a sheet of transite too and then you -- the door I made was a piece of transite that went in front of it and put a handle on that. But that was, I think, probably my junior or senior year or something like that.

MS. YAGER: This was all outside of school or -- no, you had been --

MR. MILLER: This was outside of -- I mean, I did this at home in my --

MS. YAGER: But you had been taking some enameling classes?

MR. MILLER: No. The only enameling classes I ever took was that first class with Kenny. I did the two trays with Kenny in art school.

MS. YAGER: And everything else was outside after that? Were they teaching jewelry at that time at the school?

MR. MILLER: Oh, yes. And there was a very good woman that taught it, Ms. Watkins. She has pieces in the -- I think, Chicago Art Institute has a piece. I think there is a piece in the Boston Museum [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston] too. But I wasn't really interested in the sort of things they were doing and painting was really -- I was mainly interested in painting.

And I won some awards at the end of the year, "Best Watercolor Painting," and that sort of thing. So my drawing and my painting were really coming along. And so when I had a choose a major, I hadn't any idea of what I was going to do as a major. And then I finally decided that Schreckengost had just, I think, just the year before had the first industrial design class of any school in the United States. He had it there. And so there was an industrial design department and I thought I'm going to learn the secret. I had no interest in becoming an industrial designer. But I signed up for industrial design as my major and I think my minor was ceramics. I'm almost positive my minor was ceramics. And --

MS. YAGER: Who was teaching ceramics?

MR. MILLER: I can't get the name to come to mind.

MS. YAGER: I have Carl --

MR. MILLER: Mrs. Dyer, Mrs. Dyer. And she was famous for her red color which, years later, she finally revealed the secret to me. I used to drive Mrs. Dyer who was a little old -- well, she wasn't old but she was a very good teacher. But I used to drive her because she didn't drive to school. I'd go down and pick her up and bring her to school. So I majored in industrial design and, of course, I had drawing courses and I had the ceramics, which I just -- two days a week. I know I had industrial design for two days a week.

MS. YAGER: A couple of the names were Kae Dorn Cass.

MR. MILLER: She was the watercolor teacher in my freshman year who was, until she passed away, a lifelong friend. Just great person, wonderful personality, both for Fred and me, and for all the -- and she was popular with the whole faculty, a wonderful person, a very, very good watercolor painter.

MS. YAGER: And Walter Sinz.

MR. MILLER: Walter Sinz was this ceramic -- I mean, was the sculpture teacher and we remained friends until he passed away.

MS. YAGER: And Carl Gaertner.

MR. MILLER: Gaertner. He was a very fine painter, had a gallery in New York, won some of the big prizes in various shows around the United States. It was gouache more than watercolor. And eventually, when he died, actually they put me into teaching this course for three-quarters of a year or something like that. I never should have been in there because -- but anyway, he was great too. We had wonderful teachers. I mean, that school had just a fabulous group of teachers.

MS. YAGER: The school was started, I read, in -- was it 1899 [1882], something --

MR. MILLER: Something like that, yes. And it first started out as a girls' school and --

MS. YAGER: Specifically for art?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And then became a general school. It started out downtown some place. I think, among the things that you have there, there is a booklet called "The First 100 Years." That's all about it, yeah.

MS. YAGER: Yes, yes. Now, I'd like to move on to your Army experiences. That was 1941 to 1945, I have.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Well, the last year at the Art School, in my senior year, one of the teachers left. He was teaching nature research and techniques and he was a bad boy or something and was fired overnight. And the next morning, they came in and told me I was going to teach his classes and that I would go on and graduate but I was going to teach his freshman classes for the rest of the year. And they told me what I was going to teach. This is Otto Ege, and I guess it was because my parents were teachers. I never quite could figure this out, why they thought -- because at that point, Fred had, you know, he was majoring in education, art education at Western Reserve and the Art School and he was minoring in industrial design.

Anyway, they told me I was going to teach today and I was going to teach painting, rendering butterfly wings. So for the rest of that year, I taught. They were half day classes; I guess three half-days a week.

MS. YAGER: Was this a class that you had taken yourself at one point?

MR. MILLER: Yes. Well in my freshman year, you know, under the same teacher who got fired. He was a real good friend. And then --

MS. YAGER: So you painted butterfly wings? And what would some the other nature research?

MR. MILLER: Well, the school had a collection of shells and we did rendering shells.

MS. YAGER: In nature laboratories?

MR. MILLER: There were different techniques of watercolor, opaque watercolor, colored pencil. I really don't remember what other things there were. But I can tell you the following year -- then that was sort of a critical summer for me because in the group that I was with, drama group at Shaker, there is a man named -- a young man named James Card who was very interested in movies. And he actually produced this movie.

I was in it and a couple of our other people in the group were in it. It was about a water nymph and a witch and so on and it took place out in Twinsburg here, out in forest and waterfalls and that sort of thing. And it was silent. It was done on cheap black and white film and I did all the titles for this film because it had to have -- all the old silent films all had titles. So I did all the drawings and printing for all the titles.

Then another man in Cleveland, whose sister was in Fred's and my class at Art School, Phoebe Flory, her brother, John Flory, had been working in Hollywood producing the coming attraction films in Hollywood. He was very interested and he had produced a movie out there on his own called "Mr. Motorboat's Last Stand" [1933]. I never saw it. I don't know anything. But books on the history of independent film credit John as being the father of the independent film because, apparently, this was the first produced independent film. But anyway, John got the job of making a film here in Cleveland. This would be 1939 probably, that would be called "Song of the City" and it would bring in all the ethnic groups that -- Cleveland has so many -- and their heritage.

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller in the artist's home and studio in Brecksville, Ohio, on August 22, 2004 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disk number two, session number one.

John, when the tape was ending, you were talking about John Flory's --

MR. MILLER: He got this job -- I think that's on the other tape -- making a film about the ethnic communities in Cleveland and also the Cleveland Orchestra was going to do the sound track for it as well, you know. And I got called because he needed another editor to work on the film. I had never done any editing but -- so I spent a couple of months editing bits of the film. It was my first experience with that and I didn't do anything again with film until after the war.

When I got out of the Army, John wanted me to come to New York and work for him. By that time, he had an office in New York and was doing films. So I left the Army and went directly to New York and worked in his office there, editing film for a couple of months. And I hated New York so much that, when the Art School wanted me to come back to teach, I said I'm going to go back to teach. They wanted me to teach art history. And I said I will not teach art history. So they gave me a job teaching a variety of subjects.

But then, on this same thing, the next summer John called me again from New York, and he said he had a job to produce some movie on the Presbyterian mission work in Alaska. He knew I'd always wanted to go to Alaska and he needed a director. He said we can fake it to make them think that you are a director and we'll send you up as a director, and a photographer who was from the Presbyterian Church, and his assistant and me, we would spend the whole summer going from mission to mission and photographing and going from industry to industry in Alaska.

It was fabulous. We flew to Alaska and off the top of my head began directing people for sequences at various missions and churches and then went around and we did the fishing industry, the canning industry, the gold mining industry, the lumbering industry. And we went to Point Barrow for 16 days and photographed the Eskimos up there. We went out in the Arctic Ocean on an umiak and hunted with an Eskimo, hunted ducks. It was just a fantastic summer for me.

MS. YAGER: During lunch, you were saying that, as a child, you remembered going to lectures on the Antarctic and explorers. So this fit right in.

MR. MILLER: Right. I'd always – I never thought I'd get to the Arctic or the Antarctic. But I had heard [Roald] Amundsen and [Richard] Byrd and various other polar explorers lecture in the '20s in Cleveland. And they just planted this image of how beautiful the Arctic and Antarctic were in my mind. I always wanted to go there. So that chance to go to Alaska was just fantastic.

MS. YAGER: Do you remember seeing any of the Eskimo handcrafts?

MR. MILLER: Oh, yes. And I wish I had money because at that time, all their basketry, you know, their baskets could hold water, beautiful baskets that were woven so tight. These were Indian. And Eskimos had wonderful carvings too. But I couldn't afford anything.

I did bring back a little bit of mastodon ivory bracelet and mastodon ivory. And I think this was an old thing to hold a point for. Harpoons were made out of mastodon ivory. But I did go to the museum to Fairbanks and in Juneau and saw a lot of wonderful stuff there.

MS. YAGER: Now tell me about your experience in the Army.

MR. MILLER: Well, I went in in -- the school got me deferred. I had a very low draft number and they got me deferred so that I could teach the fall of ’40 and spring of ’41. And then I went in in July. I went to Fort Knox.

MS. YAGER: This is in Kentucky?

MR. MILLER: Kentucky and went into the -- the platoon was a tank driving platoon and this all seemed very, very foreign to me. But anyway, I got driving tanks, firing all the weapons and all that business and bivouacking and -- Fort Knox was so strange at that time because a lot of it had been a firing range and they had to build where the firing range had been to build all these new barracks. And they surrounded some places -- little patches of wood where we’d go out to pitch tents, to practice this and I’d see somebody next to me using an unexploded shell to hammer in tent pegs.

You know, there were several people, not in my outfit, killed in Fort Knox at that time from doing just that. And when we would drive tanks, you would see an unexploded fairly big shell and you’d have to drive around it so that you didn’t hit it with the tank. I wasn’t a good tank driver at all. But anyway, that’s what --

And then they decided that every chapel on the post should have a religious picture behind the altar and so they looked through the records and they picked all the artists they could and got us assembled one morning. I was taken away from my platoon and driven to this building and each of us was to paint a religious painting. And this was our job. I was to paint a Nativity.

Well, at the same time -- this was right towards the end of my training, I was called into the office of the commander of our whole area to be interviewed to become a lance-corporal. And he looked at my records and he said, “You’re an artist? I said, “Yes, that’s what I was trained as.” He said, “Did you even paint murals?” And I said, “No, I never painted murals.” And he said, “Well you’re going to paint murals.”

He had this dream of taking -- every area had a rec hall, recreation hall and ours didn’t have any murals on it and a lot of them already had murals on. He wanted a history of the armored force and he said, “I’ll give you a three-day pass. You can go to Cleveland Public Library, get all the information you can about the history of armor and come back and start painting murals.”

So I took my three-day pass and I came back and I made sketches and started on -- they were to be four-by-six-foot panels on the walls. And I think there were six of them, plus a full size rendering of a tank at the back of the stage. I did ask one of my teachers while I was in Cleveland what -- I was just going to work on, -- these were not wooden walls, they were -- whatever --

MS. YAGER: Plaster?

MR. MILLER: No. It wasn’t plaster. It was composition board. And he said that I should work with casein paints. They had just come in and he said that will probably would be a good medium to work with. So I made my drawings and I started.

I made a scaffolding to get me up there so I could climb up and be on the level with these things. And I started painting. I don’t know -- I had three or four of them done when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and I thought I would be shipped out right away. But they said, “No, you’re going to finish these murals.”

Already, I had gotten a little box of tools that I’d taken down to my barracks, silver jewelry tools, and I was making simple rings for soldiers to give to their girlfriends -- selling these simple silver rings. And actually, when Pearl Harbor -- I was listening to the New York Philharmonic and sitting on the floor and working on my foot locker on jewelry --

[Phone rings.]

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller. This is track number two. You were

talking about --

MR. MILLER: Working on the silver. I thought at that point, you know, that I was going to be taken off the murals. Well, they said I had to keep going on the murals until they were finished. Then I finally finished the murals. They got quite a bit of publicity and they decided that I was -- well, something they could use, sort of, for their own devices there.

So they put me in charge of the rec hall when the murals were done. This was terrible. I didn't like that at all. Then all the people that had been called in to do the religious paintings, by this time a lot of them were done. They got all of them together again and assembled them into what became the Training Literature Department of the Armed Force.

And what had happened, the British had captured German training manuals on tank tactics and given them to the Americans. They came to Fort Knox, these manuals, and they decided to republish these in English using -- it was practically all pictures and maps – with German tanks, showing tactics. And it was always the right and the wrong way to do it: two pictures and two maps. And so they put these artists to work changing them to American tanks, new pictures, but American tanks. And after a little bit of finagling around, I finally got assigned to that training literature department and I was there then for the rest of the war.

MS. YAGER: I read that there were about 35 artists in the unit.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: And two comments that you had mentioned earlier – one, you had said, that I just thought was kind of interesting, you had said that when you were in Kentucky, that people in the armed services were given free admission to symphonies –

MR. MILLER: Concerts. I heard Rudolph Serkin give a concert and [Vladimir] Horowitz and the ballet theater would come to Louisville every year, and the Cincinnati Symphony came down and gave concerts there. And that was wonderful and the local – the main department store had a soldier's art show, usually once a year, and I sold a lot of my watercolors down there through that. So it was very good.

MS. YAGER: I noticed that you had entered the Cleveland May Show as a sergeant. So do you remember what piece you might have entered and how you had –

MR. MILLER: Well I entered I think – well, I considered myself a watercolor painter so I entered watercolors from the time I was in art school, right on through the Army I would send things down and some of them sold out of the May Show. There were – one was a view of Knoxville, Tennessee at night. I did a lot of night scenes. I liked painting – I have a wonderful memory, visual memory, and I could paint from memory, and so that – I kept that up all through the army, painting, watercolors, and sending them to May Shows. I won a couple prizes even – landscape watercolor during the May Shows. And I sent some jewelry too, but not – I can't even remember what pieces I sent anymore.

MS. YAGER: So after the war then you returned to the Cleveland School of Art?

MR. MILLER: Well, after – I did after I spent a little time in New York. Then I came back and started teaching and still doing some jewelry. I was living with my parents and still doing some jewelry and enameling in the studio. I still thought of this as my hobby and the painting, that was fine art to me. And actually I – you know, every once in a while somebody would ask me to do something that was gold – I was doing things with silver. I was using gold so thin and I hated it. I didn't like the looks of it. So I was using 14 karat at that time. Well, before the – before I went in the army, the school library used to get the magazine *Das Kunst* [*Das Kunstmagazin*], a German magazine. It was all in German but it had wonderful illustrations. I saw work in there, and I think now that it must have been by Elizabeth Treskow but here I was confounded by, they were black and white photographs, but how you could do something as minute and elegant as that without seeing any signs of soldering. So I – and when the magazine had been on the shelves a while, they

had put it in a box and if you wanted it you could pick it up. So I tore those pages, ripped it up and tore those pages out. And I took it with me to the army because they were so fascinating to me.

MS. YAGER: Now this was – you later found out that this was Professor Elizabeth Treskow, in Cologne, Germany?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: And she had been doing goldsmithing with real fine granulation.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, for years. Since the 1920s.

MS. YAGER: So you hadn't attempted any granulation yet but it was on your mind?

MR. MILLER: No, I didn't know what it was. And I didn't even realize that the museum had some beautiful examples of granulation that I had never really paid that much attention to. And it was only after I finally knew what it was, and it was only very gradually, I don't remember all the details, that I found out – for some reason or other, I don't remember – I went to Detroit when – what was her name? The girl from New York, the jeweler from Copenhagen?

MS. YAGER: Adda –

MR. MILLER: Adda Husted-Andersen. She was there for some reason or other. There was an exhibit of some of her pieces. Now whether she was lecturing – anyway I got to meet her. I asked her if she knew anything about granulation. And she said she really didn't, but she thought it was probably done with powdered solder. So I was interested enough to make some experiments of powdered solder. But I was doing some larger pieces of jewelry at that time. Fred by that time was – had been called, released from the army and became a designer for Potter and Mellen [Potter and Mellen, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio]. Mr. [Horace E.] Potter was still alive – who was the – started the organization, and Fred had been sent up to Stone Associates to learn about their methods of silversmithing and raising because he had never done any of that. He had done a lot of spinning when – in art school when he was in industrial design, they got a spinning lathe, and he did some silver spinning at that time. One of the few people that made use of the lathe, but he did, and made some julep cups and things like that. But he had never done – knew anything about raising so, but he came back and started – he raised a salt, no, a creamer and sugar with ivory handles. They went into the May Show and I think he got a prize.

And we worked in the Potter and Mellen studio at night. I was still doing, just normal run of the mill jewelry, rings, a few larger pieces. And then some – well, Charles Bartlett Jeffrey, who was a protégé of Kenneth Bates, who did enameling, asked me if I could make a silver cross that would feature one of his enamels in the center of the small cross. So I did that, and of course it went into the May Show and it won first prize, but I didn't get any credit for having made the silver, it was just Charles Bartlett Jeffery. And I thought at that time, well maybe I should start making something larger that would be more impressive for the May Show. And I had seen Alexander Calder's silver and I – who else had I seen? There were a couple other people –

MS. YAGER: [Harry] Bertoia?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, Bertoia pieces. I was very impressed with the Bertoia pieces, and they were in gold. I saw them first at an exhibition in the Colorado Springs museum [Fine Arts Center of Colorado Springs]. I happened to be out there and saw them.

MS. YAGER: What were they like?

MR. MILLER: Well they were mainly brooches as I remember it, but all made with forged gold pieces assembled.

MS. YAGER: Wire? Forged square wire?

MR. MILLER: Forged square wire, yeah.

MS. YAGER: And where did you see Alexander Calder's work?

MR. MILLER: In photographs from – I don't know that I ever saw any of the actual pieces. I might have at the Museum of Modern Art. I think there were some there at that time. I may be – because at the brief period that I worked in New York I did get to the museum but I did see them. So I started making necklaces with forged – well, I did some with forged round wire and I did some with forged square wire, and they got in the May Show and won a prize of some kind. And then I –

MS. YAGER: I want to – let's talk about the May Show a little bit because that's a very interesting Cleveland phenomenon. It was started in – was it 1919?

MR. MILLER: Probably. Well, that's about when the museum building got started.

MS. YAGER: Okay. And ran until '93. So over 75 years. And a couple distinctive things that I read about it were that painting, sculpture, craft, they were all considered all in the same category –

MR. MILLER: Right. Which was unusual.

MS. YAGER: And they were – it was intended to champion craftsmanship and support for local artists that were Ohio born, or Ohio trained?

MR. MILLER: Well, it had to be local at that time. It had to be within Cayahoga County which is the local county. And it was a big event every year. They brought judges from various museums around the country, and there were usually a couple people who were curators of painting and a couple of people who were involved with the crafts in some way or another: a curator of crafts from Richmond Museum [Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond], I know the craft person from there, or the director from there, St. Louis Museum [St. Louis Art Museum], Metropolitan Museum, and they were really good jurors. And there was this vast amount of stuff that would come in for these – we were allowed to enter ten pieces and you could enter ten watercolors and ten pieces of jewelry and so that there was a huge input of work into the museum that had to be dealt with. But they did it. And it grew for opening night thousands of people – roads were blocked all around the area and the galleries were so full you could hardly move through them. You could hardly see anything.

MS. YAGER: What years do you remember that roads were blocked and –

MR MILLER: Well I think 1937, '38, in that period when I first started going to the openings, yeah. And that went on for quite a while. Eventually they limited the number of entries you could make because it was just too much of a job for the museum to handle all of this material.

MS. YAGER: Now some of the jurors that I have seen mentioned were Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, Ansel Adams, and the director, Dr. William Mathewson Milliken –

MR. MILLER: Yes.

MS. YAGER: He seemed to be a huge driving force in the –

MR. MILLER: And see, he had been trained in decorative arts and the museum in their acquisitions was driven towards decorative arts much more than painting. I mean we didn't have much of a collection – we had some good modern paintings, but not many. There wasn't a lot of purchase in that direction but, well, the Guelph Treasure came in at that point [1930] and I don't remember what year for the Guelph Treasure was, but I think it was when I was in school. But it was a tremendously important event for the school – I mean for the museum. And then they also had a gold show. Now I don't remember the date for that, but that was a great impression for me because it had wonderful Pre-Columbian gold, African gold, just gold from all over the world. And it was one gallery, but it just knocked you off your feet to go in there and see the craftsmanship and the beauty of the work.

MS. YAGER: He also seemed to have a real interest in – it said he hammered away at the interdependence of artists, museums, and patrons and tried very hard to connect the artist and the patron, and encouraged people to support creativity and try to make – really put Cleveland on the

map in artistic terms.

MR. MILLER: Well he – with me, I'm sure when I finally was able to do pieces in granulation and in gold, I'd only been doing pieces in silver, but when I started doing gold I'm sure he encouraged members of the board to buy my early pieces so that I could keep on having enough money, that I could keep on working in gold. And actually I think he judged the Wichita [the "Wichita National," Wichita Center for the Arts, Kansas], an early Wichita that I entered with silver – I think there were three silver necklaces that were all forged units. And I got a first prize, I think from them, and I think he was one of the judges.

MS. YAGER: And that – did the awards have prizes? Cash prizes or ribbons?

MR. MILLER: In the museum? No. It was just the honor.

MS. YAGER: But being pointed out like that would be –

MR. MILLER: It would be first, and second, and special –

MS. YAGER: – major validation.

MR. MILLER: – special mention, and honorable mention, and this sort of thing.

MS. YAGER: What was it that made you turn to gold?

MR. MILLER: Well, I was doing painting, and I found that I was having a harder and harder time painting at night because I was doing so many other things at school. Though I taught only three days, I was doing their catalogs, and their announcements for shows, and the photography of student work and the installation of those shows.

MS. YAGER: And the exhibit design, yeah.

MR. MILLER: And I was having a hard time painting, just wasn't going right, at night. And one day the director, Laurence Schmeckebier, called me into his office and said, "Cleveland has enough good watercolor painters, we need a good jeweler. Why don't you concentrate on your jewelry?" And I think this sort of slided – that tilted me in the direction.

MS. YAGER: Did you know each other well? I mean how would he have –

MR. MILLER: No he had just become director a couple years before that. He came from Wisconsin and had written a book about [the town of] Red Wing and somehow or other the chairman of the board of the art school had a sister in Wisconsin that had heard him lecture and thought that he would make a good director of the art school. So that's how he got here. And he was a very boisterous director, and I didn't agree with him on a lot of things, but eventually – we stayed friends all through the years, but we had a lot of disagreements. But anyway –

MS. YAGER: But that's such an interesting – that he would call you in and tell you, you know, "Give up your watercolor," and you listened to that advice.

MR. MILLER: Well at the time I didn't say, "Well I'm going to change." But little by little I did change. I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that I realized that I had to switch to gold to do the granulation, that I wasn't going to do it in silver, and at that period too – see Fred went to Rhode Island School of Design for the second Handy & Harman silversmithing conference under Baron [Erik] Fleming. And the year after the Baron got back, came back the second year, well of course Fred learned the whole stretching process, which got him doing free forms and all of that sort of thing because of the Baron. The next year Fred and another friend and I went to New York because the Baron was arriving in New York for the second conference, and there was to be a party for him, so we went to the docking of the Gripsolm and met him, and then there was a party after that. And the Baron said that he was going to go across the country. He wanted to try to organize some shows of his work at various museums: Omaha, Colorado Springs I know he wanted to go to, and Los Angeles.

And right after I got out of the army I started going west for the summer camping. I went first with friends from art school, Joe O'Sickey and Paul Travis, the painter, and spent the whole summer traveling around and camping and seeing the country, because I'd never seen the mountains, and I'd always wanted to see the west. So the second summer I went to Alaska for the summer and did the movie. And then the third summer I went west with another student and spent the whole summer backpacking and camping. And then this next year was when – anyway, saw the Baron, we went to the party, the Baron said he wanted to go across the country. He was going to fly to these various museums. So I said, "You know, I'm going to leave in a couple weeks to go to the west." I owned a Jeep station wagon at the time, but I could fix it up in the back to carry all of our camping equipment, and I said, "If you want to see the country from the ground, and see what America is really like, you'd be welcome to come along." And I think the Baron must have been in his early sixties at this point, and about a week later he called and he said, "I'm going to take you up on the idea." So he came to Cleveland. Fred threw a big party for him with various art people here in Cleveland. And we got in the car with another student of mine and headed west.

We went all over, stopping at – we went to Longs Peak and camped at Longs Peak camp ground. The Baron and I were sleeping in this little pup tent and he had a flask with him and he would drink because it would help him sleep at night. We were sleeping on air mattresses and sleeping bags, and he woke up in the morning with a bad back. And he said he slept on the flask. Well we went next and stopped at Colorado Springs, and I think that may have been when I saw the Bertoia things but I'm not sure. But anyway, we went to the director's home and the next morning – we were staying at a motel – the next morning he got up and he could hardly walk. And he had other friends from Sweden living in Colorado Springs, we got in touch with them. They got him to a hospital; it was a Catholic hospital in Colorado Springs, and they put him in traction right away and said that he had to be in traction for a week. Well, I had never been to Aspen and the Goethe Festival was being held in Aspen, which was close enough to Colorado Springs across the mountains that I could get to it. So I went with my student and we went over and camped above Aspen.

And the Goethe Festival – Papke had the idea for this. They built a tent and they had the St. Louis Symphony there in residence with all of these wonderful artists: [Gregor] Piatigorsky and [Arthur] Rubinstein and various singers that were putting on musical events every day and then famous people talking about Goethe at lectures in the evening. Thornton Wilder lectured, and I had read all of Thornton Wilder's plays and books. It was a real thrill to be there for that. And then the highlight was the doctor from Africa, theological doctor from Africa – the name isn't coming – very famous [Albert Schweitzer]. He spoke on Goethe in German. He was the real reason for the whole thing. And I had heard about him in all my life because in church groups he was thought of as this fantastic intellect, and he was a wonderful organist too – why won't the name come? But anyway, there he – I saw him standing on the street corner and of course went finally to hear his lecture.

Then we went back, picked up the Baron, and he was well enough by now that we went on from there to Grand Canyon, no, we went first to Santa Fe. He wanted to see Santa Fe. We went to Santa Fe and went to Grand Canyon and my friend – we stayed in tents, but we got a little cabin for the Baron to stay there, and he said, "The world's greatest silversmith living in a box!" [Laughs.] We went on from Grand Canyon to Las Vegas to cross the desert to Los Angeles. You do it at night because it was so hot then, there was no air conditioning, and well, the car would have heated up so much trying to cross that. So we spent the afternoon – no, we spent a night there – we first went to a casino. Las Vegas at that time only had a couple main hotels, it had more casinos and we went to one of the hotels and Burl Ives was the entertainer. And that was a big thrill for me too because I knew all of Burl Ives's recordings. And then we went to the Golden Nugget and gambled, and of course my family would have – I was never a gambler in my life, and he said, "You've got to learn to play roulette. I have a system." So he taught me this system, and we played for several hours and I was doing alright. And I felt so wicked because these girls would come up with a cocktail for me, and I wasn't a drinker at that time either. But we had a wonderful time. And he had this special system. I wish – I can't remember it now, but anyway, we placed our chips on various combinations

of numbers and it worked out all right.

Well, finally when it got late enough we took off and we went across the desert and left him in Los Angeles. But in the process I had been trying to find out what he knew about granulation. Well he didn't know much about granulation. He said he thought you just glued the granules to the gold surface and heated it up and at a certain point you could see that it was working, they attached to the surface. Well, I got back and I tried that and it didn't work. The secret wasn't – he didn't know. But Margret Craver knew that I was searching, and she kept sending me little bits of information that she thought – she came across something about the American Academy in Rome had an archeologist that wrote a paper on granulation from the point of view of an archeologist. And he had decided that granulation in ancient days used gold that was anything but really pure, and had a lot of copper and other minerals in it. And that he thought they simple brought the copper to the surface so that it would go blackened – the copper oxide on the surface – by heating it, then glued it with any kind of animal glue onto the piece, then put in into a kiln that was – [tape break] – operated with bellows, with a cover and a hole that you could look thru. And the ancient craftsman could see when the gold or the copper on the surface united with the gold at a much lower temperature, because it was in a reducing atmosphere. Because of the charcoal it would be a totally reducing atmosphere. And they could see by the shimmer when it was time to stop the bellows and the piece was ready.

And I found the article in the Cleveland Public Library in their archival section. It's amazing, you know, that this thing from the American Academy in Rome. But Cleveland Public Library is a fabulous library. I read this and for the first time I heard about reduction atmosphere as being necessary to have this granulation take place. And at that time, Fred had bought a gas fluxer at Potter and Mellen to keep fire scale down on the silver pieces he was making. And the gas fluxer, in essence, produced a reducing atmosphere around the piece where it was being heated.

And I decided, well, that's reducing atmosphere. I'll try that with granulation. And, of course, I was working with 14 karat gold at that time and I was having practically no luck at all. And I tried adding flux to the glue, thinking that maybe this would help. But 14 karat, it would work sometimes with it then I would lose a whole piece.

So I decided to go to 18 karat gold and then I began having the success with the granulation. And I worked with gold that I would buy here in Cleveland from the I. Miller Company that sold gold and silver and took in scrap and so on and so forth. But he was getting Handy & Harman 18 karat number 8 yellow gold. And I would buy it from him. But sometimes he would substitute his own 18 karat melt, and I wouldn't know it, and I'd have this piece I'd be working on and I would overheat it and days and days of work were gone. But the strange thing is that probably -- well, I have tried other people's 18 karat gold, Hoover & Strong and other refiners. None of them would work the way Handy & Harman 18 karat yellow number 8 worked for me.

MS. YAGER: Was there something in the alloy or the preparation of the metal?

MR. MILLER: Well, at one time when I was doing granulation Cyril Smith, who was a metallurgist and had written many books and he worked on the atomic bomb in Chicago, and he was traveling through and stopped in Cleveland to see me, because he was fascinated with old techniques. And so I talked to him. And eventually he came to the conclusion that there must have been some way in the process of refining the gold and the pouring of it -- he thought maybe pouring it under a reducing atmosphere or something -- that made their 18 karat -- because I got the formula for their 18 karat from Handy & Harman and I gave it to Hoover & Strong and said, "Make me some gold like this." And they made it and it didn't work. I mean, it would partially work, but it didn't have the strength and the certainty that the Handy & Harman gold had.

So if I hadn't started using Handy & Harman 18 karat, I probably would have been going on for years, or I would have eventually realized I had to shift to 22 karat, which was what was being used all over Europe. Treskow used 22 karat. And they used the method where they combined some sort of copper salt with the glue to provide the copper at the joint rather than the method that I was

using. But my early pieces, I wanted strength in rectangular forged wire, because I was doing insects and legs and things. They were made with 14 karat -- or with 18 karat -- actually, many of the early pieces were 14 karat, because I didn't want them to be easily bent. So I stuck with the 18 karat, and it worked.

MS. YAGER: Is that the karat you use now?

MR. MILLER: It's still the karat that I use now.

MS. YAGER: And is the Handy & Harman available?

MR. MILLER: In just the last maybe 10 years, they stopped making their gold available to craftsmen. Before that I could buy, you know, $1,000 worth or a couple of thousand dollars' worth of ingot. And then they suddenly changed their policy and it was only for commercial users of gold who would buy big lots that they would sell it to. But they sold their formula to a company in Massachusetts. That name isn't coming right now. But anyway.

MS. YAGER: Leach?

MR. MILLER: Hmm?

MS. YAGER: Leach & Garner?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Stern-Leach.

MS. YAGER: Oh, Stern-Leach.

MR. MILLER: Yes. And so I ordered some. And it seems to work, well, though not quite as well as the original Handy & Harman formula.

MS. YAGER: Alchemy is alive and well.

MR. MILLER: [Laughs.] But it was such a relief to finally find that I could still get it some way or other. But of course I knew that I had experimented with adding the copper salt to the glue and gluing it on pure that way, which is just like that [snaps fingers]. But I'd never really worked with 22, though I knew by that time that all the German jewelers who had developed it were working.

And funny thing, I went to judge one of the Wichita shows and there was a German jeweler there working by the name of Braun. And he had studied in Germany with -- name won't come now -- one of the early German jewelers in the '20s, or maybe 1919, had developed a way of doing granulation. But he would never let Braun in on his secret. And I think Braun had inveigled them to bring me to Wichita as a judge, hoping I could enlighten him.

But, anyway, I've taught few students that worked -- a lot of the students that I had couldn't afford gold, so I developed this way of plating silver granules with copper by just using acid and iron and getting a deposit on the granules that way. And so a lot of my students worked that way. But then some of them accused me that when they went to gold, they couldn't make it work. Well, they didn't have Handy & Harman 18 karat to work -- they weren't working with that and they weren't having any luck.

But I did then I went to the University of Indiana [Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana]. Alma Eikerman was teaching there, and Fred and I went down and gave some lectures. And I demonstrated the process of working with silver and using copper on the granules with the acid method of developing the copper on the surface of the silver to that group. And I think there were people there from the University of Wisconsin at that conference, and they went back and then started using the copper, because I began reading in publications there about this method of working with the copper.

MS. YAGER: What year was that Indiana conference? Do you recall?

MR. MILLER: I don't know. It was quite a few years before Alma died so, you know, she was still teaching at that time. I'm trying to think who some of her students were at that time. I think we

went twice down there. I can't come up with dates.

MS. YAGER: I read that by 1952-53 that you had gotten granulation to behave and that you were able to fuse even long seams. So you were able to create actual forms using that process. Is that --

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Actually what happened, I wanted to do a snail -- first I wanted to do a slug, and I wanted the feeler, you know, the long feelers.

MS. YAGER: The antenna.

MR. MILLER: Antenna. And I decided I would try making the antenna solid and then forming the body and then making two holes through the body and forcing some of the metal up out of the body and then making the antennae out of solid material, tapered and forcing it out up through these holes until it was firmly in the hole. And then I thought, well, I heated up little chips of 18 karat and turned them black with oxidation and glued them around the joint, and heated it up and they fused to both pieces. And also some of that fusion material went in down into the joint and I could then file and get an invisible seam at that joint. And then I went on and put the granules on the form of a body, running up the tentacles.

And, of course, I did it in several firings. I had discovered by that time that with granulation, what you've done the first time will stay in place and won't deform and you can go back and add on. And so as I went to the ends of the tentacles, I could work just in that area, and because they were more in danger of melting than the rest of it. And so that was the first time. And then from then on I -- well, if I wanted to do a ring, I found I could do the joint in the ring, fusing it that way, adding it on both sides of the joint, or if I wanted to do a cone or form a cone and granulate it, and so on. So little by little I did more of that sort of thing.

MS. YAGER: I'm looking at the piece [*Pendant/Brooch*, 1975] that's pictured on "Jewels and Gems," the Renwick's exhibition [Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.] in 2003. You know, this is sort of a sea creature. Now, would each of these granulated sort of cone forms --

MR. MILLER: They're solid.

MS. YAGER: Oh, these are solid?

MR. MILLER: Those are solid, yeah. And I just did them by actually using my I brought a square roller in Germany that's graduated --

MS. YAGER: A wire roller?

MR. MILLER: Wire roller so that I could -- and I start out with just a square piece and then gradually work through the system of rollers until I get it thinner. And then I do the filing to get it to be the shape that I want it. But that's the way that the piece is done.

MS. YAGER: This centerpiece, how is that created? Those are pleated.

MR. MILLER: Those are all individual strips that I cut on the metal cutter out of a sheet. And some of them are angled and some of them are -- you know, so that they're triangular or thinner or thicker. And then they're filed individually to get a form to these individual pieces. And this was simply a good way to join these to some sort of another form, because I could then assemble this whole group.

And then after it was assembled, I would wax it and then take a metal form, thin strip that would do the curvature of this body form, whatever you want to call it, and using investment, hold this whole thing together and then lay these pieces on to fit the intersections down here with these forms and glue this all together. Of course these are all black at that point. And then because I'd waxed it, I could remove this from the rest of it.

MS. YAGER: I don't understand the wax. What's the purpose of the wax?

MR. MILLER: The wax is so that the glue -- see, this is all being glued together. The wax is so that the glue won't hold this part to this part. Of course this thing isn't on here at all.

MS. YAGER: The enamel section.

MR. MILLER: No, and then there is the unit under here that is gold that is helping -- and those are glued to it, so I can take that old glued together section off and put some investment under it to help support it, and then put it under the torch. And then it's all fused like granulation. All those units are fused together at one time.

MS. YAGER: And then this whole gold piece, is this -- is there a cold connection between the enamel and the other --

MR. MILLER: No. Very early on I -- there's a piece of gold behind this that's formed to it. And I think actually this one was formed so that it didn't just have a sharp edge here but the gold came down from it. And then -- of course it has an opening in it. And a bar, or part of it goes across the rectangular section. It goes across that, kind of has a hole in it.

And when I make the enamel piece after the decoration is fused onto the well, actually I do it in pure gold to start with. Then fuse like little square chips of 18 karat to the back of that pure gold to strengthen it, fuse that on so it's got a backing. And then I fuse -- after that's done, then I put the decoration on the top of it, fusing it all on, gluing the pieces on.

And the last thing I do is hard solder with high temperature solder, a threaded tube in the middle of this that's going to go through the gold thing that's holding all of this together. So eventually after the enameling is done, I screw the enameled section to the other section. And the enameled section -- in the early days I simply made a tube and made it go through a hole, then I would work over the edges of that so it would hold it that way. But then, if you ever had to repair it, you were going to have to fuss and fuss to get that back so that you could get the two separated. And going to Europe, all the Renaissance pieces were -- if you look at the back of them, lots and lots of screws. They loved screws, and those enameled pieces are all screwed together.

MS. YAGER: Now, did you make appointments to handle pieces and see the backs to know that, or can you see that in the exhibits?

MR. MILLER: No. I could just -- I have a wonderful little Episcope it's called -- it comes from Haverhills -- that you can -- it's like a little telescope, and you can go to a case and use this and really get a good view. In fact, in the Victoria & Albert [Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK], wonderful ancient granulation that they have there, they had some pieces that with the naked eye look just like soft surface. I mean, you couldn't even see the granulation.

MS. YAGER: Like velvet dust, yes.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. But with my little telescope, I could see that it was fantastically fine powdered granules. But that's how -- you know, Fred and I for years went every spring to Europe, mainly to northern -- to the Scandinavian countries and Germany and Austria and Switzerland and went to museums. Actually started out early enough that in the British Museum, in my early days there, I could use flash.

I've got a wonderful collection of photographs or slides from the British Museum and quite a few of the other museums. And then, you know, no more flash. But we did go and look at collection after collection after collection. And we saw a lot of contemporary shows too.

MS. YAGER: Tell me some of your favorite museums there, or favorite pieces.

MR. MILLER: Well, the Munich museum, I forget what it's called [Staatliche Antikensammlungen Glyptothek]. It's one that's devoted just to Greek vases and early Greek and Etruscan gold. Fabulous pieces there. Have you ever been to that?

MS. YAGER: No. No, but I can imagine.

MR. MILLER: So that's one of the really -- of course the British Museum is fabulous too. And the Victoria & Albert. But the Munich has some magnificent pieces and pieces that you still have no idea how they did them. And Vienna. Great stuff there.

MS. YAGER: Did you ever go to the Etruscan collection, I don't remember, was it in Florence or Rome?

MR. MILLER: See, I've never -- I've been as far as Milan, simply because I wanted to take the train ride from Zurich, over the mountains to Milan. And I should have, but I've never done Italy.

MS. YAGER: Because that Etruscan -- that granulation I'll never forget. I'll never forget it.

MR. MILLER: Well, I have a wonderful book that -- well, Dorothy Payer gave me a book on the Naples -- there's a fabulous collection in Naples. It's a big, thick book. But the other museum in Munich -- of course the main decorative arts museum in the palace there, whatever it's called, on the square [Bayerisches Nationalmuseum]. Wonderful enameling and early -- well, St. George and the dragon, in gold and enameling. And that's got to all be screwed together too. If you look at it closely it's --

MS. YAGER: So this piece -- going back to this piece on the Renwick card, the enameled form, you have this form which -- would you have done that in a pitch bowl or something?

MR. MILLER: Mainly I work with a relatively thick piece of pure gold and with a hammer, and thinning the center section and keeping the edges a little bit heavier.

MS. YAGER: Sort of stretching.

MR. MILLER: Stretching and bringing it up. And then in some cases -- some of the pieces I did work in pitch too.

MS. YAGER: And then you have all of these sorts of circular forms, which are really a type of granulation, and then some are enameled over. And then more, you know, so how would these little circular forms -- would you have cut each of these?

MR. MILLER: No. I found that, and Cyril Smith cued me in on -- this startled me so the first time -- pure gold balls, when they're struck a certain way, because of their crystalline structure will go into rectangular. You know, you'd strike it and you think you're going to get a round circle and you get a square with edges. And so you can see in here there are quite a few of them that are rectangular.

And that's how they -- now, some of them I would do by taking pure gold or 18 karat gold and making the granules, putting them between two pieces of paper, and gluing them on the pieces of paper and then rolling it through the roller to get them to stretch. And of course they would elongate. Or you could put them through one way and then turn it and put it through the other way to get different shapes.

And then a lot of it was just mainly -- there's another piece that's similar to this. It's all gold up here but it has a lot of very definite square shapes, big ones that were got simply because a hammer produced --

MS. YAGER: And you hit them when they're individual balls or after they've been attached?

MR. MILLER: Individual.

MS. YAGER: Goodness.

MR. MILLER: Individual. And it is a shock because you think this has got to go round, and it doesn't go round, it goes square.

MS. YAGER: And if it was silver it probably would go round, would it?

MR. MILLER: Yes. Because it's a difference in the structure of the gold crystalline form. And Cyril

Smith cued me in on this and I couldn't believe it was happening.

MS. YAGER: Now, what was his -- he was --

MR. MILLER: He was a metallurgist and he worked on the atomic bomb with a group in the University of Chicago originally. And then he went on to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.] and was there for many years. And he bought a couple of good pieces.

MS. YAGER: That's fabulous. Let's see. Goodness. We could -- I would love to analyze a couple of other pieces. I mean, the level of complexity that you go to for these pieces is just astounding. But before we get to there too much, can I talk about -- I wanted to find out a little bit more about your teaching career at Cleveland School of Art, and some of what your philosophy of teaching was and things of that sort. I know these were separate issues, like you sort of -- this was your work, your personal work, and then you were teaching --

MR. MILLER: I was teaching three-dimensional design. And I wanted to keep my personal work, what I did, and so I wasn't teaching one thing all day and trying to produce it at night. Well, I fell in -- when I came back from the Alaska trip -- this Mrs. Winter had been teaching second year design at the art school. It wasn't called three dimensional design at that time. It was called second year design. It was -- she took over from Schreckengost when he stopped teaching it. Thelma Frazier Winter was in and we were good friends.

But when I came back from Alaska, they told me that she found it too tiring to teach three days a week and gave me the job of teaching two days and she was going to teach one day. So I, in a sense, essentially was to start teaching in about a week without any idea of what I was going to do. Well, during the war I had become acquainted with Bauhaus books, [Laszlo] Moholy-Nagy and so on, and *Language of Vision* [George Kepes; Chicago: P. Theobald, 1944], still hunting for what was the secret of design.

So I knew a lot about the Bauhaus ideas of teaching. So I started with ideas about three dimensional. I thought I was going try to make -- since Bates concentrated on sort of two-dimensional design totally in the first year, then I would try to go into three dimensional design in the second year. So I started out with a problem where they took a two-dimensional design and then imagined what would happen if they built on that so that it became a three dimensional idea, using color. And then I tried to get in the idea of how color could influence the way you looked at this. If it was made out of balsa wood, if it was all painted one color, you would get a certain reaction from it. [Audio break.] But if you began to emphasize certain sections of it, either planes or lines, with color. You could make people see different relationships in the piece than they would have seen if it was all one color. So that and over the years then I really started out with the idea of color and three dimensions. And I started out my classes for years with the idea of working with the idea of cool and warm color, and intense and reserved or very quiet, subtle color to try to do a two-dimensional thing where you would see it in terms of these things. And they were all to be just rectangles of various sizes or lines. But to see it as a receding organization in space.

And I tried to get – that feeling has always been to me the essential part of the art, how it makes you feel. And this thing that they were doing was to create feeling, not just to be an exercise in space, that you were to get some sort of feeling to develop from this. And so then I went usually from that two-dimensional expressing spacing on a two-dimensional surface, but through color and relationships between the forms to then creating a three-dimensional structure out of balsa wood. Still, all rectangular forms and all at right angles to one another.

And I assigned each student a different idea to start with. A form that would start from a contained rectangle and move in. And its design was sort of based on what happened when these forms coming from the outside began to interrelate in the interior. Or a form where because of the way it was colored, as you turned it, it would transform itself into something that you hadn't realized was there before, or a line that was moving in space, changing its thickness, but made you think of it as

moving in a directional way because of color and so on. And so I gave about 20 of these ideas, individual ideas, to different students, and they took off from there.

MS. YAGER: And this color analysis would have fed into your work in a really special way.

MR. MILLER: Well, I always have -- you know, color has always meant -- well, three-dimensional ideas have always -- I never -- I like three-dimensional jewelry. I mean, I like -- feeling and form is a strong part of it.

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller in the artist's home and studio in Brecksville, Ohio on August 22, 2004 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number three, session number one.

MR. MILLER: We're talking about teaching. I then went on to problems where I tried to show how space and relationships in space influenced feeling in painting. Going through paintings by -- I usually spent a whole day, just one long lecture on Van Gogh, Degas, Rembrandt. Just painter after painter after painter, trying to point out how their manipulation of space I think was in a large way responsible for the type of response you got to their paintings. And how people like Degas and Van Gogh, for instance, would lead you into space or make you become involved in space in some very unusual group of relationships between the forms. Cézanne too, for this matter.

And how Rembrandt, on the other hand, often wasn't very concerned with space. He was concerned with the feeling for light and textures and that sort of thing. But, for instance, there's a Degas that's a painting but half of it is just a curtain, and there's a man playing a piano. You can't see the piano. You just see the hands going behind the curtain, and the curtain is -- and over half the painting is just the curtain. For some reason or other, he realized that there was something about the feeling of that situation that was important to get across. Or his ballet figures. I mean, the viewpoints of the way he leads you into these.

And I started it all out by having students bring in a drawing they'd made from some sort of a landscape situation, particularly city situations. And it was just a drawing, a fairly big drawing. And then I could show them that the mind, left to its own devices, will divide things in the most mechanical way that it possibly can. And they didn't realize it at the time, but practically everything is divided -- organized in halves and quarters and so on. It's a two-dimensional -- the mind sort of wants to make this flat surface divide into two-dimensional relationships rather than three dimensional relationships.

And if there's a chance to put a chimney on a house, they'll put it right in the center section of the top of the roof, all through. At any rate, and then I took this on into advertising and the way layout could make you, without realizing it, feel something about the spatial relationships of the things that were being presented in the layout to influence your feeling. And then we went onto a problem that I usually spend almost half a year on, of working with film.

And I started working with film in, I think early 1950s or maybe even earlier, but trying to emphasize the unreality that you could create with film in no other way. And we would start out with doing things like -- everybody making a Rorschach blots in color and putting these up all on the wall, 24 of them or whatever. And then each picking a succession of these and photographing them one frame at a time in a movie camera and then projecting this image that is the composite of all of these things moving and working, and how it becomes something entirely un-seeable any other way, except through this movie technique.

And that eventually each one of them would form part of a group of usually four people, and they would create a couple of minutes of a film that would be their own devising, and not animated film in terms of a Mickey Mouse or something like that, but trying to do something really unusual with it. For instance, they do things with -- one image would be changed slightly in the forms. Maybe it would just be rectangular and circular forms. But in the next image, everything that had been white in the first would become black in the second.

And these things would move, but they're changing. And strange things that happen with that sort of situation. And I showed them lots of unusual movies, animated and otherwise, to get the idea.

For instance, there was a man in Canada that did films simply by scratching on film and painting on film and punching holes on film. And I think his name was Ley. This was 1950s maybe. And I showed his films. But I wanted them to get the idea of feeling coming from something that was totally intangible in terms of anything that could be made as a direct statement. It had to be seen in continuity, and the eye and the mind had to be manipulated so that here was an image that was impossible to see any other way.

MS. YAGER: You spoke about two books that had a lot of influence on your teaching. Do you recall -- the one you brought up was *Language of Vision*. Can you pronounce his --

MR. MILLER: Kepes.

MS. YAGER: Kepes.

MR. MILLER: George Kepes. Gyorgy Kepes I guess it is. Yeah, Gyorgy Kepes.

MS. YAGER: And the other was *Feeling and Form* [New York: Scribner, 1953].

MR. MILLER: *Feeling and Form*, Susanne Langer.

MS. YAGER: Can you talk about those?

MR. MILLER: Well, *Language of Vision* I bought while I was in the Army. And I really didn't understand a lot of it. But it was Bauhaus inspired and it was about all the revolutionary designers and painters of that period. And it got me thinking about relationships and design and communication. And there was a second book, and I can't remember the name of the second book. But it was his book too.

He came from the Bauhaus and taught at the School of Design in Chicago [Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology]. What's the name of the jeweler who was a student of his who disagreed violently with me about what jewelry was all about. Well, her name is gone. One of his books has a picture of him. She was at Asilomar [Pacific Grove, California, 1957]. We both talked to Asilomar –

MS. YAGER: Ruth Pennington?

MR. MILLER: No, no. Ruth. This was the gal -- very -- she was in the show, first America House traveling show that I was in. I'm sorry.

MS. YAGER: I'll have to look -- I'll look up who the women were at the conference.

MR. MILLER: She was a very famous --

MS. YAGER: Margaret.

MR. MILLER: Margaret De Patta.

MS. YAGER: Is that who you mean? Okay.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, Margaret De Patta. She was a student of his.

MS. YAGER: Yes. And Moholy-Nagy as well?

MR. MILLER: I think, yes.

MS. YAGER: And so tell me the difference you had.

MR. MILLER: Well, there is a transcript, just a little part of what we both said in that conference. And I just read it yesterday, but I can't remember now why -- I know that she was very hostile in feeling in her speech to what I had to say in mine. And to my jewelry, too. I mean, this was something that she didn't want to have anything to do with. And this was very early in what I was working with, but anyway. I was too much part of the past and she thought everybody should be

going into the future.

MS. YAGER: Well, I guess it's the Scandinavian versus the European and all those issues of narrative and decorative and modernist. And tell me about the book by Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form*.

MR. MILLER: Well, it's hard to put it into words. It's just that she made this very definite connection between psychologically developing feelings through what you saw in form relationships. It's too complicated to try to put into words.

MS. YAGER: And you said, when the tape was off, that people responded to form more strongly because people were forms.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. I think that. And there are always -- in the world around you, you're constantly in -- you aren't in a flat land, you're in a three-dimensional world. Four dimensional if you want to count time. So that's -- I think all of my teaching I was trying to get students to realize that they weren't just involved with color and shape but they were mainly involved with how these things made you feel. It's just -- it's feeling, there's so much to feeling.

MS. YAGER: And how they penetrate, the ways of entering a person.

MR. MILLER: Right. Yeah. So I had a lot of -- I mean, she wrote several books, and I got a lot out of all of them. And I think they may be totally unknown now, but that was a big thing for me.

MS. YAGER: In the 1970s you started teaching jewelry and metalsmithing at the school.

MR. MILLER: You know, it would be I would think '75 maybe. It was when Fred stopped teaching, I went in to teach. And I felt very inadequate because my training was -- I had no formal training except -- well, I did go to the Baron's conference and learn to do hollowware stretching. But I made only, I think, three pieces of hollowware after that. That was Fred's thing and jewelry was my thing.

MS. YAGER: And that was all self-research? I mean, that was very self-directed research?

MR. MILLER: And I never -- yeah. I really was all -- well, Fred taught me what I basically knew, and then from there on I taught myself what I needed to know. But I've always felt my jewelry was fairly -- quite a limited range of -- I had the black and gold technique, which were pieces that were distinctly different from the other. And the fragment forms, which were distinctly different from the others. But it was just really those three things. I did a lot of rather technically difficult sawing on creatures, on rings, on very small things of that sort, which was sort of a whole other direction.

And some of it wasn't very practical because I put granulation on it and I would see the ring 10 years later and most of the granulation was worn off. It just didn't work on that. But when I started teaching, I didn't know anything about, I mean, teaching metalry I didn't know anything about casting. I couldn't' teach that.

And it was at a time when there was a lot of sort of funky jewelry being made, which I didn't have much response to. And I just felt sort of inadequate. I could teach -- I would go to Europe, I would photograph as many modern shows of jewelry that I could find in Europe -- and I found quite a few -- and I would bring that back also with all the photographs that I'd taken in museums of ancient and earlier pieces. So I had that to offer to them.

And a chasing, I could work with them on that with ideas about the technical sides of that. And I tried to emphasize form again in the jewelry, rather than flat. And I've always felt the same way. If I ever had, well, a large show, that my work would be too repetitive in a way, the same ideas with variations again and again and again and again. And, fortunately, whenever I -- the one man shows I have had weren't large shows, so that there is enough variety, and that didn't bother me too much.

MS. YAGER: Some of what you consider limited, other people would consider focused.

MR. MILLER: Well, maybe. It is focused, I mean, because I couldn't let an idea alone. If I enjoyed working with one, I'd see another variation and so on and so on.

MS. YAGER: Yeah. One grew out of the next.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: Let's see. Tell me about the issue of balancing your work with your teaching. Was that -- I mean, you seem to have worked that out, all of that.

MR. MILLER: Well, I balanced my work with my teaching, with my -- see, I did major show installations and I would take often two weeks to design and build the show, the staging of it and the hanging and the planning. And then at that time I would be working night and day, and I would get into my class for a little while but the rest of the time I was in the gallery. And I had sponge rubber mats that I would sleep on overnight often in the gallery because I would work so late it wouldn't pay to drive all the way out here and go back to school the next day.

MS. YAGER: Goodness.

MR. MILLER: That was -- but I loved it. I loved organizing space, you know. And I had the feeling of what painting belonged with what painting belonged with what painting and so on. It was important to me. I mean, it had to get to the place where it felt right. And in a big show with crafts and all the rest of it, I loved that interrelationship of all these things, designing with it. So that was just sort of part of my joy of working at the art school really, in that relationship.

And the teaching was sort of the hardest part of it because I never felt capable of really communicating as well as I should. I'd never had any formal training as a teacher, and I never expected to teach design. It all came off the top of my head.

And the funny thing is students will come to me now that I had years ago and they'll say, "I remember this all these years. It's been so helpful in my work." I can't remember having ever said it. So it was really off the top of my head with most of the teaching.

MS. YAGER: What was Baron Fleming like as a teacher?

MR. MILLER: He was a wonderful, warm man. He didn't do much teaching by demonstration. In fact, I think Baron Fleming was mainly a designer. He was the court silversmith. He had an atelier in Stockholm with people that were there working and producing his designs, and he had a tremendous volume of work. I've seen shows of his in other places in Europe. Just amazed at the amount of work that he produced. And I guess in Stockholm, where they hold the Nobel Prize in that building, there are a whole lot of examples of his silver work throughout that building.

But he was very warm. He loved to say, "All you have to do is continue. It will come," you know. And he would give lectures on silver, showing examples and talking about problems in designing a teapot or a coffeepot or trophy or something of this sort. But he didn't do much in terms of sitting down with a piece of silver and a hammer and a stake and demonstrating. And he did have a good assistant who would do this sort of thing with him.

MS. YAGER: Was there a -- I know in Detroit there was the [Michigan] Silversmiths' Guild, and I believe he taught there a number of times as well, up in the Detroit area.

MR. MILLER: I doubt -- I don't know of him ever doing that.

MS. YAGER: Really? Well, many other people, I guess, in the Michigan shows credited Fleming. So maybe they went somewhere else.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. See, they were -- he did, I'm sure, maybe four conferences, and they would be -- what were there, 15 of us at those conferences. I'm not sure how many of us were there. I mean, [Arthur] Pulos, Fred, the guy from Philadelphia.

MS. YAGER: Richard Rinehart.

MR. MILLER: Richard Rinehart. There were a whole lot of people that studied at those conferences. And they went all over the country. But I don't think he ever did anything but the

conferences.

MS. YAGER: That's very possible, yes. Let's see. Can you -- I'm trying to find out what motivated your interest in metal in the first place. Do you remember the very first experience you have with seeing someone work in metal, or the first time that you did something with metal?

MR. MILLER: Well, it was simply -- in *Popular Science* magazine, I think it would have been in the 1926-28 period, there was an article on how to make simple jewelry using wire, and you made rings out of wire. And it showed how to flatten a round wire to make a leaf. And it must have talked about soldering too. All I know is that I thought, gee, I would love to do that. But I never did anything about it until I met Fred at art school.

MS. YAGER: Do you think that there is -- I mean, sometimes I'm wondering, is there something about metal that holds feelings more?

MR. MILLER: Well, you know, I did a lot of work in pottery, as my minor in art school. I never got good -- I mean, I never had any feeling for form with what you could I mean, ignoring Toshiko [Takaezu] and so on -- well, other people too, for that matter. Leza S. McVey. But clay never excited me in terms of what I could do with the form. I really enjoyed all the glaze study we did. I was fascinated with working with glazes. But I didn't take -- I think I said before I didn't take metal in art school because what they were doing didn't interest me.

MS. YAGER: But do you think there is something? I mean, I always wonder with people, you know, when they are marking an accomplishment, a military accomplishment or a wedding, you know, you give a piece of metal.

[Audio break.]

MR. MILLER: There's something about the permanence of it and it's usually silver or gold which has some sort of connotation in terms of wealth and status, I think too, you know, and so I think there's always that sideline. But I realized when I started working in gold, that simply because it was gold, I could charge much more for it, for my time, than when I was working in silver. And I really loved silver, when I was working in silver, I -- you know, I just loved it as a metal, and I never make anything in silver, and --

MS. YAGER: Did -- I mean the amount of time that you put into your work, is that -- are you ever able to charge enough, I mean?

MR. MILLER: No, I've never -- well, I've always been afraid that I would price myself out of the market if I charged what I thought it was worth. So it's always been -- you know, I realized when I started working with gold that I had to use gold, and I was going to use it just as if it was a common material that was available to me. And I was going to use it as heavy, and however I wanted, and I never weighed a piece. I never kept track of the weight or the cost of the material, because I realized that it was time that was the valuable thing, and time plus inspiration is what people were paying for. But still I started out, you know, charging so little that it took me years and years to get to the point where I began charging closer to what, probably, I should have been charging earlier.

But, when you're working with gold, particularly in the earlier days, you realize you've got to sell the pieces, I mean if you're just teaching, on a teaching salary, you can't afford to buy a lot of gold, and you have to be able to sell so that you can get more gold to work, and so --

MS. YAGER: Did you -- were you able to sell the pieces with -- you know, fairly steadily?

MR. MILLER: Yes, well, from the very early days, Fred and I would put, you know, quite a few pieces in the May Show and most of them would sell from the May Show.

MS. YAGER: Really?

MR. MILLER: And the museum would buy the occasional piece, and -- but I never got any collection of pieces, I always had -- if people wanted, you know, to have a show some place of

some of my work, I always was in the process of either making something new or borrowing pieces back for the show.

When I was working with silver, I accumulated some of those pieces, but they went before too long. With the gold, it's the matter of making pieces, getting them sold and then buying more gold, so that I could keep on working in gold. Mr. Fleishmann, when he wanted to start buying gold again, my pieces again, I think it was in the 1980s, he said, "You're charging much too little", and told me what he thought I should be charging for the pieces, and --

MS. YAGER: What had you been charging, and what did he suggest?

MR. MILLER: Well, I had been charging maybe $5,000, $6,000, and he said they ought to go up to at least $9,000, $10,000 for some pieces. So almost doubling what I'd been charging for it.

MS. YAGER: And did you say that he wanted to commission a piece a year?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, and he did, and some years he would get two or even three pieces if I -- a couple of times I took two pieces that I had been working on to let him make a choice, and he decided he wanted both of them.

MS. YAGER: Now would these be pieces -- had he asked for anything specific or these are just sort of whatever you create?

MR. MILLER: Sometimes he wanted a bracelet for one of his daughters, and he wanted a bracelet for his wife, both of which, I mean, they worked out all right, but I don't enjoy making bracelets, I have a difficult time, it's something about going around the wrist that doesn't intrigue me --

MS. YAGER: Well, that's a lot of units that need to be connected somehow, I guess.

MR. MILLER: Yes, yes.

MS. YAGER: And would you make each unit the same or different, or --

MR. MILLER: Well, I did some with coin-edged forms, you know what I'm talking about, coin-edged -- raised where you hammer the edge to bring it up on an oval or round or rectangular form, because I like the effect of that tapering up at the edge, and then sawed sea creatures or something like that, as the design, and then taking part of it and the body form, usually, and granulating that, putting that down in. And I did some bracelets with woven cord, having woven cord that then would come up and surround the form so the cord gave it flexibility and then an elaborate clasp at the back of it, and then something at the top.

And then one of the daughters has a black and gold that was quite a production because it was a hinged bracelet with a clasp and a gold unit at the front that was a complex fragment unit, and then the rest of it was all like strata black and gold technique, and that one I actually made because I had this idea for it and I wanted to make it. It's the only bracelet I think that I ever made without being commissioned.

MS. YAGER: How many of the pieces that you have created, like pieces that have been, do you accept a specific kind of commission, and what are the pluses and minuses of that?

MR. MILLER: Sometimes they're helpful because it gets you thinking about something and helps the creativity, sort of, keep churning in your mind. And I used to do so many wedding rings, you know, wedding ring after wedding ring after wedding ring in the early days, and I made renderings for all. You know, I would present them with three or four renderings of different gold wedding rings. And I haven't done a gold wedding ring in years, but in the early days that was one of the things that I did, really a lot of.

MS. YAGER: You had that little box in your studio with a stack a few inches tall of lovely renderings, using --

MR. MILLER: I like doing renderings. I mean, I had taught techniques. And even for Potter and

Mellen, for Fred, when things would get busy and he would need renderings to show the clients, I would go in on Saturdays and do renderings. I really enjoy creating renderings and that was fascinating to me. But then, eventually, I found I couldn't do renderings easily of pieces that were enameled, trying to do the enamel and the cloisonnés, as I did them. My cloisonnés were never bent wire, but they were always rectangular fragments to develop a line. And to try to do that in rendering, I made some, but it was so difficult.

I showed you I did lots and lots of fairly thick sketch books of drawings, and I would work and work and work with drawings until I had a feeling that this was right, or was approaching where I could see, begin to feel the piece. And then I'd just go ahead and work on the piece. And I found that it was important to try to work it to the size of the drawing, or else if the drawing seemed not right, I'd take a Polaroid picture of it, and I had a close-up so that I could adjust the distance away from the drawing, and get it a little bit smaller to what the size should be.

But I really, the notebooks of the drawings aren't beautiful drawings, but they were what I needed to get ideas. And sometimes I could go, you know, and sit down and draw, draw, draw, the idea would just flood. And then other days you'd go and you were struggling with the drawings because they don't seem to be working right.

MS. YAGER: Now you said that your general practice is to work in sort of a linear way, one piece at a time?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, almost, I think there's only been twice over-the-years when I've had two pieces going at the same time. And I think the reason, in both cases, was that they were both inspired by drawings, but as I got going on the piece I saw ways of getting two pieces out of this same drawing rather than just one piece, so at that point I was working on both of them at the same time.

MS. YAGER: So the drawing would be fairly exact before you begin creating?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: And how long might you work on a piece, what's the shortest and longest period of time on the more major gold, enamel, granulated pieces?

MR. MILLER: Well, when I was teaching and working, because we were working nights and Saturday afternoons and Sundays. It would depend, you know, I could do a ring in a week, but a major piece two months to three months, depending on how elaborate the enamel section of it might be, if it was enameled. And the black and gold ones took a long time too, because that was tiny little pieces of 18 karat and pure just building up strata of these things.

So for the May Shows -- I would have to look at the old catalogues -- but I think five or six pieces was about it for the year. And so there's never been a big -- I've never had anything, enough production that I could offer it to a gallery or anything like that, except when I was in the Army and making little pins and little brooches. I would bring them up to a gallery in Cleveland and they would sell them. But once I got started on the more major pieces I never -- it's just it wouldn't be profitable, I couldn't produce enough, and there was a waiting list of people who wanted a piece.

MS. YAGER: So pieces have always gone directly to a person who was buying it?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Except that now they're turning up at auctions and that sort of thing because --

MS. YAGER: Are they really?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: Which auctions have you seen them at?

MR. MILLER: Well, there was an auction here in Cleveland, there were a couple of times I didn't even know they were up for auction. But the present instructor at the art school bought two of my

pieces through auction because one of the -- they were both owned by the same man who had died and had no relatives that wanted to hang onto these. But I've always felt sort of unhappy because I didn't think my pieces were getting to be known because I didn't have a New York gallery or some place like that that would be sort of the salesmen, the promoter for the pieces. I didn't need -- I couldn't make anything more, but I always knew that I was just sort of off here in Cleveland and I was selling most of my pieces to Cleveland people, which is amazing, I mean --

MS. YAGER: Part of that, I guess, you know, Potter Mellen -- Potter and Mellen -- such a huge influence in Cleveland I guess.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah.

MS. YAGER: And the fact that Fred was working there, the president at one point even -- yeah. I read that the founder of Potter and Mellen went to Cleveland School of Art. And that a prize in his name [the Horace E. Potter Memorial Award for Excellence in Craftsmanship] was one of the ones given at the May Show and you and Fred often won -- each of you won one or two of --

MR. MILLER: I think I've got four of them upstairs, yeah.

MS. YAGER: Did you get a plaque or something when you --

MR. MILLER: No, it's a beautiful medal.

MS. YAGER: Oh, really.

MR. MILLER: Yes, in silver, yeah.

MS. YAGER: Oh, interesting.

MR. MILLER: But no, I knew him, when Fred went there, he was in his late 70s I think, I mean Mr. Potter, and --

MS. YAGER: This is Horace Ephraim Potter.

MR. MILLER: He was still doing some designing, but he wanted someone to come in and take over the whole designing thing. And he was still -- he did a lot of enameling on rings which wasn't very practical, they were beautiful rings, gold rings with enameling on them, but he was still repairing because there were so many of these things coming back because the enamel had chipped off here or there, and he was still a craftsman enough that he could go back at them and repair them.

MS. YAGER: Now you have all of his enamels downstairs?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, I have all of what was left and it's enough to keep me going for another 60 years, well, longer than that, with the amount that I use. But he apparently went to Europe and bought enamels from companies over there, I think mainly in France and England, and he brought the big round boulles --

MS. YAGER: Of glass? A chunk of glass?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, it's like a pancake of glass, a thick pancake of glass, and then broke that up and ground it. And so all of those are still good, but I have a cabinet of vials of ground enamel, and all of them have gone beyond the point where they will work any more, they won't fire any more because enamel when it's exposed to air, the glass, just like old Egyptian glass, it starts getting that surface that breaks down and makes it luminescent and so on. And when it's a tiny grain it just deteriorates to the point where there's still a grain there, but it's no longer glass.

MS. YAGER: It's changed chemically?

MR. MILLER: Yes, yeah. And when I work with enamel, I grind every time I get some enamel out to work with it. Even though it's ground, I regrind it to start with. I mean, I don't spend a long time on it, but grinding it enough to try to get the surface of all those grains roughened again or cleared of any deterioration that could be there.

MS. YAGER: And you use a mortar and pestle?

MR. MILLER: Mortar and pestle to do the --

MS. YAGER: Which actually was one Mr. Potter had made out of agate?

MR. MILLER: Agate, yeah.

MS. YAGER: With a beautiful wood handle. It's very nice and worn. And then you said you use distilled water?

MR. MILLER: Yes, Cleveland water has too many chemicals in it. It's hard to tell the difference, but there is a difference, and if you don't use distilled water the brilliance isn't quite there. So with distilled water it works much better. Kenny Bates used to use acid, I've never used acid, but he also acidified his enamels at one point in washing them, to clear up more, I guess, of the chemical on the surface

MS. YAGER: How do you acidify it?

MR. MILLER: Well, he added, I think it was nitric acid, to the water, and he was grinding it. Or maybe it was -- no, it was nitric, because sulfuric, if you add that to the water, you know, it heats up and blows up in your face, so it had to be nitric that he was working with.

And the other thing I do, when I finally get the piece done -- this was a dangerous process [not recommended], but I found the final thing that you're doing is stoning the surface to get the cloisonnés and the enamel down to the same level. I'd done all my polishing, practically, with pumice and water. So you pumice and water the enamel and the gold to get the gold a little bit brighter, but because of the rough texture that it has after the stoning with carborundum.

And then I get the ventilator going in the little room that's off the main studio, open the window to get air coming in. And then I get soda and water in a dish ready, and get out the hydrofluoric acid bottle, which is very dangerous, you know a drop on your skin and it will go right through. It's the worst chemical of the acids that there is, because it eats through glass, you know, it's in a plastic bottle. And then I put the piece in a little plastic cup and put that plastic cup in a pan of warm water to help -- hot water, really -- to help warm up, make the action faster. And then I put on gloves, rubber gloves, and try to keep from breathing and pour the hydrofluoric in on this, leave the room as quick as possible and then eventually go back in and take it out and put it into the soda water to get rid of the acid on it. And then go out again, and come back in and pour the hydrofluoric back into the bottle.

MS. YAGER: What will that do to the piece?

MR. MILLER: It eats the surface off, and any carborundum -- see, you have to fire it again, and any carborundum or dirt that could be in that surface, in the process of polishing -- pumice and all that, could create spots, discoloration, and then you give it the final firing after that.

MS. YAGER: Like a --

MR. MILLER: And I don't recommend, you know, this is a very dangerous process and you don't have to really do it, but you can have some very unhappy results if you do get dirt or something there, pumice or something, it's still lodged -- could be an air bubble in the enamel that the pumice would go down into. And so I'd still do it and that worries me, it's down there in the studio, and I think, if I go and somebody is cleaning out the studio, I've tried to put skull and crossbones and everything else as a warning, and what this is, because -- but anyway.

MS. YAGER: Yeah.

MR. MILLER: That's important. Then the other thing we haven't mentioned, the 18 karat gold, because you're working with acid and cleaning the piece, always gets slightly yellowish surface, not a really gold surface. There's enough silver in that surface after you scratch brushed it, so I've always plated with 24 karat --

MS. YAGER: 22 or 24 karat --

MR. MILLER: Twenty-four karat gold plate, the piece finally to get the color that I really like so they're all -- and I see pieces that are 30 or more years old, and the plating's never worn off. Apparently, it stays with the piece very, very well. Some pieces I like the yellow acid finish on the 18 karat, some of the fragment pieces I've always kept that color, but most of the enamel pieces --

MS. YAGER: Do you make a box for the piece or do you encourage people to store it in a certain way?

MR. MILLER: In the early days I used Potter Mellen boxes, way back in the late -- and then Bufkor, which is a company that used to be in Buffalo [New York], and I had a very nice box that I would -- for a ring or a brooch and various-sized brooches. And I had my monogram printed in gold on the inside of that box. So I did use those, and then for quite a few years, I just bought boxes without the monogram, here in Cleveland from a jewelry supplier, they've gone out of business. And Bufkor, now, will only sell -- they make beautiful boxes -- but you have to buy in thousands. So I am now at the point where Bufkor sent me information that they had some left-over in some categories that I could buy. So I bought up some of those, maybe I have enough to last me, I don't know. Well, the other thing, Mary used to make ultra suede bags.

MS. YAGER: This is Mary Miller? Fred's wife?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, Fred's wife, yeah. And she would make bags for Fred's pieces and she'd make bags for my jewelry too.

MS. YAGER: Is repair of your work, is that an issue, do pieces come back very often from mishandling, or --

MR. MILLER: Luckily, not very often, no. I've never had an enamel repair come back, which is wonderful. And, you know, I always thought that they would be -- I've had a few times when the legged creatures have come back with some of the legs bent or something and I've had to fix them. I think the piece that went to the Vatican show [Vatican Exhibition of American Crafts, 1978] years ago, when it came back, it had some bending on it, it was on granulated legs, but I could carefully work them back into shape.

MS. YAGER: Trying to look up when that Vatican show was, not sure if I've got it handy.

MR. MILLER: The other show, one of the earliest European shows, was the Brussels World Fair [1958].

MS. YAGER: Yeah, tell me about that, how did that come about?

MR. MILLER: I think Mrs. [Aileen Osborn] Webb got the idea of sort of sponsoring this, and unfortunately when the show closed there was no security, apparently, so my pieces, and they were important pieces in that show, were stolen, gone. And she put up the money to pay for all the pieces that were stolen out of that show. Now Fred had pieces in, but I don't think his pieces were taken, and I think it was because my pieces were gold, you know, that they would be right away -- that's one thing I never thought about in the early days, but I think over 18 pieces of mine, over the years, have been stolen, or lost, and probably melted down, so --

MS. YAGER: Oh, you think so?

MR. MILLER: Well --

MS. YAGER: I would keep it, if I had stolen it. [Laughs.]

MR. MILLER: Well, I don't think so, the kind of people that --

MS. YAGER: You think they were stealing them for the gold?

MR. MILLER: They were stealing them for gold, I would think. But I never contemplated that in the early days, but little-by-little it began -- more and more pieces that were lost or stolen.

MS. YAGER: The Brussels show was in 1958, and then the Vatican exhibit was in 1978. How many pieces do you think you've created over all this time?

MR. MILLER: I have no idea. I have never tried to figure out how many pieces.

MS. YAGER: Do you think it would be hundreds or thousands, or --

MR. MILLER: Well, not thousands, but it would be hundreds, probably. And not many of the big pieces, the major pieces, may be close to 100, you know. But brooches, used to do a lot of tie bars, cuff links, small things like that. There were lots of things like that.

MS. YAGER: I wanted to ask you something and I forgot. Oh, I know what it was. You had said that you have photographed most of your work. Do you keep track of the exact piece and who it's gone to or any of that?

MR. MILLER: Mentally, I know where most of it's gone. And in the early days, Mary used to keep track of Fred's and my -- there was a ledger and she would say -- when we could find, if it went out of the May Show often we could find out who had bought it, sometime not. But no, I never made a real point out of trying to keep track of it, and I wish I had. Many of the early pieces I have no idea who has them or who they went to, but most of the later pieces – there haven't been that many, you know, there were some pieces that went from the Los Angeles County Fair shows to people out there.

MS. YAGER: Was that a show that you went out for, or you sent work to it?

MR. MILLER: We sent work. I don't think -- it went on for maybe three years or something like that. We went out once; the show wasn't on, because of the people that organized the metal part of it. But apparently it was a very good show, a lot of good craftsmen sent to that show, and at that time there weren't too many shows available that were sort of national in scope. Wichita was really the only annual -- was it annual or was it bi-annual? I'm not sure.

MS. YAGER: I don't know, I'd have to look it up.

MR. MILLER: I'm not sure, but anyway, I think it was maybe annual on the one that really was national.

MS. YAGER: Was that "Clay Fiber Metal" ["Fiber/Clay/Metal" St. Paul Art Center, Minnesota]-- was that what it was called?

MR. MILLER: No, that was St. Paul. Wichita was just called the "Wichita Annual" ["Wichita Art Association Decorative Arts and Ceramics Exhibition"]. The funny thing, I went out there to judge a couple of times and then I had a little one man show once. And I had a correspondence from a girl I'd gone to school with who was married, it turned out, to the man who was the director of the Wichita Art Museum. Well, the Wichita Art Museum and the Wichita Art Association were sort of at war with each other. I never knew that the Wichita Art Museum even existed, but she wrote me this letter. And so when I went out this last time, I made arrangements that I would go and visit her while I was there. And I went to the museum: It has the most fabulous collection of American painting, contemporary, well, not too contemporary. There was some wealthy lady, probably cattle or oil, in Wichita who had a friend who had taste in New York and she told the lady, any time there was an American painting coming up in an auction; she put up the money to buy it. I went to this museum and here were wonderful Burchfields and Hoppers and Kuhns and Marins. It was just astonishing to find this wealth of wonderful American art in Wichita that I never knew existed out there.

Oh, the other thing they had -- Mary Petty did a *New Yorker* cover years ago of a lady, of a maid leaning out of a window of the top of the -- what's the big hotel overlooking Central Park?

MS. YAGER: The Plaza?

MR. MILLER: The Plaza. You know, it had the mansard roof with the window, and it was a cover.

They have the original of that out there. It's just an amazing museum that had nothing to do with the Wichita Art Association.

MS. YAGER: One of the things that I wanted to talk about a little bit was your work environment. One of the questions they ask is, do you work alone or with others. For, you know, many, many decades you shared a studio with Fred Miller.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, we worked from right after the war. He came back and started working at Potter Mellen. From then on he was teaching metal at the art school, and I would go to Potter Mellen in the evening and worked with him when he was still just starting out doing hollowware, and I was just starting out doing early, just plain silver jewelry. And then when he'd reformed the department at the art school, I mean, it really took over the space and redesigned the space. Then we began working there.

MS. YAGER: And you said that the classes ended at 5:00, and the students had to leave and you had, from that time on and the weekend, to work?

MR. MILLER: Oh yeah, yeah, so -- and we worked really late. I don't know, we were young then, I guess, but we could produce a lot and we had music going on all the time. Well, we had a friend who was over in the pottery who would be firing in the evening or glazing, and there were other teachers who were in the building at the same time. There were also rats in that building, and you'd go down a dark hall at night, and you'd feel something jump on your leg and then jump off.

MS. YAGER: Jump on you?

MR. MILLER: Yes, yeah, there really were a lot of laughs there. But it was wonderful to have somebody to work with, and there was a give and take, you know, about ideas and helped a lot too when we were rolling things, if it was really heavy, if you needed somebody to help you roll this ingot down. So there was a lot of give and take that way. And then we used to stop teaching, or I would stop teaching, and Fred was working at Potter Mellen and I'd go over and pick him up and then we'd come back to school and cook something on the hotplate and then get to work.

And Toshiko was teaching, well, when she came to teach, she was working in the evenings too, and so she would come over, and we would cook and she'd eat with us. And then sometimes she'd have us -- on rare occasions, really. We'd go over to her apartment, and she lived in a basement apartment at that time, and she made wonderful tempura. And we'd sit on the floor and she'd fix tempura partly in the kitchen and partly in electric fry pans on the floor which was covered with newspapers. And so that went on for all the time she was -- we had one funny thing. Toshiko was a wonderful cook, or still is, does lots of cooking, but she make tempura --

MS. YAGER: This is Toshiko Takaezu.

MR. MILLER: Takaezu, yeah.

MS. YAGER: Yes.

MR. MILLER: And she got a call and this man said, "I have friends in New York who know I like Japanese cooking, and they said if I was coming to Cleveland I should call you up and see if you would care to cook me some food."

Did I -- I didn't tell you this?

MS. YAGER: No.

MR. MILLER: Well, and he said, "My name is Marcel Marceau," and she didn't know who Marcel Marceau was. So she asked me, she said, "this man's called me up, I don't know who in the world he was, he wants me to cook for him." I said, "Toshiko, I saw him the night before last in the theater, he's the world's most renowned pantomimist."

MS. YAGER: The world's most renowned?

MR. MILLER: Pantomimist. Pantomime --

MS. YAGER: Oh, yes, yes.

MR. MILLER: Well, so I said, "Call him up and tell him you'll have him to dinner." She said "I will only do it if you'll come, I don't want to do it alone." So I went and he's -- you've never seen him?

MS. YAGER: Oh, yes, well not in person.

MR. MILLER: Well, he's fabulous. But here he came in, we sat on the floor, he talked and talked -- it was early because he had to get back in time for the performance that night. Toshiko cooked and we sat and talked about his children, and he was as funny you know, talking, as he was when he was performing. But it was so funny because she had no idea who this man was. But anyway, that's sort of off the point.

MS. YAGER: You mentioned earlier that Fred and Mary had married kind of secretly?

MR. MILLER: Not kind of, really secretly. They had friends in Akron -- well, the same friend who had taught Fred how to make silver after he'd gone to summer camp. He had married a girl in Bath, Ohio, and they had a Phaeton, an open car with isinglass windows, and Fred and Mary decided to get married. And they were going up to Ripley, New York, where you go and get married in a day and come back. It was like -- there's some other city --

MS. YAGER: Bowling Green, Ohio, I thought you could.

MR. MILLER: Well, at any rate, I don't think Bowling Green existed as that kind of a town. But anyway, you could go up there and without any to do, get married and get back. And it was a terrible cold snap, and they drove up in this open Phaeton with isinglass windows, with no heat, and got married and came back to Cleveland. And Mary kept on – well, she had a good job with the telephone company in Akron, so she would come up on weekends and they could be together on weekends.

But they kept it a secret from Mary's family and Fred's family for, I think, two years after that, because Fred was on this scholarship that this wealthy family had given him, and he was afraid that if they knew that he had married, that he might be using the money and so on -- because they were giving him money to live on -- for this marriage and maybe take the scholarship away from him, so he kept quiet.

MS. YAGER: So then at what point did they have children?

MR. MILLER: Well, Fred went into the army the year after I went in, and he went into the Signal Corps as an officer, and they were stationed in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. And while they were down there, I guess 1945, maybe, 1946, their first daughter was born down there. Fred's job was in intelligence at the post there, but he also had the job of being an officer escorting special army materials on trains across the country where he would have to have a whole group of guards on the train which he would be in charge of as they went to the west coast and came back, so that was part of his job. And he was there until the end of the war. But he didn't get out – see I got out because I went in very early. I got out early on the early release, well, I got out in November, Armistice Day in November when I got out. He didn't get out until I think the following summer. During the war we only saw each other once. I came back to Cleveland on a three day pass, or something like that, and he happened to be with his family, and he came up, and I was so nervous because he was an officer and I didn't know how to respond –

MS. YAGER: Should you salute?

MR. MILLER: – to an officer. I had funny experiences in the army as a soldier. One of the earliest jobs I had – there was a huge map of the world in the commanding general's office, in his outer office at armored force headquarters, and he decided that – it was showing the world in color according to the height of the land, and the green areas were the low areas, and he decided that the

green was too similar to the next color and he wanted the green intensified. And because I could use an airbrush, my commanding officer in our office suggested that I go over there and airbrush this whole thing to make the green stronger. And this required frisket cutting for all this huge wall –

MS. YAGER: To block out certain areas?

MR. MILLER: Yes. And here I was working on this ladder with an airbrush and the commanding general would come in and – well the first time, you know, I finally went to a salute trying to do something with the airbrush, and he said, "Keep going young man!" [laughs], and that was that. After that I didn't have to worry about what I was doing.

MS. YAGER: I want to talk about the, somewhat about the subject matter and the intent of your jewelry pieces. You know, where you got the ideas and what sources of inspiration you had, some of the, you know, you worked – some of the ones I'm familiar with are sea creatures and beetles and moths and snails. I saw one example of a bat. Tell me about how you –

MR. MILLER: Well, I was always fond of animals, all animals, and I had a microscope. My folks in spite of the Depression – I got a Bausch & Lomb one-hundred dollar microscope for one of my Christmas presents when I was in high school. And so I was fascinated with pond water and all things that you could see that way. And we had a woods near us and I would go down and watch the chipmunks and the animals, and of course, I had pet animals. So animal and life and the wild, the natural world, were really important part of my life. And when I got involved with the jewelry, the early pieces had nothing – I mean they were rings and they were sort of modern designs, simple modern designs, but they had nothing to do with wildlife or anything like that. And usually set a stone.

When I got involved with the granulation I began to think about things in nature where there was something about their design that suggested the character of granules. And Kae Cass, who was my watercolor teacher and a great friend, she loved spiders, so when I first got spiders – first got granulation to work, I was doing little pieces, little domes, I made her a pair of earrings with the body granulated and the rest of it was forged gold wire. And then I tried a larger spider and I think in that first American artist article, there's a picture of that. And I got a larger section, body section, to work. I think I melted a couple before I got that to work, but I finally got a larger piece going, and I used to – in order to work with the heat problem I often would coat the back of the piece with yellow ochre.

[Audio break.]

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller in the artist's home and studio in Brecksville, Ohio. Today is August 22, 2004. This is for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number four, session number one.

We were talking when the last disc finished about yellow ochre, putting yellow ochre on the backs of pieces and the granulation?

MR. MILLER: Well, the yellow ochre went on the back to keep the piece from melting. I found out very early on that you had to have heat under the piece, as well as coming down on top of the piece. And we worked with pea pumice in a pan to do annealing, and I found out that if I put the torch on the pea pumice and got it red hot -- actually it wasn't too good for the pea pumice because it would begin to fuse together. But that heat, then I could put a screen with the piece on above that, and have enough heat underneath it to bring it to temperature.

And the problem was the piece would want to heat unevenly if the torch -- especially if it was highly-domed or something like that. So I did a lot of experimenting early on, and the yellow ochre was the early stages of a solution to keep the edges from melting while I was trying to heat it up. And eventually I got to the point where on many of the pieces, if it was a domed piece, did the center part of it first with the granulation, and then did the edges, because the edges would overheat if I tried to do the whole thing at the same time.

In the early days, after I finally got granulation working, and *Craft Horizons* [April 1957] – Conrad Brown wanted to do an article. He came and at that point I didn't give out much information about what my technique was, mainly because at that time I thought -- Kenny Bates had just brought out his kit. And you know, there was enameling going like mad all over the United States, everybody was doing enamel ashtrays, and I had this vision of everybody doing granulation.

MS. YAGER: And you had worked for many years to arrive at that point, I suspect?

MR. MILLER: Well, what I didn't realize and have known from years since, that it takes so much patience and technical ability with the brush and so on, that it was never going to be something that you could do like you could do enameled ashtrays. And many craftsmen that talked to me, criticized me at that time for not, you know, publishing something about the technique, and I should have realized that it wasn't something that was going to sweep the country in any way.

MS. YAGER: I remember Henry Dunay, hearing him speak one time, and he said that he learned really early on that if it had just one process, just about anybody was going to copy you, and if it had two, some people would, three processes hardly anybody would bother. Your things have -- I can't imagine how many processes and steps you've got. So yeah, the chance of being imitated is probably impossible.

MR. MILLER: The Pijanowskis [Eugene and Hiroko], you know they – well, he was very incensed. I met him once in Rochester, I don't remember why I was up there, but for some reason or other. Well, he thought I -- he just told me off, "because this is something that should be public knowledge and you're holding it back."

MS. YAGER: I think the teacher, people whose profession is teaching, they're dealing in information. But when it's your own work and it's taken just a tremendous evolution to arrive at things, it's a different thing, it's not a commodity that can be given away, I don't --

MR. MILLER: No. But, well, I probably should have been more open than I was. Because now I realize that it's more difficult than I -- and now that my sight is going some, I know how much depended upon good eyesight, because at that time I was working without glasses, and I was doing tiny little things. The first ring that I did was a sun -- little tiny head, about 3/16ths of an inch, dome that had a sun face on it, and then rays that went out from that that had granules down the center of these rays and this was set in a ring. And that was shown in Wichita, and [Robert] von Neumann, I guess it was, who was a judge at that time, and he gave it a prize. But I look at these things now and I wonder how I ever did it without glasses, but that's what I thought in the early days, I thought, the minuteness of granulation was one of the unusual things about it because you could do tiny things that you couldn't do with solder.

But eventually I went with -- the heating of pieces became more and more of a sort of a tricky problem, because when I was doing the little chips to make lines, for instance, in a moth or something like that, I then began to realize that I had to do the parts that would heat up more slowly, do those first. And then get that fused on and then complete the design. And the parts that would heat up faster and fuse that on, and that became more of a problem, you know, trying to make the design look as if it had all been done at the same time. So that was one of the things that I worked with for quite a bit of time.

MS. YAGER: I'm trying to see if I can find the -- you had sent me the image of this moth, the African moth. And you know, when you were talking about looking at examples in nature that would match the granulation, the pattern of, you know, like how you put the granulation on the moth wings, and how the edges, like how the moth, how they have those little platelets on the --

MR. MILLER: Well, that's -- you know, it was a natural for the techniques that I was working with, the moth seemed to be something that I could express. And the other reason, a moth always to me seemed to be a heavier creature, and I fought the idea of trying to do butterflies. That's the only butterfly I ever did, and that woman kept insisting that she wanted a butterfly rather than a moth, so

--

MS. YAGER: And this one is climbing up --

MR. MILLER: Sort of a spiny twig or something, and I wanted the contrast between the unpleasantness of the sharp spines on that with the delicacy of the butterfly. But one of the early pieces was a snail which worked very well, simply because after the slug, I used the slug idea, the slug body and went right to the snail with the shell on the same body. And that again -- the snail -- actually the texture on the snail's body has that bumpy little surface that suggested granules. And the tentacles on many -- like the octopus and sea creatures and things like that -- all suggested the granules would lend themselves to that, and that's why those types of creatures became part of it.

MS. YAGER: This African moth, it just, you know -- the way you go from the more rectangular little pallions to the rounded, and sort of this transition, this slow transition from rectangular to circular, and then you know.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah.

MS. YAGER: It's astounding.

MR. MILLER: Well, it's just all suggested by the character of the creature.

MS. YAGER: You when you were showing me, you know, your toolbox and you opened up the one drawer, and in there you have little glass bottles with --

MR. MILLER: Granules.

MS. YAGER: Granules that have been prepared and are ready to be used. In the round you had nine different gradations of size, and the smallest, what would that measurement be?

MR. MILLER: I've never measured it; it's smaller than a grain of salt. It's just extremely -- actually, that was one of the early problems of separating granules into sizes, because I just wanted to work with a range of size, and I found out that there was a company in Cleveland called Otis Elevator that also produced mesh, mesh similar to what potters use when they're grading glazes and sifting glazes and that sort of thing. And so I went down there and I found that they would give me samples of the full line of meshes that they made, and they gave me little about two inch square samples of all these, and I think they were in nine sizes.

MS. YAGER: So that's how you found them.

MR. MILLER: So that's how --

MS. YAGER: Oh, my goodness, I didn't know that.

MR. MILLER: And then we brought them back, and made nesting brass tubes and cut them apart so that -- I didn't show you that, but there's a large tube and then a smaller one which goes into it. And we've mounted the mesh on the underside of the smaller one and then soldered the smaller one into the larger one. And so that these would nest and I could pour the granules in the top and shake it, and you'd get the various sizes of them.

MS. YAGER: And then you have -- some are blackened and some are yellow gold.

MR. MILLER: Well, the black ones, all that I do with the granulation are 18 karat, that are blackened to get the copper oxide on the surface. See that's the thing that makes the granulation possible.

MS. YAGER: So it's not that it will look black later, it's that it's the copper --

MR. MILLER: No, no, the copper has to be there to make the joint --

MS. YAGER: -- coating on it that's on there now.

MR. MILLER: -- because it's going to work it.

MS. YAGER: So the other, the ones that are yellow gold at some point will also be blackened?

MR. MILLER: Actually the ones that you saw there were a mistake. At some point or other, and I don't remember, this is years ago, I made a group, and for some reason or other I acid finished them after they'd been blackened, thinking that I would blacken them again, and blackening them again didn't work. The second time I didn't get enough oxide on the surface, so I kept them, I re-acid-finished them and kept them and I used them occasionally when I need just a gold granule to be soldered on something else or used in a soldering situation. So that's why you saw those, but I always thought, well, as long as I got them, I'll just keep them.

MS. YAGER: They're beautiful. And then you have little rectangular ones, so you roll stripes of gold?

MR. MILLER: I roll about an inch wide piece of gold, maybe – oh, I start out with maybe -- [Audio break.] -- eighth of an inch thick, and get the long, long – and I roll it down as thin as it will go.

MS. YAGER: Long, long meaning how long?

MR. MILLER: Well, sometimes 2 or 3 feet long. And then I cut that on the shears, and the smaller sections, and then put it back through the metal shear again to get tiny, linear pieces of that – very fine. And then combine them and put them back through again to get little tiny squares to make the granules. Then I take stainless steel cups.

Actually they're stainless steel measuring cups that you can get at any hardware, and using powdered charcoal, which is sort of hard to find. I don't powder it myself. I buy big containers of powdered charcoal. And I put a circle of tracing paper in the bottom to start with, and then a layer of powdered charcoal, and then I -- maybe that's a quarter of an inch thick -- sprinkle some of these black little chips into that, another piece of tracing paper, and I go on until I get, maybe, an inch thick of these layers.

I tried to do it with more than that, and I found that because charcoal is sort of an insulator, if you heat it, if you put it into a kiln, it takes an awful long time to get the heat all the way into the center of a big mass of powdered charcoal. But if you use smaller layer and the paper layers in there, it becomes paper charcoal, you know. But it has enough strength that the granules all won't go to the bottom, sift down through to the bottom. Particularly in cases when you're moving this to dump it eventually into water, you don't want the granules, because they're still hot, you don't want them to hit each other and join together or something like that.

So I put this in the kiln at about 1,900 degrees and leave it in for about 30 minutes. And then outside I have a chair or stool, and I have a Pyrex dish, Pyrex glass dish with soapy water in it. Then I take this out through the door and pour it into that. Because when you pour it in it's powdered charcoal just going in this tremendous cloud. If you do it inside, everything's covered with powdered charcoal. Even so, some of this as you take it out of the kiln and so on.

And then from that soapy mixture it helps separate the charcoal from -- it's a detergent, you know -- from the water, mainly from the gold. And then I gradually wash it and pour off the water and put fresh water in until I've got to the point where the charcoal is all out and I'm just getting clearer water and the granules that are in the bottom. And then the granules are placed in little 18-karat, domed dishes. You know, they're about an inch or three-quarters of an inch across. They've been dapped to make these little things. And I put the granules in that and put them in a kiln and then heat them up for about eight minutes or 10 minutes to develop the black surface.

And then I pour them through my sifting thing and I get all the -- and because you want a variety of sizes of granules, sometimes I roll different thicknesses of what I'm going to make the strips out of and the chips out of, so I'm going to be getting some larger and some smaller. So that's the process for getting the granules made.

MS. YAGER: Now, do you go through this process before each piece, or is this a whole different thing and you just do --

MR. MILLER: I usually assign. I say, “Well, today I’m going to make granules,” because it’s a long process. And so you make them, and you make enough one time that will hold you for several -- well, maybe four or five pieces. It depends on how much you’re using

MS. YAGER: And would you be able to prepare all of those different pallions or granules in one day, or is that a couple --

MR. MILLER: No, no. It’s usually I can do it in one day.

MS. YAGER: You know, I was thinking about when you were talking about being criticized for not revealing process. And I remember one time when I was at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and George Segal was giving a lecture. And I found it quite a moving lecture. And he spoke at the end about, you know, I was sitting there, quite enthralled. And the first question that someone asked from the audience was a process question about “How do you get your seams not to show?” And I could see that, he was so insulted that here I was an artist, here I was ripping out myself, here I was showing you my ultimate efforts, and that was the only part that you were able to approach me with.

So, you know, I just say that, because I think that so often people are -- the technique and process is the only part that some people can understand and relate to, and it gets too much attention because it’s really this whole life’s effort.

MR. MILLER: But on the other hand, process -- you have to develop the process if you’re going to make the piece be expressive in the way you want it to be.

MS. YAGER: Well, yes. You have to master those things. Absolutely. Because you’re not free until then.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Just like in watercolor you have to master the manipulation of watercolor and then take off from there.

MS. YAGER: In looking at your pieces, the photos that I’ve seen, it looks to me like, you know, you’ve got -- I mean, each decade they’ve gotten better and better and better. The last pieces seem astounding. So does it take 50 or 60 years, you know?

MR. MILLER: Well, see, I don’t see them quite that way. I know the last moth was the most complicated moth that I’d made and probably the best.

MS. YAGER: A masterpiece. A masterpiece.

MR. MILLER: But I look at some of my early pieces too and still think they’re perhaps some of my best, best pieces. And sometimes I’ve repeated some pieces years later. Not many, but the snail the museum owns, I repeated it many years later because the museum never shows it. It’s there in a vault. And the same thing with the first piece they bought, a beetle. For years it was shown, they had a case for Cleveland art, and it was shown. And I was very proud of that early beetle. And then not too many years ago, somebody wanted something like that beetle. And it hadn’t been shown in 20 years or more, so I just decided I was going to remake the beetle. And I enjoyed revisiting some of those pieces because the second beetle was quite a bit more complex and different from the first one.

MS. YAGER: The African moth, will that go into a public collection or is that a private -- or is it in private hands?

MR. MILLER: No. It’s just -- the same lady that owns -- you were looking at the octopus on that one. The same lady that owns that owns the African moth.

MS. YAGER: Where do they live?

MR. MILLER: Here in Cleveland. Now, she was very interested in art and she was for years the head of the Cleveland -- I mean of the Ohio Art -- I can’t think of the full name.

MS. YAGER: Arts Council?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Ohio Arts Council. She was the guiding force behind that.

MS. YAGER: Do you ever -- I mean, sometimes I -- I mean, your work I remember as a student in the early '70s, you know, you had large spreads of work in [Robert] von Neumann's book I think [*The Design and Creation of Jewelry*. Philadelphia: Chilton Co., Book Division, 1961], and Philip Morton, as well [*Contemporary Jewelry, A Craftman's Handbook*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston; 1970]. I mean, the work was legendary in the '70s. And I had never seen a piece until I saw some last year in Boston at the museum. And I wish there was a place that always had some of this jewelry on display of many of, you know, where do you go to see a Bertoia? Where do you go to see

MR. MILLER: I don't know where you would go to see a Bertoia, and it would be fun to know where you could see a Bertoia.

MS. YAGER: Yes. I mean, there's so many masterpieces that I wish there was some place that we could go.

MR. MILLER: The Museum of American Crafts [now the Museum of Arts & Design, New York, New York] should have a Bertoia. I was so surprised at the Renwick show, that there were so many people that I thought I was going to see there. There wasn't a Mary Lee Hu. I know they own a piece, but there wasn't one in that show. And there were other people, and I can't really remember the names now, but that I expected to see, and they weren't there.

MS. YAGER: I don't think that a museum collection has been purposefully built that really shows the leaders in the field and --

MR. MILLER: Well, in Europe you have the Pforzheim Museum.

MS. YAGER: Yes.

MR. MILLER: But they don't have any American pieces that I remember. It's all European pieces, I think, there.

MS. YAGER: Can you talk about the Pforzheim Museum? And have you been there, I'm assuming.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. I've been there a couple of times.

MS. YAGER: Is it comprehensive?

MR. MILLER: It's very comprehensive of European work and some early work. There are some wonderful pieces in it. It isn't a huge museum. I mean, it doesn't have a lot. But they've got good Max Fröhlich and I can't name the names. So many of the people that I admire in Europe are in that museum. It's a wonderful place to go to get a taste of European designers.

MS. YAGER: I feel that way about the Victoria & Albert Museum. You know, seeing that as a young jewelry student, this incredible laboratory. It wasn't really heavy on modern, you know, but this historical range of pieces.

MR. MILLER: I've only been there once, and that was -- and all I remember now is the, I think, Etruscan work and Hellenistic work, and maybe some Renaissance pieces there. Well, there's nothing modern that I remember when I was there. But this was maybe 30 years ago.

MS. YAGER: There is modern now. Now it goes, you know, the full range. It goes up to today. And that's what's pretty wonderful about it because you can see the Renaissance, you know, the man with the pearl body [the *Canning Jewel*]. You know, a piece that you see in books, and there it is. And then you go through time, and down at the end you'll see Gerda Flockinger or, you know, some of the other things.

Do they own a piece of yours?

MR. MILLER: No, no, no. Very few museums own -- I have things in very few museums. Boston has one piece of jewelry. I guess they're going to get another, eventually, that's being willed to

them.

MS. YAGER: Well, the Cleveland Museum owns about nine pieces [six pieces of jewelry, three watercolors], I think.

MR. MILLER: That many?

MS. YAGER: That's what I've -- yes.

MR. MILLER: I didn't think they had that. They have some of my watercolor paintings. Maybe they're included in that.

MS. YAGER: That could be. But I --

MR. MILLER: Because I think they have at least four watercolors.

MS. YAGER: I'm looking now. Let's see. Collections. The Renwick?

MR. MILLER: Renwick has one.

MS. YAGER: Museum of Contemporary Craft?

MR. MILLER: Has two.

MS. YAGER: Minnesota Museum in St. Paul?

MR. MILLER: One, if it's still there. You know, I don't know.

MS. YAGER: Vassar?

MR. MILLER: Vassar has a good one. Yeah, one. And Yale has one pair of cufflinks.

MS. YAGER: The Fleischmann Collection?

MR. MILLER: There 18, 19, 20, I'm not sure how many.

MS. YAGER: But that's a private collection at this point.

MR. MILLER: Yes. It's in the family.

MS. YAGER: And then Huntington Galleries, West Virginia?

MR. MILLER: No. I think somebody in the museum stole that. There was a jewelry show that was circulating, way back. It was "American Jewelry," I think it was called. And somehow or other, some of the museums got to pick a piece from that show for their own collection. And eventually that piece, I wanted to show someplace else, and I wrote the museum to see if I could borrow it and they couldn't find even a record of it.

MS. YAGER: That was in 1955, "American Jewelry and Related Objects."

MR. MILLER: Right.

MS. YAGER: And that was a show that was -- Dr. Milliken was instrumental in that happening, as was the 1953 "Designer-Craftsmen Show." I'm so impressed with how the leadership level that the museums had, at one time, on trying to really get this work out.

MR. MILLER: Well, he was a judge for that first show in New York. This is at the Brooklyn Museum [of Art].

MS. YAGER: Yes. "Designer-Craftsmen USA."

MR. MILLER: And I'm sure, because he was a judge, I got the prize that I did in that exhibition. And Fred too.

MS. YAGER: I'm sure you deserved it, even if he knew you.

MR. MILLER: I know he pushed my work a lot in the early years.

MS. YAGER: He understood the excellence of it.

Let's see, can you describe like, for instance, you had two solo shows, one in 1957 in Chicago and then another in 1964 in New York, at the Craft Museum. Can you describe -- I'm assuming you went to those shows.

MR. MILLER: Oh, yeah.

MS. YAGER: Were you involved in the exhibition and installation?

MR. MILLER: No. None at all. See, I went and judged the "Midwest Designer Craftsmen." I think it was the first big show that they had.

MS. YAGER: That was in 1957.

MR. MILLER: And [Peter] Voulkos, Dorothy Liebes and I. It was the first time I met Peter and the man -- and I can't think of his name -- he was either the director or the curator of the St. Louis Museum. And I think there may have been one other person on that jury. And it was the first time I met the glass people.

MS. YAGER: Harvey Littleton?

MR. MILLER: No. I met Harvey at that time too, but no. The other people that did glass in Chicago. She just died this year [Frances and Michael Higgins].

MS. YAGER: Labino?

MR. MILLER: No. He's from Toledo. I stayed with them. [Laughs.] The name isn't coming. And I just looked the other day at her death notice again. Well, anyway, then we were each given a one man show as a group, Dorothy Liebes, Peter Voulkos and I, at the Chicago Art Institute, which is a tremendous thrill for me.

MS. YAGER: Fabulous museum.

MR. MILLER: And they did a beautiful installation. It was very early and I didn't have a lot of very good pieces, but I showed what I had. But I made a piece -- the other thing was they wanted me to come and give a lecture. Meyric Rogers, was there --

MS. YAGER: Yes.

MR. MILLER: He was the one that wanted me to come. And I hated the idea of lecturing. And I thought, I'll make a movie and I can talk with the movie, and that will make it easier. So I made a piece and made a movie of making the piece. And that's how the movie came about.

And it was a good show. I think I told you about Peter Voulkos, that he was a judge. We both stayed in – oh, what's their names? He taught at the school of design. Anyway, we stayed with them. And Peter was doing these big pots at that time that looked very oriental, with sort of calligraphy patterns in the glaze, and then they'd come way in and then a big flared top. And they were very famous at that time.

And Peter said, "I've never been to New York. I wish I could go to New York sometime," he said, "but I don't have any money with me. I'm this far, but I can't get on to New York." And I said, "I'll give you the money. You ought to go to New York. You're this far away from Montana, you ought to go the rest of the way." So he went to New York and saw the Museum of Modern Art and the work there, for the first time.

And when his one man show came up in Chicago, it was totally different. It was all the slab construction and all this. And Meyric Rogers said, "This is the greatest transformation I've ever seen." He said, "This man is really a genius." And it was a shock to me because I had loved his other pots, and these were so strange, so different. But that show was great for him. And I went and showed my movie and Meyric Rogers was very, very happy with that.

MS. YAGER: How many pieces were in the show, do you think?

MR. MILLER: Oh -- maybe 15. I don't -- there were a lot of things -- I really can't it was a nice, dark room with all these cases that were lighted. And it was a beautiful installation. I mean, Peter's room was light. But mine was, you went into the dark and here were these cases with the pieces in it. I don't really remember how many there were. But it was a real thrill. And they had one of -- well, I think it was the piece that was on the cover of the von Neumann book, which was a crab with a big claw. And a huge poster on the front of the museum. And if you don't think at my age that was really a thrill to see that huge picture of that. So that was the one, you know.

MS. YAGER: A fiddler crab.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: So these were on probably the pieces that were in the show, some of these pieces, the ones in the von Neumann book?

MR. MILLER: Well, this was the one that was stolen in the Brussels World Fair --

MS. YAGER: It's a squid.

MR. MILLER: -- and I don't know whether it was done by that time or not. Some of those could have been, but some of them are later, too. So I really can't -- I know one piece that was in that show. There's no photograph of it.

MS. YAGER: The eyes on these are just so beautiful, on the caddis.

MR. MILLER: So I think it had quite a bit of my forged silver jewelry in, too.

MS. YAGER: You know, it was interesting looking at the forged work, because you had said you were influenced by Alexander Calder, and I could see that with these repeated forged pieces. But then when I started looking at your later work, you're really still doing those forged things –

MR. MILLER: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MS. YAGER: -- but now they're creature legs, you know, so it sort of -- it kept mutating.

MR. MILLER: The other thing that was a big influence on me was totem poles. When I went to Alaska and saw the totem poles, the old ones up there, I was so thrilled with that one U-shaped form that they used to make eyes and fins and everything, and it suggested the forged forms that I worked with in silver. The other thing that was a big influence on me, the Museum of Modern Art -- I guess it was right after the war when I was there -- had a show of art of the South Seas. And I think it also had primitive African sculpture at the same time. And it just overwhelmed me, again, with the stylization of the forms in South Sea island art and African art. And the similarity between -- well, sort of similarity in their choice of forms is fascinating.

MS. YAGER: Can you talk about one of the South Sea pieces? I'm trying to picture what these were.

MR. MILLER: I can't. There's a wonderful collection of them in Cologne.

MS. YAGER: What material were they made of?

MR. MILLER: Wood. Most of it was wood.

MS. YAGER: So it was carved wood?

MR. MILLER: Carved, yeah. They were -- some were figures?

MS. YAGER: Yeah.

MR. MILLER: -- but they were different than the African carving but there was also this relationship in similar forms in both things. Cologne has a wonderful collection, gallery after gallery, and Berlin too. The European museums seem to have collected American art and other art to a much greater degree than we have. I mean, Berlin has a fabulous collection of Pre Columbian gold and other carving and stonework and all sorts of stuff of that sort.

MS. YAGER: That was in our own backyard. [Laughs.]

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And Cologne too. Oh, some fabulous pieces in Cologne. The New York show was a very small gallery, sort of up above overlooking -- this was the old --

MS. YAGER: The original.

MR. MILLER: The original building. And as I remember, the gallery overlooked the entrance hall. It wasn't it wasn't a hall. It was just sort of a lower gallery. And it was one big case and it got a *New York Times* review, not all complimentary, but at least it got a review. [Laughs.] And it was a great thrill to have it there, and there were some good piece and that fragment piece that was on the cover of it. That was one of my first fragment pieces, and I think that's one of the most successful of the fragment pieces. And I went and gave a lecture.

MS. YAGER: In New York?

MR. MILLER: In New York, at the --

MS. YAGER: You didn't do the movie again?

MR. MILLER: I don't remember. I don't think so. I remember lecturing -- I lectured from up there and the people were all down below. Sort of a strange situation. But anyway, they were questioning me from down below.

MS. YAGER: Did you know Richard Pousette-Dart? Did you know his work?

MR. MILLER: I knew his work, yes, but I never met him, no. The other big show was the enameling show at the museum, which was a really big show.

MS. YAGER: This was at the American Contemporary Craft Museum in New York?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. That was before my show there. It was one of their early shows. And all the people in enameling, at that time, had pieces. And I got to meet some of them at the opening. And I made, and I don't know whether it still exists, but they asked me to make a demonstration piece of the piece that was on the cover of the catalogue. It was an enameled flounder on a rock. And I made this demonstration piece in gold, showing the first outlines at the head end and then progressed into the enamel going into it, which was glued in onto the first firings and then later firings, and by the time you got to the tail, it was the final -- it had been stoned and it was the final firing.

And I don't know whether that -- I've never seen it again. But of course it was in the exhibit. And some of the other exhibitors did demonstration pieces. But that was quite a fantastic show.

MS. YAGER: You spoke about a collector in Cleveland that had a collection of [Peter Carl] Fabergé work and you talked about sitting on the floor and passing pieces on.

[Audio break.]

MR. MILLER: Her name was India Early Minshall and she was very, very wealthy. She lived in Wade Park Manor. And she had gotten interested, somehow, in the Romanov family and had started making a Russian collection. She had a huge table in her living room, circular table, that came from Russia. And I can't think of the name of this. There's a semiprecious-stone top to this. And she had candlesticks from Fabergé made for the family.

And she had one of the imperial eggs and she had some of the smaller eggs, one of the eggs that is often illustrated. It was blue enamel, you opened it up and there was the yolk of the egg inside. And inside of that was a diamond encrusted chicken. And inside the chicken was a ruby on a chain that you could wear around your neck. And she had the two salt container chairs. One J. Pierpont Morgan had owned which was a beautiful little gold and enamel chair. I can't --

MS. YAGER: These were on exhibit in New York, weren't they, "Fabergé in America" [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, 1996]

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah.

MS. YAGER: They were. I saw them. I remember it now. So you handled those pieces on her living room floor? [The Cleveland Museum of Art, India Early Minshall Collection]

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And eventually -- she had a lot of these Fabergé -- I mean, she had some with the birds and some of the rabbits and other animals that were in stone.

MS. YAGER: Stone pieces, yes.

MR. MILLER: And, well, I've got it in the other room -- I photographed the whole collection because she wanted a record of it, and I made a book of photographs of all. And that was a pleasure too, because I worked a couple of weeks, you know, going every day and setting up lights and then photographing these pieces. So that was a great thrill. I mean, a lot of the Fabergé is not great art, but it's great technical skill that went in to produce it, and a lot of fantasy in thinking up these pieces.

MS. YAGER: An element of delight.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah. And what a joy it must have been for the Romanovs to collect these pieces.

MS. YAGER: Did you have much experience with [René] Lalique work? Did you see

MR. MILLER: No. I mean, I knew of it, and I'd see pictures of it. I think the Cleveland Museum only has one Lalique piece. Maybe they have a couple. But I remember one particularly, and it was always a fascination. I did go to the big show --

MS. YAGER: In Chicago?

MR. MILLER: -- in Washington, at the National Gallery.

MS. YAGER: Oh, recently?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: Yeah. I remember there was a show of Lalique work in the '70s in Chicago that just staggered me.

MR. MILLER: And one of my students, Tom Gentille, you know his work?

MS. YAGER: Thomas?

MR. MILLER: Thomas Gentille. Yeah. He apparently -- the Lalique museum in Portugal, is it?

MS. YAGER: The [Museu Calouste] Gulbenkian in Lisbon.

MR. MILLER: The Gulbenkian.

MS. YAGER: Yes.

MR. MILLER: They apparently like his work a lot, so he is very familiar with their collection, tells me all about it. But the one in Washington had lots of renderings, and that was fascinating to see, the preliminary rendering of those pieces and then the final pieces.

MS. YAGER: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. MILLER: What an incredible -- but he must have had lots of people working for him, again, like Fabergé.

MS. YAGER: He had between 80 and 100 people, yes.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And the --

MS. YAGER: Can you imagine if you would have had 80 or 100 people working for you?

MR. MILLER: I wouldn't like that. [Laughs.] I never wanted -- Toshiko also said, "you ought to get

an" – course she's always had apprentices -- not always -- but "you ought to get an apprentice." And I had requests from way back when the apprentice system started, would I take on an apprentice. The last thing I wanted was to worry about somebody else, keeping them busy and keeping them happy. And so I never got involved with anybody else working on pieces with me.

MS. YAGER: They would have to like your music and also your work hours.

MR. MILLER: [Laughs.] Yeah. Actually I met somebody in Europe whose father had been a big work-master in Fabergé. And he was from Finland -- I think he was from Finland -- pretty sure he was from Finland. But what an operation that must have been to produce the amount of work that they produced, and the stories that he would smash a piece if it came to him and he didn't think it was as good as it should have been.

MS. YAGER: Oh, really?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. I don't know whether that's apocryphal or not, but anyway, I've heard that story. And I read it, I think, too.

MS. YAGER: I guess that would -- it would be kind of like the crit where the teacher rips your drawing off the wall and stomps on it. It would put such great fear in you to try to excel --

MR. MILLER: Well, Toshiko used to use a hammer on some of the students' pieces.

MS. YAGER: Oh, no. Really?

MR. MILLER: Yes. And at the end of the year, at the final test -- you know John Marshall?

MS. YAGER: Yes. Another student of yours.

MR. MILLER: Yes. John was in Toshiko's classes too, and he and another well, it was mainly John. At the final crit, Fred and I gave John the golden hammer award. We thought it should be smashed, this piece that he'd done. [Laughs.] We used to tease John a lot.

MS. YAGER: But that was just a verbal hammer? [Laughs.]

MR. MILLER: Yes. We didn't actually smash it, no. [Laughs.] But I think we put a sign on it, "Golden Hammer Award."

MS. YAGER: And how did that affect him?

MR. MILLER: Oh, you know, I still crit his work, and some of it I tell him I think is just awful. And we're really good friends. But some of his tea sets -- not tea sets, well, it was coffee sets. I think they're so over the top. I like things to look as if they would be efficient and work well for what they're supposed to be. And with Toshiko's we used to – oh, her teapots never poured. I mean, you'd go to pour it, it would go this way or that way. You were never sure. And she absolutely was above all our criticism. She said, "I like the shape of it." [Laughs.] "I don't care whether it pours or not."

But I always, on the other hand, felt jewelry, too, should look as if it was made to be worn, and worn comfortably. And so much of what I see, doesn't look as if it could be worn comfortably. And in that show in Washington, I mean, some of those were exhibition pieces, but you'd kill people if you walked through a room with some of those big pieces on. Too much, I think, is made for show, for it to be exhibited rather than worn. And I always felt that pieces should be made to be -- if they're jewelry, they should be made to function and be worn.

MS. YAGER: Do you -- the findings and things on the back of the piece, I've never seen any photographs of the backs of your work. But what kind of -- did you make your own --

MR. MILLER: I just used commercial findings. I never made my own. And the commercial ones worked. I bought some of the spring-loaded ones in Europe. We used to buy a lot of our jewelry saws and files and things like that in Switzerland, because Max Fröhlich had a dealer there that he worked with, and we liked him, and we could get things. So I tried some of the spring ones, but I

never liked them too well, though I know most of the Europeans work with that kind. And a lot of people make their own, but I just never got into that.

MS. YAGER: So 18 karat and just the little spring catch.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Yeah. Most of the pieces that I've made -- I would say over half of the pieces I made, I've always photographed the back to show the finding.

MS. YAGER: And how do you sign a piece? How would someone know, other than identifying it?

MR. MILLER: Well, I have a stamp.

MS. YAGER: And what does it say on it?

MR. MILLER: Well, I'll show you a picture of it. But it's an M where the one leg of the M becomes the J and the other leg becomes the P. And I did Fred's monogram at the same time, and he has an FM -- FAM actually. But it's all sort of combined so the F and the M are the most prominent parts of it.

MS. YAGER: And where would you have signed it? Where would that stamp be?

MR. MILLER: Usually on the back of the piece, near where the screw to hold the enamel on. I mean, there's a flat area there and someplace in that section.

MS. YAGER: And sort of stamped on a little piece of metal that would be attached?

MR. MILLER: Sometimes I did it that way and sometimes I did it on the actual piece itself.

MS. YAGER: And you didn't number your pieces or anything like that?

MR. MILLER: No. No.

MS. YAGER: Why make it easy for anybody? [Laughs.]

MR. MILLER: Well, I never even thought anybody would worry about it, whether it was one, two, three, four or five, you know.

MS. YAGER: Yeah.

MR. MILLER: And I never did.

MS. YAGER: And no dates. Any dates on the pieces?

MR. MILLER: No. The other way I know the date of a piece is I go back through my slides, and I always photograph after the piece was made so it will say, January something, 1983 or something like that.

MS. YAGER: Yeah.

MR. MILLER: So that's the way I kind of plant a date on the piece, if somebody wants to know a date. And some of the early pieces, of course, I didn't photograph, so I don't have dates. But then really the early pieces, most of them would have been in May Show catalogs, so I can go back to them for some of the early ones.

MS. YAGER: Yeah. Those are a good document.

Let's see. As far as influences go, one of the questions, you know, what are some of the most powerful influences in your career? Does religion or a sense of spirituality play a role in your art?

MR. MILLER: Well, I came from a very religious family. They were Dunkards in Pennsylvania, which were sort of related to the Quakers. And Dunkards became Brethren. The Dunkards were the first women nurses, I think, in the Civil War. But anyway, they were very, very strict -- I wasn't allowed to do anything on Sunday. Couldn't paint, couldn't work, do anything, as long as I was living with my family. And I went to Sunday school and church, and I was a deacon in the church and so on.

But I always had this feeling the religion was something that was personal, and that there was too much of, well, a foreign element in religion, warring between whether you were a Catholic or a Protestant and so on and so forth, a Christian scientist and a non-Christian scientist. And so I stopped -- as soon as I left living with my family, I stopped all official connections with religion as a certain church or something.

I've always had a very strong feeling about nature and the world. Well, God is -- that's what God means to me.

MS. YAGER: That was one of the things I was going to ask about, just your attitude about environmental, if that comes up in your --

MR. MILLER: I support every cause I can in terms of worries about the environment.

MS. YAGER: I mean, in many ways, you know, your work celebrates --

MR. MILLER: Well, I hope it does, yeah.

MS. YAGER: -- these miracles of nature.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And nature's been my life really, because all my camping and all that, was so that I could be really involved with nature. And actually, though I shouldn't have ever done it, on two occasions I backpacked alone back into the mountains in Wyoming for a week by myself. I worried about -- you know, everybody said, "You mustn't do this because if you're back there alone, sprained an ankle or something, what would happen?" Or fell and so on. But they were two of the most rich weeks of my life. It was really inspiring seeing nature in a way that you don't experience it when you're with somebody else. I had 30 years or more of backpacking and hiking in Yosemite and then Montana and then Wyoming.

MS. YAGER: So every summer --

MR. MILLER: Every summer, that's what I did.

MS. YAGER: Wow.

MR. MILLER: And I never got enough of it. And I went to Yellowstone once in the winter, which was fun to see it under those conditions. And I think religion per se isn't what my religion is about, but I have pretty strong feelings.

MS. YAGER: Another question is in what ways do political and social commentary figure into your work?

MR. MILLER: I don't think there's any political or social commentary. Do you?

MS. YAGER: Only in a sort of promotion of nature.

MR. MILLER: Well, maybe that way. But I don't -- I've never thought of it as a promotional way.

MS. YAGER: Right, yeah.

MR. MILLER: Sort of a celebratory way.

MS. YAGER: That's not really the right word. Yes. Well, it's one of the questions that I had to ask you. Now, another issue that comes up is issues of gender, race and ethnicity. Do you think that you approach your work as a man in a particular way, unique --

MR. MILLER: Never thought about it, you know.

MS. YAGER: The fact that you -- like sometimes I think that, you know, some women approach jewelry as a wearer. Do you ever wear jewelry or do you try your pieces on and make sure that they function well in relation to the body?

MR. MILLER: Well, no. I mean, I'll make necklaces, but I don't -- I just assume -- sometimes I think maybe this is a little too heavy, but the -- I guess when I was making a lot of silver necklaces,

you know, with the hanging units, I used to try them on to be sure that they would fall right and so on. And I would be happy when I would see somebody wearing, you know. I'd go to the symphony and there would be one of my silver necklaces on somebody in the lobby, and that was such a thrill to see.

And when I went to the symphony too, we had a harpist, Alice Chalifoux, who's one of the most famous harpists in the country. She's still living, near Washington. But she always played the harp in a black velvet gown and I would imagine necklaces on her. And I'd be listening to the music and I could -- and one funny thing that happened, I think the first moth that I ever did I was listening to *Rosenkavalier* and I thought of the relationship between the hoop skirt on the Marschallin, blue, you know, flowing, and a moth. And I think that somehow or other, the first moth came from *Rosenkavalier*. But I don't think that ever happened very much, but I know there it did.

And a lot of my pieces, particularly the black and gold pieces and some of the fragment pieces, I always think of them, sort of, as muted musical pieces. They aren't music. But still, they're strongly, to me, related to music.

MS. YAGER: I can see that a little bit in the moth, when you say that, because the sort of movement of -- gradation of size is almost --

MR. MILLER: I think that maybe has something to do with it.

MS. YAGER: There's a couple -- let's see where to go now. One of the objectives that it looks like you had was a quest to create beautiful pieces. I'm not sure where that's really going to go.

MR. MILLER: Well, I mean, that's, you know, there's no question that I wanted it to be beautiful. I mean, I didn't want it to be kinky or unique particularly or something that was avant-garde or anything. I wanted it to be beautiful, and it was -- and I always felt that jewelry reflected the taste of the person that was wearing it and should sort of, in some way, enhance your relationship when you saw the piece, the way you reacted to them as a person.

MS. YAGER: So it became this kind of point of communication.

MR. MILLER: I think so, yes.

MS. YAGER: Do you ever think of like how it feels like when you touch it?

MR. MILLER: No. I never – that tactile sense has never been something that came into my mind in relation to the pieces. Except, I never wanted them to be uncomfortably spiny or spiky. And I've been on the cusp of that in some of the pieces, you know, for instance, the forged legs, I never let them go get to be knife points on the end. I would worry about things like that. But touching, I never thought they were going to get much fun out of touching the piece, or that that would be part of the experience.

MS. YAGER: Is there an element of play in your process, or do you want some delight to be in the pieces? Or surprise. Is there any surprise?

MR. MILLER: There's always the surprise when the piece finally comes together. [Laughs.] You think it's now it is finally -- there I'm finally seeing what's been developing all along. The last piece I did, I had such a sense of that because I really had a sense of wonder when I finally saw it, because I'd been working on all these pieces, and it wasn't that too unfamiliar. But for some reason or other, it really gave me a lift which I hadn't experienced in a long time.

MS. YAGER: Now, when you work on a piece, like this last piece, how many different pieces is it? For quite a long time – it probably doesn't go together until almost the end.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Well, it is a lot of individual pieces. I mean, like the eyes and the granulation of the eyes on the moth, and then the feelers, antennae on the moth, and the legs. You're assembling a lot of pieces. And I don't think we've ever mentioned it very much, but Fred, at Stone Associates, found out about soldering investment. And soldering investment has been the key to my assembling

my pieces, you know, ever since I first started with assembling, because I use it constantly to get -- well, I position them with wax and then I put soldering investment on the rest and keep the -- the wax is where they are going to solder together, and the soldering investments make it sure.

Well, things like this, I obviously don't solder all those at one time. But I'll solder a group of them and they're held together by wax. And then I put the soldering investment on the group and then --

MS. YAGER: Is soldering investment different than regular investment?

MR. MILLER: Oh, yes. It's similar. It becomes like a plaster. But then when it's heated, you can douse the whole thing in cold water and it crumbles and comes apart. And it won't -- for instance, if I've got investment on granules and that sort of thing, it won't pull them off the piece or anything like that. And soldering investment is so important to me. And unfortunately the old soldering investment that I used to buy here in Cleveland, that company went out of business, and so I'm working with a new soldering investment now and it works pretty well, but it isn't as good as -- at least I don't think it's as good as the old soldering investment. I don't know whether many people use it or know about it.

MS. YAGER: I'm not aware of it. Is it like from Kerr or --

MR. MILLER: No. It was Ransom & Randolph, here in Cleveland, and they made several different kinds of it.

MS. YAGER: It sounds like the kind of stuff that dentists would have used for different things.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Yeah. Well, they were a dental supply company.

MS. YAGER: Oh, that's right. Yeah. Yeah.

MR. MILLER: So that's been a major element in the type of things that I would think that I could do in terms of -- you're talking about assembly. Well, that's what made assembly possible, for me to get them exactly the way I wanted them, when they were soldered.

MS. YAGER: I think this tape is going to end in about two minutes. I think we've done quite a bit for the day.

MR. MILLER: Okay. Oh, it's 6:00. We have.

MS. YAGER: Time for dinner. We've worked hard.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller in the artist's home and studio in Brecksville, Ohio on August 23, 2004 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number five, session number two.

John, I wanted to talk a little bit -- I know that you have an extensive list of museum exhibitions over these many decades. Can you tell me, how important has it been to exhibit your work and have it be seen?

MR. MILLER: Well, I think it was important right from the first, when I finally got serious about doing jewelry. Because when I gave up the painting and really went into jewelry then, both Fred and I began doing a lot of exhibiting. [Audio break.] And when we'd find that there was an exhibition that we could send to, we were anxious to send it off, and it's a way of seeing, you know, how much interest there is in what you're doing, or what you're producing. And luckily the Wichita was available, and that was the first sort of national --

MS. YAGER: This was the "Decorative Arts and Ceramics Exhibition," Wichita Art Association?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, and I don't know -- I think we exhibited there before we exhibited in New York, I'm not sure about that.

MS. YAGER: Nineteen fifty-one, I think so, yes. I don't know when that show started. The amount

of support, you know, the amount of opportunities for exhibitions, does it -- I mean how many did you show in a year, do you think? Did it feel --

MR. MILLER: Well, I'm surprised, when I went through this material how many sort of universities were sponsoring exhibitions. Of course the May Show was the one that we went into every year and prepared -- the work that we did during the year, that's where it went, to the May Show.

MS. YAGER: And you were able to show between five and nine pieces?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: You just showed me some of the small silver rectangular medals that you were awarded at the May Show. How important has the impact of awards and recognition been as a motivator?

MR. MILLER: Well, I think it's been important to some degree. But really the motivation was I just wanted to make more pieces, you know. I liked working and they just sort of promoted themselves. I mean I'd do one and I'd think I could do something maybe a little different or try something a little bit more difficult and so on.

And so most of the motivation I think came from -- a lot of it came from the technique because I was excited about finally being able to work with granulation. And it was a challenge, to be able to -- I did do -- in the early days I had pieces that melted. You know, they'd be almost finished or some place and I was overheating, and that was a big thing, to finally get to the place where I thought I had control of the heat, and I wasn't going to lose the piece, because I was spending sometimes a month or more on a piece and it would be -- it would go, finally.

MS. YAGER: Melt, you mean?

MR. MILLER: Melt, yeah, yeah.

MS. YAGER: How would you handle that?

MR. MILLER: Well, I learned patience from the -- when I first started making just the rings, the silver rings, if something went wrong, sometimes I would throw the thing across the room, you know. But I really mastered patience simply because I was making pieces and I had to be patient. And even in the early days when I was doing enameled ashtrays, that taught you patience too, because it was the technique and I was doing things that were figurative or so on, and it just took a lot of patience to get the pieces right. But I don't think that -- well, it was always a thrill to get an award, but you didn't -- you didn't work for the awards because the -- well, Fred and I were working because we really enjoyed working with metal, that was it.

MS. YAGER: I did notice one of the things about the awards, I was looking through the Cleveland Institute catalog from 1950, and at that time, the tuition was $187.50 for a full time student, and the awards at that time were between $25 and $1,000. So, for instance, in one of the designer craftsman shows in 1953, you each won awards for $100, that was like a half year's tuition at school.

MR. MILLER: Right, yeah.

MS. YAGER: So I think that must have had a wonderful impact.

MR. MILLER: Can you be sure about that price, because I thought when I was going to school, my parents were paying $470 or something like that.

MS. YAGER: You know, I can look back in the catalog, it was $187 full time, but maybe that was per semester.

MR. MILLER: Or could it be per class -- or could be per semester, I don't know. But I thought when I -- I know that later when I went to seven hundred and some dollars -- of course now it's I don't know how much, but it's a couple of thousand, you know, at least.

MS. YAGER: It would be tens of thousands I would think [$11,635.50 full-time tuition, 2004], wouldn't it?

MR. MILLER: For one year?

MS. YAGER: Could be.

MR. MILLER: Maybe, I don't know.

MS. YAGER: Yeah.

MR. MILLER: But anyway, there was never a lot of money, remuneration for the awards. Well, of course, in those days, $100 meant a lot more, yeah.

MS. YAGER: Just as --

MR. MILLER: But there weren't many shows that we went into that had a money award, as I remember.

MS. YAGER: I think this might have been an unusual thing, yeah. This was sponsored by the designer craftsmen, by the Brooklyn Museum in conjunction with the Crafts Council, and I think they were really trying to pump some, you know, support into things. Another thing that I noticed just on the award thing that I thought was kind of interesting, they noted in the one catalog the 100 years of Cleveland Institute, that many of the alumni faculty had upon graduation, most had received scholarship awards from the Agnes Gund Memorial Scholarship, and that often people -- this enabled people to take a trip to --

MR. MILLER: They were -- actually they had -- if you got the Gund Award, you had to go to Europe, really. I mean you had to use the money that way, even to the point where they gave you so much and you went to Europe, and they sent you more after you were over there. So that was -- but I think that was only the top award, the Agnes Gund Award.

But when I graduated, Bernard Pfriem got the award, and Fred and I got free tuition for, I think, a year's like night school. I think that was the award that we got. And, of course, we couldn't do that. I don't know whether we -- I know we both went into ceramics in night school. We might have done it, the winter of 1940, '40, '41, and I really can't remember. I know we both did use part of it in night school which was in ceramics, and we did it that way.

MS. YAGER: I think that's so interesting, it's sort of this -- I've heard of that in England where they have you know [set up grants], the year after where you're -- because so many artists if they don't at least now -- if they don't continue their artwork in the next year or two, they may not at all. So this kind of encouragement to continue to pursue your work, and you know, seek out inspiration or more training. It said that one person had gone to the London Slade School [Slade School of Fine Art, London], many went to Rome and Munich and Paris and that one Paul Travis had gone to Africa. And then these were sort of life forming things, they really had a lot of impact on a young artist. I just thought it was such a --

MR. MILLER: You know, I think that now there is a million dollars in scholarship money that the school gives out every year, and that amazes me.

MS. YAGER: That's fabulous.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: That's important stuff. On the museum collections, I was wondering if these were purchases, gifts or donations, and how you feel about that. I think there was mentioned that the Cleveland Museum had purchased a few pieces early on.

MR. MILLER: Yes, I think they purchased, well, two of my pieces early on. I think that may be the only -- they purchased watercolors. I don't know how many -- I think three probably, of the watercolors, but I think only two of the gold -- wait a minute, no. From that they did purchase some

silver before I got into gold, they purchased a necklace and bracelet. I think -- I see it listed there but I think the necklace was part of the group and they purchased the bracelet and then the lady in her will or something left the necklace, so that's how they have it probably. And Fred I think over the years -- I think there were eight pieces of his hollowware that they purchased.

MS. YAGER: That's -- you know, it's important to have some pieces in public collections.

MR. MILLER: But I don't have very many in public collections, compared to the list that I read on William Harper or other jewelers, Mary Lee [Hu] and so on.

MS. YAGER: Now William Harper was one of your students?

MR. MILLER: Yes, yes. One of the best design students that I ever had, just fantastically gifted as a designer. And with color he was particularly, you know, very sensitive to color relationships.

MS. YAGER: Did you work with him on enamels or in design --

MR. MILLER: He worked with -- no, it was in the second year design course, and he worked with Mr. Bates, because Kenny at that point was teaching enameling. I'm pretty sure he was working with Kenny, though it could have been with Mary Ellen Nichols -- but I'm not sure about that.

MS. YAGER: It occurred to me last night, you know, you had this very committed interest to watercolor, and then at a certain point shifted to jewelry, but really transferred your love of color transparency into the enamels.

MR. MILLER: I think that came about because I was very excited about Egyptian jewelry. And Egyptian art all the way through -- I mean a lot of my early pieces of jewelry, I did intaglio things, horses and so on, where the figure would be cut out and then I would replace the body in the form of the horse or whatever, and fashion it with modeling, finally, basically, and insert it below the surface of the thing. And quite a few of my early -- even the early silver pieces were done that way, and that was strictly Egyptian influence of the intaglio things that they did in their sculpture.

MS. YAGER: Do you remember a show or something that you had seen, or was this inspired from books?

MR. MILLER: I think it was books. Well, there are some good examples in the Cleveland Museum, too. The Cleveland Museum has the most fabulous example of tiny little fragments of a piece of jewelry, and it's the headdress, like a bird, hawk or something like that, of gold channels with the most minute carved pieces of different colored stones that make up the color between the gold cloisonnés. And it's only maybe an inch and a quarter, but I've never seen anything in any museum anywhere that is as minute and as fantastic a job of craftsmanship as that one little thing. They used to have it under a magnifying glass. They don't any more, and I don't think many people even notice it, but it's just an incredible piece.

MS. YAGER: They're mosaic, sort of miniature mosaic inserted pieces?

MR. MILLER: Yes.

MS. YAGER: And you think they're glass or stone?

MR. MILLER: No, I think they're stone, I think they're lapis and various types of stone. You've never been to the Cleveland Museum?

MS. YAGER: I have but I don't recall that piece. I'm going to put it on my list.

MR. MILLER: Well, I don't think they appreciate it because -- well, you know, I've seen the big exhibits of Egyptian jewelry in Toronto and we had one here in Cleveland when we had the lot from the Cairo museum [The Egyptian Museum, Cairo]. But I've never seen -- and things in other museums in Europe that I've seen -- but nothing comes close to this in the minuteness of the craftsmanship in this particular little fragment.

MS. YAGER: An Egyptian John Paul Miller.

MR. MILLER: [Laughs.] Well, it -- I'm sure that the reason that I wanted to get color into my jewelry -- well part of it was the fact that I had done enameling for quite a long time with ashtrays and things like that, but the other was that the color in the Egyptian jewelry made me think, you know, I want to get color into my jewelry.

MS. YAGER: Let's see there -- in speaking about your jewelry, you had mentioned that there were a couple of ideas about your work that you really wanted to -- you said you had forgotten to mention that it was really important to use photo flood lights when you were working?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, right from practically from the first, I realized that you know, I had to be able to see accurately what was happening to the surface of the metal to know when it was -- when it had granulated or when it had fused, and not take it beyond that point, where it would deteriorate the quality. And in order to see it right from the start, when I realized how accurate I had to see this, I wasn't wearing glasses at the time but I used a photo flood in a reflector. Of course, I had them for doing photography anyway, and I just clamped one of those near to the area where I was working, on a turntable with the pumice in it and the torch, and found that I could see much better what was going on with the piece.

MS. YAGER: Is it just one moment, I mean is it a split second sort of decision?

MR. MILLER: No, it isn't a split second. The heating has to be done sort of gradually. Well, it has to be done gradually, not sort of. Because only that way can you judge it, and then what -- the color isn't as much as what the surface looks like, and when it finally gets -- well, the black -- when the granules are all on to start with, they're black against the gold surface that they're going on. Shortly after you start applying the heat, the oxide turns to copper and so it becomes -- the granules become copper colored, and then they change to a gold color.

And at that point they begin to shimmer, it's just like, well, the surface is slightly -- well, it's molten, but it's just this very, very thin -- it's the copper uniting with the gold at this lower temperature. And if you keep on going beyond that, the bond between the granule and the surface of the gold, instead of being sort of like a little pedestal, it will expand, or more of the gold will run and it becomes sort of -- well, if you take it too far, it just sort of becomes embedded, almost. It's a bumpy surface, it's terrible, but that's going way beyond the point.

But it's that shimmer that you learn to watch for. And when you get to that point, you've got to know -- you've got to feel that it's shimmered long enough, that you're getting a bond to this whole group of granules that's there, without taking it too far, or taking a section of it too far and so one section is good, one section is bad. So it's --

MS. YAGER: Like how many sections would there be on a piece?

MR. MILLER: When I say section, I mean areas of the same surface, where there are granules. So I learned to -- with highly domed pieces, or most pieces actually, the center will take longer to get up to temperature than the edges. So I would -- well, I finally realized that if I did the center area where I knew it was going to take longer to heat, fused that section on and then applied the granules for the area beyond that out to the edge, then I could heat it and get them on. But if I tried to do the whole piece I would often overheat the edges before I got the center to shimmer right, so that was one of the -- now, that was with granules. With -- when I'm doing the little rectangular chips on edge, that isn't as big a problem, many of the pieces there I can do it right -- can do the whole thing and do it all at one time.

MS. YAGER: Are there -- do you use any adhesives or any kind of things to keep --

MR. MILLER: Well, you have to use glue, I use tragacanth. Elizabeth Treskow said she just used spit. But my pieces with -- because often they're more three dimensional. I think spit works fine on a more two dimensional surface, or a flatter surface. But when you get the pieces that are towards the edge, or granules I should say or chips, then I don't think the spit works as well as the tragacanth.

MS. YAGER: Now, you -- there was a piece that I saw photos of, that had sort of oval round forms that were sort of dusted with granulation. The eyes of the creature, were they granulated in all dimensions around the entire --

MR. MILLER: No they don't -- they go around as far as you can see. But I -- I stick a rectangular or square piece of wire into the charcoal, and previously if it's going to be oval I've made an oval depression in the charcoal, or if it's going to be round I've made a round depression in the charcoal. And then I stick the square gold wire, 18 karat gold wire, and heat it up with other pieces around it. And so that the -- it melts and -- melts to the point where it flows and forms either an oval or a sphere.

Then I take the heat away and if you haven't overdone it, the -- it will still be attached to this rectangular square wire that's down in the charcoal. And then I can use that in tweezers to hold it while I'm applying the granulation to the surface. And I usually do the whole thing at one time. And I think it's because it's solid -- the heating is different when you're working -- if you work with really heavier pieces, for some reason you don't have the differential in the temperature or the center of the piece, and the edges of the piece that you seem to have with thinner pieces.

MS. YAGER: But it is hollow backed, I mean it's opened in the back, it's not --

MR. MILLER: It isn't like it's hollow, it's just the other part of the sphere. So it is a spherical or ovoid solid form with a square rod coming out of it.

MS. YAGER: It's solid?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: It's solid, it's not hollow?

MR. MILLER: No, it's not hollow.

MS. YAGER: Oh, I didn't know that, okay.

MR. MILLER: No, no, no. There's another thing I was just thinking about. The other thing that I learned early, and I think it had a lot to do with working with 18 karat. I would heat the 18 karat form or piece, develop fire scale, put it in acid, scratch brush it so that the pure gold on the surface would be worked into the piece, and do that maybe five or six times to develop a really thick, fine gold surface on the 18 karat. And that helped keep the base metal from flowing, you know, it didn't shimmer in the same way that the 18 karat granules shimmered.

And so the attachment would happen but you wouldn't get a sort of a roughened -- not roughened but sort of a reticulated surface on what was supposed to be smooth. Because in looking at Elizabeth Treskow's photographs or her work, I always saw that the background was beautifully smooth. And what I didn't realize in the early days is that was because she was working with 22 karat gold, which because of the higher karat would resist the heating longer on the flat surface than 18 karat would on the flat surfaces.

MS. YAGER: You mentioned at one point that you had written her a letter because you had really admired the work that you had seen, and that she wrote you back.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: What year do you think that may have been, roughly?

MR. MILLER: Well, I would think it was in the 70s, I waited that long. You know, I went to Europe a couple of times thinking maybe I'd get up the courage to try to look her up in Cologne. And then I think it was Max Fröhlich maybe, that told me that she had gone into a nursing home because she had gone blind. And in her later years she had had such poor eyesight that she designed pieces and had students completing them for her.

So I wrote her and I got a very nice reply from her, telling me that she was blind and didn't

understand English and that if -- because I think I'd said that maybe I'd like to visit her, and she thought that she would have to get an interpreter, and maybe it would be better if we just corresponded. And she talked to me about her early days, and she said from -- I had written in this letter to her, she said "Your early days of experimentation sound almost identical with mine, because I couldn't find out from the German jeweler that was doing granulation in the early 1920s or 1918, in that period, how he was doing it, he wouldn't give any information about the process."

So she said, "I finally worked," and she said "I did use quite different from your technique, I used 22 karat gold. And I worked with a copper salt added to the glue to produce the copper resin, as you do with the copper actually in the 18 karat gold, bringing it to the surface." It was a very nice letter.

MS. YAGER: Did you ever see any of her work in person?

MR. MILLER: Oh yes, I -- Fred and I often went to Europe in -- in fact almost always went in March or April, it was spring vacation at the school. And in Munich there was a big exhibition of crafts from all around the world, and there was always a special jewelry exhibition [Inhorgenta]. And I saw -- I took photographs of some of her pieces in that show. And then, there is now in Cologne, in the Cologne Decorative Arts Museum a whole gallery or group of galleries that Elizabeth Treskow gave her collection of old Etruscan jewelry and that sort of thing, and her own pieces, so it's quite a thing.

MS. YAGER: So she owned Etruscan work and had that as her -- wow.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah. Sorry. Cologne museum [Römisch-Germanisches Museum].

MS. YAGER: This is track three, this is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller, you were talking about the museum in Cologne?

MR. MILLER: Well, she has a gallery there and she gave her Etruscan pieces and her own -- a lot of her own pieces are in that exhibition.

[Audio break.]

MS. YAGER: You know, we -- one thing that we really -- I want to just -- I'm sorry. One thing that has been such a huge, huge part of your life has been your really long, long relationship with Frederick A. Miller. You had mentioned before that you met as students when you sat next to each other alphabetically. You know, for two years sat in every class next to each other, but it developed into a long, a life long friendship.

MR. MILLER: Right.

MS. YAGER: You ended up living in the same home together, Fred married and had two children and you all created a family together, and then shared studio space, worked face to face on a bench for decades.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: Can you talk a little bit about that experience of having --

MR. MILLER: Well, I think the reason that both of us worked as much as we did, I mean we worked night after night until 11 o'clock, and this was -- he first lived with Mary when he came back to Cleveland after the war. You know, I hadn't seen him during the wartime, except one brief encounter. And he came back and started working at Potter and Mellen. Then he and Mary got an apartment overlooking the park down near the school down in Cleveland, and fairly close to where he worked.

And I was still living at home and sometimes using my little studio in the basement. And then when we started -- we started to work over at Potter and Mellen some nights. And I don't remember exactly, the year that it was, probably after I went on the summer up in Alaska, I suspect maybe that would be 1947. We were -- we worked in the studio at Potter and Mellen, and I was still not -- I was doing the forged silver jewelry, nothing very much.

I still was committed to painting, and I still had the studio at home, or the room at home where I did painting at night. But little by little, I think I told you before, I had made a piece for a man here in Cleveland that was showing in the May Show, a friend of Kenny Bates. I made the cross that he was going to put enamel in the center of, and when that won the first prize in the May Show, the next year, no credit to me, it was just Geoffrey's piece, and then I began thinking well, maybe I should try to make something that was a little bit more of a necklace or something like that, and get involved.

So then I began more seriously doing silver and I -- so Fred and I began working more like every other night or something like that during the week at Potter and Mellen studios. And then occasionally I would stay at their apartment, because they had a day bed in a sun room up in the front. And because we'd work so late and I'd have to go back to teaching the next morning, rather than going quite a distance out to Shaker Heights, I'd stay in with them.

And at that time they had just their one daughter Laurie, who had been born when they were at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. And they had a gal who came in and roomed with them, who took care of -- if they wanted to go out or something like that -- took care of their daughter. And so little by little I spent more and more time working at Potter and Mellen with him and more and more time going quickly over to their apartment, spending a night there rather than going up to Shaker.

So it just -- little by little, I sort of became part of their family. And then -- I don't remember what the first year was that I -- you know, I went west in the summer, and tried to be out there almost all the summer. I would take one of my students along, or I would take one of my cousins in Pennsylvania. I had lots of cousins. One of their -- or later one of their kids or sometimes several of the cousins would go with me.

And so one year we'd seen a movie about mountain climbing in Switzerland, I can't remember, "High Tower," I don't know, something like that. Anyway Mary and I had gone into town to see -- Mary and Fred and I had gone into town to see this, and driving home, they said it would be wonderful to see those mountains like that. And I said, "Well, there's still time. You've got a vacation coming up and we can just get in the car and go west for your vacation," which I think was two weeks.

So we -- Mary put the -- I think it was just one daughter at the time, with her -- yeah, I'm sure there was, with her -- with Fred's parents in Akron, and we got in the car, and we made a trip west. We went all the way out to California, to Yosemite. We went to the Grand Canyon, climbed Longs Peak. Mary didn't climb Longs Peak, but we slept in schoolyards on the way out, in church yards.

And I think -- I know we camped all the way, in the National Parks and that sort of thing. And then I think on that -- I'm sure on that trip -- we went to Yosemite, and we found Tenaya Lake, which was so fabulously beautiful, and camped there for one night, probably. And then the next -- I guess it was the next summer, I drove to Tenaya. I'd been west. Whoever was with me, and I don't remember who it was at that time, had already gone back by bus or train home. And I went up to Tenaya, found a camping spot, and then Fred and Mary and one daughter, I'm pretty sure that first time, yeah, came out and camped.

And we camped for about a week and a half at Tenaya Lake. And then with two cars we drove back across country. And from then on every summer Fred and Mary -- except the summer that Mary had Cathy -- Fred and Mary would come west with the girls, and for a while they left Cathy with the grandmother until she was old enough.

But I remember Cathy at three years old was out there and climbed one of the mountains, hiked the trail to the top of a high mountain in Yosemite. And we were very proud of her, that she could do it at three. So we went there until one year we -- for several years we left Yosemite and spent a couple of days up in Montana at Glacier National Park, Kintla Lake which was right on the Canadian border.

And at Kintla they had wonderful salmon fishing, landlocked salmon fishing. And I had brought a fold boat kayak which packs down to two bags, so you can carry it in the back of your trunk, your car or any place. And so at Kintla we would put the fold boat together and go salmon fishing. And we all liked fish, so we ate and we fished.

MS. YAGER: And you and Fred also traveled to Europe every year in the spring?

MR. MILLER: That was much later. Fred -- I had real problems with flying. After Alaska, where I did a lot of flying, I got to the point where I was white knuckled about flying to any place. I had a chance to go to Cambodia right after the war, in that early period, one of these State Department things where you went to train people how to make crafts, or what they knew about making crafts, but make them more saleable, that was the idea. And I had a chance to go to China to make a movie, in China at that same period, and I also had a chance to go to South America, but flying was so difficult for me.

MS. YAGER: Did you do these things?

MR. MILLER: No, I didn't do it, I mean I just said no, I can't. The thought of flying, at the time -- and eventually Fred and Jack Schlundt after he came to work at Potter and Mellen, they eventually became partners in the business. But Fred and Jack would go to Europe every spring, and buy things for Potter and Mellen to sell.

They went mainly to Scandinavia and got glass. They went to London and brought things like Chinese or Japanese sword furniture that they converted into boxes and letter openers and things like that. And they bought stones there too, silver in Copenhagen, glass in Copenhagen. They went to Orreforrs factory in Sweden and then they would look -- they would hunt for craftsmen that were producing pieces that could -- that weren't large volume but that they could sell -- ship over to Potter and Mellen.

And so Potter Mellen had this great range of things for sale that would be for sale almost no place else in the United States. And when there was a big Scandinavian exhibition, came to the Cleveland Museum, much of what was shown in that exhibition, you could go to Potter Mellen and find Orreforrs or similar -- silver that was similar and so on. Even the furniture was similar.

MS. YAGER: Such an interesting, you know, it was this jewelry store, silversmiths place, sounds like there was also an art gallery, they had batik and painting, and very --

MR. MILLER: And it gradually expanded until they took the two stores that were next to them, which were small shops, but they first took one of them over and expanded it into their dinnerware and silverware area, and then a glass area. A whole room was devoted to glass. And then they went to the third room --

MS. YAGER: Would this have been contemporary glass as well as --

MR. MILLER: Yes, and the business just grew and grew. But they would be over about two weeks, touring, and come back. And then eventually I got up the courage enough, Mary and I -- they, Fred and Jack, went over but Mary and I flew on Air Canada over to Copenhagen. And I found that if I drank enough bourbon so the hostesses looked drunk, I could make it without being too white knuckled all the way.

But on that trip, we went -- actually we went to Finland and we knew Oppi and Sarah Untracht at that point and we went to visit them in Poorvu. And then we came back and went to Oslo and Bergen. And Fred -- we knew in Oslo, John David Andersen, the enamel manufacturer firm there. Potter and Mellen sold a lot of their enamel, butterflies and things like that. And in Oslo, too, there were some enamellists that we went to visit, I mean in Bergen.

But when we got to London to fly home they hadn't told me -- smaller planes didn't bother me, the larger the plane got the more it bothered me. When we got to Heathrow we were greeted when we went to the Air Canada thing by these greeters, put medals around our necks, we were going to be

the first 747 to fly from London to Toronto. But just the thought, the size of that plane just terrified me, I drank seven shots of bourbon in order to get on that flight.

MS. YAGER: Before you got on?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, before I got on, and then I kept drinking. But eventually as part of the same story, I -- Oppi Untracht said I should really see the jewelry show in Basel that's every year, jewelry and watch show.

MS. YAGER: In Basel, Switzerland?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, and that he would go with me if I flew over and met -- he'd meet me and we'd go to the show, and just spend a few days sort of in a week that I would go over there and come back. So I planned it and I was going to fly from Cleveland to New York in the afternoon and I'd take care of my class for half a day in the morning, and I thought there'd be time to get a drink in at the airport before I got on the plane to New York. And I missed my connections to the airport and got there and just had to get right on the plane sober.

And they didn't come around to serve drinks until we were on -- we were on -- we were halfway there. I was in the wrong seat, so I didn't get a drink and I got to New York without having a drink. And I got on the plane, and I didn't have -- I said I'm going to try this, I made it this far.

So I got on the plane in Kennedy [Kennedy International Airport, New York], Swissair, and I flew to Zurich without a drink, and I was all right. And I couldn't understand why there was no -- I just went. And that was it, from then on I could --

MS. YAGER: What year do you think that was?

MR. MILLER: I don't know, maybe it was in the 60s, maybe early 70s. And it was a wonderful show, and I went back -- I think I took -- went with Fred once. I think we both went once there, but I know Fred and Jack went there because they stayed on one of the river boats that they docked there to take care of the huge influx of people.

MS. YAGER: Yeah, they never have enough hotel rooms.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, but that was then. And then I don't remember exactly, Mary went again, and we went to London and this was after Mary had had a heart attack. And I was worried about her, because we were going to Switzerland and we were going to stay in the mountains.

But we went to Zurich and spent some time on the lake there, and then we went to Grindelwald and -- at the base of the Jungfrau. And Mary insisted that she was going to take all the trip so she went to the -- on the train up to the – you don't go to the absolute top of the Jungfrau, but she'd go up the -- you know, very, very high. And we also went to Murren, which is on the other side, opposite the valley that separates the Jungfrau. And I can't think of the other mountain over there, but she went up that which was also a cable car and really high, and no problems with her heart.

So -- but I think -- then we came back through Geneva and so on, but I think that was the last trip she made to Europe. And then Fred and I went on a couple of trips when he -- we went to Portobello market in London to buy antiques, and we did some other antique buying for the store. And then -- he had never -- I got a sabbatical in there some place, and I arranged it so that I went for a short time in the fall -- went to parts of Europe in the fall -- and then went back again in the spring, for the same sabbatical year. And then I went to Greece and Vienna and Switzerland, I can't remember exactly. But anyway, Mr. Milliken had outlined the various places that I was supposed to see, the various museums.

MS. YAGER: He was like a life adviser.

MR. MILLER: Yes, yeah, these are the museums that you have to see, and I went to London on both of these trips and saw a lot of time in the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert. You can't sort of absorb it all at one time. But Greece was a big disappointment to me in some ways, because I

was there -- our Easter not their Easter, which was the Greek Orthodox Easter -- but there was so much smog, of course. And I flew from Switzerland, and the plane wasn't all that great, and my hotel room reeked of disinfectant, and any time I'd go out on the street there were beggar women with children trying to get money from me. The museum was fabulous, you know, that was great. Well, the two museums -- I can't remember the name of the other one.

MS. YAGER: These are in Athens?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, the big national museum [National Archaeological Museum of Athens], fabulous stuff there. And I did a lot -- photographed everywhere I went, but I got a lot of good photographs there. And I went to the Acropolis which was a little bit of a disappointment to me too in some ways. It was totally surrounded with scaffolding. They were working on all of the facades. You had this strange view of it through all these horizontals and vertical lines, and I thought somehow I was going to be more impressed by it than I was. And I did one day walk from the center of town through the -- all the way around the whole -- through town, and out through the areas up on the hill above the Acropolis and down past the amphitheatre and so on, and back to the hotel, and made the full circuit.

So I got to see a lot of what the town was like, what the old section was like. But I had planned to go to Crete and there was some problem with airlines, strike or something of that sort, and they couldn't be sure whether if you went you'd be able to get back and so on. So I didn't -- and I've always regretted not being able to do that.

But I went to Vienna, saw some wonderful operas while I was in Vienna, I saw "The Trojans" in a production that I still can't figure -- the staging was so fantastic. They did a thing with the wooden horse, when it's brought into the town of Troy, and this tremendous horse comes in. It doesn't look like it's made of wood, but it's huge, fills the full height of the stage. And when night comes, the whole thing starts to move, and it's the scaffolding underneath, and all the parts of the horse are shields of the soldiers. And they climb down off this thing; it just stands your hair on end because you had no idea that that's what --

MS. YAGER: This transformative thing?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And there were a lot of things about this, but I loved the Vienna opera, so -- finally in later years Fred had problems with depression, and he finally gave up the work at Potter and Mellen, and then we began going on our own during spring break to Europe. And he'd never been to Vienna, so I took him -- I took him to Vienna, and we went to Berlin. We went when the Wall was still up, and even went through the -- over to the other side on a tour, and we went to the Green Vault and -- I wish I wouldn't have such trouble getting names to come back.

MS. YAGER: At the Hermitage, or --

MR. MILLER: No, no, this is in Germany, it's where they had the tremendous bombing attack that practically leveled the whole town.

MS. YAGER: Dresden?

MR. MILLER: Dresden, yeah. We went down there for a day. The Green Vault by that time was open again, all the treasures had been taken away but the town practically -- little of it left, it was just -- by that time, all the rubble, most of it had been cleared up, but there were just great vast empty spaces everywhere. And the Berlin museums were fabulous, really wonderful, the Etruscan and Greek work there.

And we went to Hamburg, and the wonderful decorative arts museum in Hamburg [Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe]. And so we started going back, and we'd go usually through this -- sometimes up to visit Oppi but we always went to Copenhagen and visited friends there. And Cologne, Frankfurt, wonderful decorative arts museum, modern decorative arts museum in Frankfurt [Museum of Decorative Arts]. And Switzerland, Basel, we went to the jewelry and watch show again there, and had friends, Max Fröhlich in Zurich.

And we bought a lot of our own jewelry supplies. Max had a small shop there. He didn't have it but he patronized it, where he got his jewelry supplies. We got wonderful stuff there. We went to Pforzheim and the museum there, a couple of times. We bought the square roller that I have in the studio, we found a place that sold them in Pforzheim and had it shipped from there. [Audio break.] And Fred had -- well, I think I said he'd never been to Vienna, so we went there. And every place we went, if there was an opera to go to we went to the opera. And wonderful operas we saw in Copenhagen, and a funny thing, in Copenhagen we saw "Carmen" in -- no, "La Boheme" in Danish, which was really strange.

Fred then eventually began to show signs of having Alzheimer's, and we were still going to Europe and I had really worried about him because he took to not walking beside me but walking behind me. And I kept worrying that he'd get lost in a crowd and so on, that sort of thing. And eventually then he -- the Alzheimer's got to the place where he couldn't go any more, obviously. And I stopped going west -- or I had stopped going west because he needed full time support.

And Mary had had two operations for breast removal because of breast cancer. Both of them smoked just constantly in the early days, and I didn't, I'd never smoked. And Mary finally stopped when she had her heart attack, she had a heart attack. And Fred stopped at that same time too.

And, of course, Mary eventually found that she had lung cancer, inoperable. And so she had found that out I think it was in June or May, and knew that it was terminal. But then in November, late November, she had a heart -- not a heart attack, she had a stroke, went into the hospital and just within a week another one, and passed away. And at that point Fred was so far gone with the Alzheimer's he didn't even know his own daughters. And we had -- up to the point when Mary died, we were taking care of Fred --

MS. YAGER: What year did Mary die?

MR. MILLER: It would be '98. Fred died just the first week in January in 2000. So --

MS. YAGER: And you cared for both of them for quite a long time?

MR. MILLER: Well, yeah, longer with Fred, because eventually Fred had to have somebody around at night. So I took a bed from another room and put it in his room that he was sleeping in, so that if he got up in the night, which he did a lot and would just sort of wander, I'd be around to get him back into bed again.

Then after Mary died, of course he didn't go to the funeral; I took care of him here. And then we had to get two people, we got a day person and a night person who were here all the time so that I could -- was free to get away, to get food. And he still maintained his same pleasant personality, no personality change. And he liked to drive, so we would drive every noon for about an hour, an hour and-a-half, down through the park system here, and see deer and wild turkeys and bluebirds and so forth. And he was very interested. He loved that driving, to see those things.

MS. YAGER: The home that you both -- that you all lived in, what year did you move to this home in Brecksville?

MR. MILLER: Well, we first moved from the apartment, and I was still living at home quite a bit of the time. They moved to a little 100 year old house in the center of town that's no longer there. And then I think they were there -- or we were there maybe four years. It would be about 1950, I think, that that house, the property was being sold and we had to get out because they were going to build a telephone company there. So Mary found this house and --

MS. YAGER: In 1950?

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: So you've been in this home for 50 years, over 50, 54?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah. And the house originally had been a barn and had been converted, I

don't know what year, from a barn into a house. And then it had been added onto some, but it was like a -- you know, just an old, standard house when we moved in. And Fred was bipolar, he would get periods of -- lots of energy and, you know, had to do things -- he just had to be into things.

And so we would rip all the wallpaper down and paint the walls and we eventually, in one of these periods, we decided to change what had been the kitchen into what had been the -- yeah, what had been the kitchen into the dining room and another room that had been a utility room into the kitchen. And then he got the idea -- it had just ordinary old windows in it, and he decided he wanted the living room to have a big window all across it and so that was done.

Unfortunately I can't remember it; I think it was about 1975 that we decided to build the studio. And at that point we had an architect come in and we drew up the plans that we wanted for the studio. And Fred was in sort of depression at that point, but he was very fascinated by the progress of this thing being built. So we got the studio built and the whole house covered with vertical siding. It had been regular siding before, and so on.

MS. YAGER: The home, it's situated in a cluster of very tall trees at this point. You said that they had been planted around the WPA time. There's a long drive that you drive up and it's surrounded by trees and hostas and all kinds of plants. The room we're sitting in has a large picture window and the hummingbirds are out there, having their little battles. And then the window off to the dining room, the chipmunks and the squirrels of all types and the deer are out there.

So there's a -- you're surrounded by green and you're surrounded by nature. It's a beautiful setting. I'm sure if I wasn't here it would also be surrounded with classical music playing. Inside your home you have Danish modern furniture. You have Ansel Adams photos, an awful lot of pottery from Toshiko Takaezu, and lots of watercolors and wonderful artwork in every room.

It seems like a completely serene and --

MR. MILLER: Well, it's a very, very nice environment. And we worked lots on gardening and developing the garden over the years. And I planted -- of course Fred worked year round, but in the summer when I wasn't out west I was planting ivy and pachysandra.

And we've got, you know, so much pachysandra and ivy now that little by little I planted it over the years and it spread and spread and spread. And we made gardens where there had been flower gardens before. So, we've always had a lot of flowers.

MS. YAGER: And I've noticed all the plants in your home and in your studio, and there seems to be a real interest in plants that have unusual form. And I really see a connection between, you know, the sea creature legs and a lot of the different, unusual cactuses and things that you seem to surround yourself with.

MR. MILLER: Well, I always sort of liked unusual plants. When I was in Europe we always hunted out botanical gardens, in Berlin and Basel particularly had -- well, Vienna too, for that matter, but when I could find an unusual plant I would buy it, if I could. And we had a florist that was in the same building with Fred's business, it was a real old florist establishment.

And they got some unusual plants and I would get them from them. And then old families in Cleveland that had unusual plants would bring them in there, and several of the plants that I have came from old families that didn't want them any more. So some of these strange things are 50 years old or more, here in the house. My father was a gardener, he loved gardening and plants, so I think I inherited that.

MS. YAGER: I read a quote from Fred Miller. It said that "it's a tragedy John Paul is so good at so many things, a tragedy that so much of his time is demanded for projects outside of jewelry."

MR. MILLER: I don't even remember -- didn't know that he'd ever made that statement. I don't think it's a tragedy, I think it's --

MS. YAGER: Well, a tragedy for jewelry, because we might have gotten so many, many more

pieces, I suppose.

MR. MILLER: But I loved, you know, all the things I've done. I've done them because I really enjoyed doing them. So --

MS. YAGER: I think you've done it all to great excellence.

MR. MILLER: Well, I just -- I've had a wonderful, good life. And I've -- I'm amazed that, you know, I'm still going, still doing jewelry.

MS. YAGER: You know, just before I came you returned two weeks ago from a trip to Greenland. You said that you had been to the Antarctic. How many times?

MR. MILLER: Fifteen. I thought I was only going to go once. That was the one thing that I really -- well, since I was a kid and heard all these Arctic and Antarctic explorers lecture here in the '20s -- I wanted to see this country, the Arctic. Then I finally got the chance to go to Alaska and make the movie there, that was right after the war.

And then when I stopped teaching, I wanted to retire at 65, and I'd gotten a little bit of an inheritance from a cousin shortly before I retired, and I decided I was going to go to the Antarctic, give myself a trip to the Antarctic when I retired. So I made my first trip, it was a long one, that was almost 30 days. And we went all the way around to McMurdough and then ended up in New Zealand, a fabulous trip.

And I was so hooked, and some of the wonderful lectures and some of the people who were on the ship told me I should see South Georgia, that it was so fabulous, an island in the Atlantic that's -- well, it is fabulously beautiful, wonderful penguins and bird life. So I signed up and I went -- got back from my first Antarctic trip in the end of March, or maybe it was the beginning of March, I'm not -- I guess it was the beginning of March. And I signed up to go to South Georgia, a trip that next November. So I went twice that first year, and I -- well, in South Georgia I came down with Bell 's palsy, and the whole side of my face was paralyzed. But I was having such a good time that I put up with all of this, and they gave me some medication. And by the time I got home, about two weeks later, my doctor could see that I had had it but I was recovering to the point where I've never had another recurrence of it.

But then I really, you know, once I retired I made jewelry constantly, except for the -- I still went west in the summer, not as long periods, but I still went backpacking. But the rest of the year I was making jewelry. And I had commissions enough so that I'd make enough that I could pay for another Antarctic trip, and it's just -- until Fred got really -- the point where he needed constant attention.

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller in the artist's home and studio in Brecksville, Ohio, on August 23, 2004, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number six, session number two.

John, I wanted to ask you about affiliations and communities that you felt a part of. I know that for you, you know, your relationship with Fred, that created a really pretty satisfying community just right there. But I wondered how much involvement you've had, for instance, with local craft organizations and guilds: the Ohio Designer Craftsmen or the Cleveland Artist Fund, or --

MR. MILLER: Yeah, it's been sort of minimal. I'd gone to a couple of the sessions, showed my movie, talked in Columbus to that group and I've always been a member and contributed money to their prize awards for shows and things like that. But I've seen very few of the shows that were down there, and Fred got the governor's award at one show and so on. But he -- in the same way, we just never did much about getting down to that group.

And locally, other than the museum, we were both members of the museum, and that's been about it. You know, now they've formed a craft organization in Cleveland [The Craft Council of the Cleveland Institute of Art]. I don't know what --

MS. YAGER: The Cleveland Artist Fund?

MR. MILLER: No, this is craft, specifically craft. And it's sponsored by the school or funded by the school, but they haven't had many meetings or talks. They had Sharon Church this past year, which was excellent. But even that -- well, I've always said I thought craftsmen should do less talking and more working. And I knew how hard it was for me to just find enough time in the day to do all of the work that I wanted to do.

MS. YAGER: Let's see, I wanted to ask you on national and international levels as well, if there were any national craft organizations that you were involved with or participated with. I know that you have had a number of different relationships with the American Craft Council.

MR. MILLER: Right. But SNAG, the --

MS. YAGER: Society of North American Goldsmiths.

MR. MILLER: I've been a member. I don't think Fred ever became a member. I don't think John Prip ever became a member. But I've not gone to any of their conferences. I promised that I will go this next year when it's here in Cleveland.

MS. YAGER: Hey, good.

MR. MILLER: It was here quite a few years back, but at a time when I was hanging the students' summer show. So I -- I mean, it was in the auditorium and the people were here. I got to meet only a couple of people who took the time to come into the gallery and look me up and talk. But again, I just don't think I want to spend my time going listening to people talk. That's terrible, isn't it? But that's me.

MS. YAGER: It's been how you --

MR. MILLER: Yeah, well --

MS. YAGER: You haven't had that need.

MR. MILLER: No. Well, whether it's -- maybe I would find I needed it if I went. But I have, you know, former students that write me and say how much they got out of the Colorado conference or the San Francisco or the Miami conference and how great it was to meet all these people. And I know I should have gone, but there's always been a feeling that I didn't really have the time that I could give to going that distance. So unfortunately there's been very little interplay that way at all.

MS. YAGER: This is Jan Yager interviewing John Paul Miller, this is track number two. Two of the things that you had participated in with the American Craft Council -- Asilomar, am I pronouncing that correct?

MR. MILLER: Yes.

MS. YAGER: That was in -- oh, I don't remember the dates -- 1957. Can you talk about your experiences out there? I had read that Aileen Webb, who was one of the, you know --

MR. MILLER: America House -- well, she founded the American Craft Council.

MS. YAGER: The whole council, and really a driving force. And she said that she wanted to create this as the first annual -- as a possibility of communication, one with another. And she felt that if we could all talk to each other face to face that many of the problems which now trouble the world might quickly disappear.

And she felt that there was a need -- that artists needed isolation in order to do their work, but that they also needed some communication. So can you talk about --

MR. MILLER: Well, before that happened she invited a group, small group to San Francisco, and I think it was sort of preparing for this. I think it was a year before. And Fred was one of the people that went to San Francisco to this and came back. And then we went, and it was on the Monterey

Peninsula, a beautiful location. And we had there were, you know, a little bit rustic side buildings where we lived, and the dining hall, good food and a lecture hall.

And there were people there from the University of Chicago, I think somebody from -- oh, what's the big department store in Dallas?

MS. YAGER: Neiman Marcus?

MR. MILLER: Neiman Marcus. I think Mr. [Stanley] Marcus was there and talked. Because at that time I think they were buying individual pieces and had made quite a thing of that, of unique pieces that they were carrying. And there were some good movies that had been made about craft work, and a lot of good lectures. And then all of us that were there were assigned a time when we had to speak, which was traumatic for me.

And so I -- well, I wish I could think of all the names of the people that were there, but it -- I enjoyed it very much. And Toshiko was there, Peter Voulkos was there, Lenore Tawney was there. I can't think of the name of the gal who was in her hundreds, who was a potter from --

MS. YAGER: Oh, Beatrice.

MR. MILLER: Beatrice Wood. That was the only time I've ever met her. But it was fun. And one of the funny -- well, it wasn't funny. One of the tragic things, Mrs. Webb thought there ought to be decorations on the tables in the dining room, and she went out and gathered greens.

Well, she gathered this type of poison oak and she swelled up, just her arms were immense, and she was in terrible itching agony through this thing. It was a tragedy for her. But it was a great thing, and, you know, I say I don't go to anything, but that was really a lot of fun.

MS. YAGER: Some of the things that they were trying to tackle were, you know, professional practices, the importance of design and its relationship to technique, socio-economic outlook, Charles Eames was there, Anni Albers, Jack Prip.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. But I don't remember the social -- I mean, the economic social aspects of it at all. But I'm sure they were part of it, and probably -- it's so long ago, you know, what I remember was meeting the people and enjoying that. And I don't remember the specific lectures, but they were certainly very, very interesting to the point.

MS. YAGER: Do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition?

MR. MILLER: I've never thought about it. I probably am sort of part of an international tradition. My granulations have been, as a technique, has been a lot of it in Scandinavia, in India and in China and South America. So in that sense I've -- and I always think, you know, there's only so much gold in the world, and the gold that I might be using might have been something that has been melted down hundreds of times and finally I'm reusing it again.

MS. YAGER: Do you think there's anything about your work that is particularly American?

MR. MILLER: Well, other than the fact that I'm sort of the first person that began really working with granulation, that's the only aspect.

MS. YAGER: Is the combination of enamel and granulation, is that an unusual -- a unique combination to you?

MR. MILLER: I think maybe yes, I have -- I don't know other pieces really. Internationally enamel and granulation was part of it. So I've never thought too much -- well, I've never thought of the question before, but probably, that may be unique.

MS. YAGER: What else do you think really are unique marks of your work that we may not have touched upon?

MR. MILLER: Well, I think that the way I do the lines in enamel. Rather than bending cloisonnés I started right from the beginning, developing lines by taking rectangles of gold and setting them on

edge and gluing them one by one by one by one to develop lines, and that way I could develop tapered lines. And the other thing I could do that you can't do very well with bent lines is I did a lot with intersecting lines, in some pieces quite complex with a whole group of lines that were going one way and some that were going another way.

And I always felt that by doing the lines slowly that way, little by little by little by little, it got a different type of intensity or feeling than when you bent something, that sort of because of the bending process it developed its own particularly bent wire quality.

MS. YAGER: You know, when you were saying that little by little by little, it immediately came to mind the micro-mosaics, the Roman micro-mosaics. And in some ways your work is like that, in metal, but --

MR. MILLER: Yeah, I see what you mean. But I think that's one unique factor. And then the other thing may be that -- [Audio break.] -- well, in the moths and in some other pieces I would do things with the edges that were fused and granulated right up against the enamel, which was difficult in some cases, because when it has to be stoned you have to devise ways of stoning without disturbing the edge and so on. But that was something that had to be done according to the way I felt about the design, so I had to develop a way of doing it.

And then perhaps the fact that I develop pieces where there would be one piece that had a tube that went through something else that was another part of it into a tube that had another part of it, and then finally all the sections were screwed together with a screw, rather than formed any other way.

MS. YAGER: Would the screw have been made of gold?

MR. MILLER: Oh, yes, yes. And I have a tap and die and make my threaded tube and make my screws, you know, changing sizes depending upon how big the piece is or how delicate the piece is.

MS. YAGER: I wanted to talk a little bit about hobbies and interests that you have. I know you're an avid photographer and film maker. You've done -- well, some of the things -- you know, you've done hiking, climbing, fishing, animal and bird watching, voracious reader, gardener. But the photography and the filmmaking, I think that you've -- that seems to have recurred at many points in your career. Can you talk some about some of the films that you were working on? I know that you and Fred did some on the stretching processes.

MR. MILLER: When Fred had just learned how to do the stretching process, which was quite something different and, I don't know, we were working at Potter and Mellen in the studio over there at the time and he was about to start a piece. It was a sauceboat. And I said, "Why don't we make a movie of this process." Because, you know, I liked making movies. And it actually was an old Eastman movie camera that I'd gotten maybe in 1936 or something like that, way back. But it had a wonderful lens and I had a tripod. And he was going to start this and I said, "Okay, we're just going to make it."

I bought some more floodlights so that we'd have enough light to film it by and we started. And when there was some significant point that I thought we ought to film, we filmed it. And we would get the film back and run it and hope that we'd gotten everything that we thought we had. And so, little by little, we built the film on that stretching method.

And it really wasn't a very complicated piece that he was making. But, anyway, we made the film. And then I had been an editor, so I knew how to do the editing and put it all together and made some special sections of some dissolves to show certain parts of the process and so on with drawings. And it was quite a professional film by the time it got through.

MS. YAGER: The catalog that was done, *Contemporary Silversmithing: The Stretching Method*, by Handy & Harman, did you do the drawings in this catalog?

MR. MILLER: No. No. That was done -- eventually Handy & Harman -- originally Fred would narrate it and we'd even put some *Rosenkavalier* background music with it because he was very

fond of *Rosenkavalier* music. So originally he would show it, you know, if he was asked to speak or something like that. And Margret Craver saw it, and she said, "I'm going to get Handy & Harman to take it and put a soundtrack on it. You write the script but they will have a narrator and they will take it then and distribute it to people that want to get that film." And at the same time, they put out this booklet about it.

And then many years later, when he was doing the bottles, which I thought were quite different and unique, and it was the raising method that he was using there. And I had much better cameras and so on at that point. We were in the studio at the art school. I don't remember what the year was that we made it. But, anyway, it was his -- I think it was his first bottle that he did. And it was just decided, we're going to make a movie of this. So at that point he had simply made the Plasticene model. He'd made some sketches and a Plasticene model.

MS. YAGER: You mentioned that over lunch, that he would have -- was it Styrofoam core?

MR. MILLER: A Styrofoam core. And put --

MS. YAGER: Plasticene to --

MR. MILLER: Sort of like automotive designers do in planning. And he reworked that until he had the form that he wanted. And then, as he worked with the piece, he made templates from that plasticene form, and he would make the templates by taking a piece of lead, rectangular or square wire in lead, and get it to form against the template or against the plasticene, and then he would use that to finally get the form in silver to match. He really -- if he got the plasticene looking the way he wanted it to look, then he wanted the silver to have the same qualities of feeling, and he worked to -- and it shows that in the movie.

And with that film, we used double exposure, which was something sort of I'd never seen before in a technical film of that kind, to show him with the disc of silver being formed against the stake. And so you could see him hammering on the silver and the stake underneath it in this double exposure. So you could see that happening. And it was a lot of fun. And it took, you know, I think months in the process of this thing happening. But every night we'd set up our lights and take a little bit more of the film.

MS. YAGER: How long of a film did it end up being after editing?

MR. MILLER: I think it's 25 minutes or 30 minutes. Maybe it's -- it's about that.

MS. YAGER: Are there many copies of the film?

MR. MILLER: Yes. Well, I don't know how many. But eventually -- again, this was done just with narrating, when he showed it. But then the goldsmiths, SNAG, arranged to have a soundtrack put on it, and they have a print of this movie available. You can rent it from them. I don't know whether anybody even knows it exists anymore, but that's available. So that was that movie.

And then after I had made the movie of him doing the sauceboat, then I was invited to have this one-man show at the Chicago Art Institute. And Meyric Rogers wanted me to come and talk while the show was on. I hated talking, but I thought, well, I could make a movie and narrate the movie, and that way -- and then just get questions and I won't have to try to write a speech. And it would be much easier to talk about. So I started a piece and set up the camera, set it on where I would be working and had a long cable release, and I would start the camera and then work, and then turn off the camera. So that's how that film got made.

And a few times -- there's one section where I'm shown making the early drawings, I think. And Fred operated the camera for that, but most of the time I just would set it up, get it framed right, and then go to work. And that film never got a soundtrack put on it. Except eventually I got a copy made of it, a good taped copy of it made, and then I put -- I narrated the soundtrack onto the taped copy. So there's that. But nobody -- well, I shouldn't say nobody -- I've given some copies of that tape. I think the Columbus Group has a copy of that, and I think Margret has a copy of that. Well, anyway,

that's the movie.

MS. YAGER: Have there -- what role have specialized periodicals played in your development as an artist? For example, *Craft Horizons*, or you mentioned *Popular Science*. You know, *Design Quarterly*, *Metalsmith*. Were any of these periodicals very influential or informative for you?

MR. MILLER: Just to give me an idea of what was going on in the craft world and in the world of metal doing in the crafts. I subscribed to several foreign publications for the same reason, *Aurum*, which was a wonderful magazine. I can't think right off hand -- "Forum," I think was another one that was maybe Scandinavian. And another one we were talking about the other day.

MS. YAGER: *Art Aurea*.

MR. MILLER: Which is no longer published. So they were all good. And actually in *Aurum* there were some good articles on granulation and European craftsmen's approach.

And I met the man that wrote some of those articles. I can't think of what his name is. Well, he wrote the big German only book, called *Die Granulation*. It's a big, thick book. It's all in German. He has a lot of wonderful Treskow pictures in that. And then he asked people from all over I guess the European world mainly, and the American world too, who were doing anything with granulation to write a section on their particular technique and then they were put into this book, along with his commentary about the differences of how one person worked and another person worked.

And because it was in German, I finally got a gal here in Cleveland who did translation to translate some of the book so that I could read Treskow's account and various other people's accounts of how they work -- and it's quite fascinating because we all have different ways. Well, I soon realized that there were many different ways of working with granulation, or doing it, I mean the technical process. But my type is unique because I'm practically the only person that worked with 18 karat and this particular way of developing the blackened surface. Practically everybody else works with 22 or works with glue and some sort of copper salt in the glue, and working that way. And some work using my method of copper plating gold granules and getting the copper onto with 22 karat, getting the copper onto the surfaces that way.

So it's a very -- it's a beautiful book. But it never came -- you know, it's an inch and a half thick, and big and wonderful illustrations. But never came out. Actually I bought it in Munich at the big Munich international craft fair. There was a bookstand there and that's the first time I saw -- I knew it was being written, but that's -- I ordered it from them. That's where I got it from. And I don't think it's very well known in this country simply because it's all in German.

MS. YAGER: Have you read or have you -- has there been any writing that has been meaningful to you? I guess we've talked about that a little bit with some of the early art theorists. But do you prefer -- is criticism written by artists more valuable to you or less? What's your opinion about who are the most significant writers in the field of American craft?

MR. MILLER: Well, it really depends on how much the person knows about what they're talking about. And, you know, I've had some articles written about me, and there haven't been very many, by artists that weren't good.

MS. YAGER: What wasn't good about them?

MR. MILLER: Well, it was the point of view. They didn't understand my point of view. I think one of them made me out as much too sentimental, sort of had me weeping at one point. So things I don't think even actually happened, but anyway. I think when it has to be somebody who knows a lot about the field, that's the person you want to have write about you. I mean Oppi certainly knows a lot. And I trusted a lot of what Oppi was going to write. And even there, some of it isn't quite right.

MS. YAGER: Do you think that artists should write about their own work?

MR. MILLER: Well, I enjoyed [Benvenuto] Cellini's book about his work very much. How much

of it I can actually believe verbatim -- you know, I think he was a fanciful artist writer in some ways. But it's a fascinating book, his writing. So, sure, if they've got a flair for writing, then I think they should write about their own work. But I don't think it's something that every artist has to do. [Charles] Burchfield, terrible speaker; wonderful, fabulous artist. But I heard him lecture a couple of times and it wasn't good and he wasn't comfortable doing it.

MS. YAGER: You know, I came across a jeweler statement that you had written for the "Midwest Designer-Craftsmen" in 1957. And I found it to be a really -- I found it quite powerful. And I wondered if you would be willing to read this thing that you had written.

MR. MILLER: I haven't read it since I wrote it.

MS. YAGER: You haven't read it since then?

MR. MILLER: I will read it. "There is nothing very rational about creative work. As I go about it, making jewelry is, for the most part, a long, sometimes tedious, time-consuming process that I thoroughly enjoy. It is the whole reason for producing it.

The quality of inner life, vitality, personality must materialize with the finished piece. Metal, stone or some other material must gain the power to stimulate to an unanticipated degree that region of our emotions which finds pleasure in the intangible feelings that quicken our awareness of being alive. To sense that this can be done deepens its mystery and provides the drive for working.

So jewelry making becomes essentially a process of infusing a form with feeling. Technique and function become disciplines consciously felt only by the artist working with them. And craftsmanship is the element that eliminates the feeling of technique and function except as they are necessary to express the feeling of the idea. To work, you need the confidence that with patience, intuition will lead you to discover relationships capable of building the quality of feeling you sense that we should have." That's pretty good. [Laughs.]

MS. YAGER: I think it's so beautiful. I was so stunned by it.

MR. MILLER: I must have labored over it a long time because --

MS. YAGER: Does it still feel pretty on target?

MR. MILLER: Yeah. I think. I'm amazed. I hadn't ever read it in 40 years or something, but I'm satisfied with it. But feeling -- the book that I told you about, *Feeling and Form*, that's partially responsible for my being able to express it, I think. Yeah. Well, I've always -- you know, feeling of the final piece is the thing that you're striving for.

And it's so exciting when a piece finally gets finished and you finally see it, but you feel it for the first time when you finally see it completed. And you had this feeling that you want to get. And many of them never come off with that feeling in the final statement. I mean, it's partially there and then you think, well, maybe the next time I'll get closer to that.

MS. YAGER: It could keep -- there was -- Daniel Rhodes, I read a comment that he had made. "It is evident that deep and significant values reside in the crafts." I wondered what your attitude about craft and your -- how you see it in the future.

MR. MILLER: Well, there's been such a tremendous development since I started working. I mean, there were just a few of us, relatively few of us, who were working when I started working. And the amount of work that's being -- and the development of techniques and so on that's happened since I started in everything in ceramic and woodworking and weaving.

So it's just going to keep on. Everybody that gets involved is going to have something that they are uniquely able to develop and provide another stepping stone to the future development. So it's certainly going to expand tremendously.

And part of that is, I think, because of our age, where there is all of this photography and publication that distributes these ideas. Many people get acquainted with -- well, in the ancient

world certainly you look at work and there are different degrees of craftsmanship that you see. But they were all sort of seemingly in a very regimented type of feeling about what the work was that they were doing.

MS. YAGER: Sometimes it spanned 1,000 years, the accumulated knowledge.

MR. MILLER: But it didn't change. I mean, the knowledge -- maybe the techniques changed but there was something about the essential character that didn't change. Now there's so much change and variety and character and feeling and thesis, I think that's a big change. And certainly I think it's going to continue.

MS. YAGER: And how do you feel -- has the market for craft changed from when you began to now?

MR. MILLER: I can't talk too much about that because I've never been involved with craft fairs or that sort of thing, and I've never been involved with galleries, just for a brief period during the war. So I think there's been a tremendous change in the distribution of crafts from what it used to be in terms of the available galleries and being spread across the country in terms of galleries where crafts were shown and sold. That's about -- I don't have too much information on that.

MS. YAGER: Where does American craft and American metalwork or jewelry rank on an international scale?

MR. MILLER: Well, I'm really not too familiar with the international area, except through publications and through the fact that -- and going to Europe for many, many years, I would see craft shows. And other than that -- I mean, Oppi wrote a wonderful book about the jewelry of India that just opened my eyes about what's going on there. But, you know, other areas of the world I don't -- even Australia. I saw a few shows. I think actually I saw them mainly in Copenhagen where Australian jewelers were showing in some show there, and I was very impressed with the quality and the inventiveness of the work.

I really think that the European metalsmiths whose work I've seen in shows over there has a higher degree of inventiveness, I think. I mean, the Czechoslovakian and German jewelers, I can't get the names to come, but I sort of worshipped some of the craftsmen in Europe because the pieces were just so beautiful and so inventive and so unique. And I think they're beyond what we're able to produce in this country at this particular time. I don't find that outstanding a group of unique people with unique ways of developing objects in metal in this country that I found in Europe.

MS. YAGER: Where did you see the Czechoslovakian work?

MR. MILLER: Well, I can't think of his name now. But I think I saw him in Zurich, at a show in -- sort of European jewelry in Zurich. Certainly in Munich, at that international fair, when they had the special jewelry show there, which was every year. And we just went across shows in various cities over there. I'd just be lucky enough at that time of year that there'd be this exhibition. And I would photograph it and bring it back for my students here.

MS. YAGER: You must have just an astounding collection of photos and slides.

MR. MILLER: All messed together. But anyway, they were -- I think it was a wonderful thing that I could do this and my students could see the range of work that was being produced in Europe at that time.

MS. YAGER: What do you see as the place of universities in the American craft movement? Because the thing that's kind of interesting to me is that so many people in your generation, you were not ever formally taught jewelry. It was really self-research, self-motivated research.

[Audio break.]

MR. MILLER: I always wondered, you know, there are a lot of universities that developed metalry classes. And I had no way of really being able to verify this, but from what I heard, I always

worried that they weren't allowing enough time, class time, to really work on the work itself. That it was sort of a part of the curriculum. That it wasn't -- I sort of think it has to be the central part of the work and what you're involved with. And I may be totally wrong, but I always worried about the fact that the University of Michigan or Wisconsin [University of Wisconsin-Madison] or somewhere else or Indiana [Indiana University] with Alma [Eikerman], it was part of the curriculum but was it devoting enough time for them to really develop. So, I don't know.

MS. YAGER: Is the European training different. Do they -- you know, is it --

MR. MILLER: Well, it used to be very much. I mean, there was the apprentice system in Germany and Denmark and all of that area where you went to school and you did certain assigned techniques and you really didn't worry about it being an artistic piece. It was a piece that had to teach you how to do this particular technique. In Pforzheim, we went to the school there. There are two schools there. There was one at the university and then there was the other, which was the craft school. And they had immense group of different techniques of engraving and forming and stone-setting, all of these things which are not to produce works of art, but were to produce a sample of your mastering that particular technique without really any worry about the art or the feeling quality. That wasn't it. It was the technique.

And I know -- I talked in Denmark to jewelers who had gone through all of this in hollowware, this sort of training that was specifically aimed at learning the technique of your crafts, but with practically no emphasis, at that time, on developing your creative ability in terms of how you're going to use these techniques.

MS. YAGER: Do you think the creative ability also needs honing?

MR. MILLER: I think it does. And those people then would go out into for instance, into Jensen. And I think they knew the techniques, and then they were master craftsmen there who, I think, then developed their ability to see and feel and know how to use this technique. For instance, Solve Holquist, who came from Baron Fleming's shop in Stockholm, and he first came over and worked in the project that Steuben [Glass], at one time, imported a group of silver people who were to work in connection with glass, Steuben Glass, and combine silver and glass.

Well, this never really worked very well and those people got distributed. Solve went to work for some company in Baltimore, temporarily. I mean, well, he wasn't there very long. And Margret Craver, I think, found out about him and told Fred about him, and Fred brought him up here to be the silversmith for Potter and Mellen. And he was a very, very fine silversmith, but just sort of at that point just beginning to develop his own unique ideas about silver. So I don't know -- in this country, I don't know a lot about the European things.

MS. YAGER: Let's see. Could you discuss the differences between a university trained artist and one who has learned outside of academia? I mean, in some ways you're an example of that because you really --

MR. MILLER: Well, I went to an art school, but I didn't study metaling.

MS. YAGER: But you were -- yeah.

MR. MILLER: But I was trained as an --

MS. YAGER: You were able to bring unrelated fields in.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. And I was devoting every day. I had an art history course and that was the only academic thing, sort of academic. Now the art school, you have English courses and you've got -- and, I'm sorry, I always fought this -- I mean, you have literature courses, you have English courses and you have all sorts of other academic courses that you come in in the morning earlier, but you don't get into your major classroom or studio until later in the day, until you've gone through the academic part of it.

And sometimes the academics are late in the afternoon, after the -- So I always sort of felt they were

getting shortchanged at the art school because they were involved with -- well, let me put it this way. I had no college academic training other than the art school. I mean, I didn't have English courses after high school or language courses or anything like this. But I kept reading and I kept sort of educating myself, as I felt I needed it. And I had the feeling that any good person who was interested in art was also going to have other interests and that they really didn't need to go on and be forced into English classes and literature classes and these other classes, just because the collegium – or the whole group of art schools sort of felt they had to become more like universities in order to give degrees.

And actually, our school is the only school that has a five-year curriculum. And the reason it's five years to graduation is because we tried to keep more studio time along with the academic time. But not very many people ever agreed with me on this. And I know a lot of people who have gone through university training and become very fine craftsmen.

MS. YAGER: The attitude toward jewelry, you mentioned something that Anni Albers said during the jury. Could you --

MR. MILLER: Well, I was jurying with Anni and three other people. And when it came to jewelry, Anni had a plain gold band ring on, and she took it off and laid it on the table and she said, "That's all I know about jewelry. I'm not even going to attempt to jury the jewelry section." Now, she knew so much about design and had such strong unique feelings of her own work, that I couldn't comprehend how she couldn't look at other areas of the craft world. Like she couldn't look at metal or look at ceramics and so on. I think she did look at ceramics, but I don't remember any other areas. Certainly she looked at textiles.

Well, I've been on quite a lot of juries, and it was a diverse group of people with diverse backgrounds as far as their areas. But they all cooperated in trying to make decisions. I know -- we gave Lenore Tawney her first big prize at the "Midwest Designer-Craftsmen" show, and the person who was the fabric person on the jury said practically, "over my dead body, will I give that a first prize." But the rest of the jury agreed that that was the best piece in the show, so it went.

MS. YAGER: At the beginning of this interview you said, really early in your career, "I'm going to learn the secret."

MR. MILLER: You mean of design?

MS. YAGER: What is it?

MR. MILLER: Well, I tried to teach my -- I don't think, you know, there's a secret -- I always thought there was some secret and you were going to find it. But I taught my students that you had to really see what you were doing and feel what you were doing rather than sort of let your subconscious get -- because I think the subconscious dictates balance and something that's quiet, non-disturbing to your feelings.

And you have to design something that will sort of intensify feeling through relationships of forms that aren't based on sort of mathematical precision, of division of space or balance of forms and this sort of thing. I could be wrong, but I could prove to my students, through their drawings, that they were seeing, at that stage in the game, basically, though they were drawing from nature, they were dividing things in mathematical divisions all through their work.

MS. YAGER: Some of these things might even be natural growth patterns.

MR. MILLER: Yeah.

MS. YAGER: I wondered what your formula for excellence and for making a masterpiece is. And some of the things that you mentioned, ultimate patience, you also it seems like your partnership with another intensely hardworking metalsmith must have added immensely to this synergistic effect. Looking at great masterpieces, the Etruscans and all that, looking at nature, you know, the ultimate perfection, what do you think?

MR. MILLER: It's the patience to stick with it until it begins to feel right. I mean, that's -- more and more, as I work, I realize that I keep changing and manipulating forms in the early drawings and even when I'm working on them, until at some point they're going to feel right. And I don't know if that makes it a masterpiece or not, but you have to wait long enough. I don't think you can hurry the development of a piece. If you do, you can make a lot of pieces and sell them, probably, but you're not going to get, maybe, the best work out of yourself. And that's just my view. But I know Fred and I would both sort of critique what we were doing, particularly in the early days, and I think that helped a lot to have somebody else around that you could show a drawing to or say, what do you think?

MS. YAGER: Who understood what you were hoping for.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. YAGER: What advice -- you know, one of the things you had said, you know, are there any -- do you have any warnings for artists coming up? Any special advice? One thing I had read was that you had emphasized establishing self-respect and warnings about the captivation of the mountains. But what would you -- you know, are there any things that you -- if you were starting out now or someone was starting out, what would you advise them to -- how would you advise them to maneuver in this world?

MR. MILLER: Well, I'd say, don't philosophize too much, work more. And, you know, try to get into the thing that you're doing as deeply as you can. And I think I told you that I think most of us don't write very well about our own work. And your work really should be what you're saying to the public about the way you feel and about this thing that you're doing. But a lot of the time it just won't go into words. And I think I said that. I think metalsmiths should stop publishing artist statements because some of them -- the piece is beautiful, but the statement, I can't relate to what it is that they're doing. It's as if they're struggling too hard to justify this in some philosophical way when it doesn't need that type of justification.

MS. YAGER: And it's not as finely-honed.

MR. MILLER: No, the piece is fine, but they aren't expressing it when it comes to words.

MS. YAGER: Do you have any advice about the money versus art dilemma, and balancing a career?

MR. MILLER: You mean how much you should strive to be able to pay for what your time is?

MS. YAGER: To finance your trips. [They laugh.]

MR. MILLER: Well, I don't know. I've always had a hard time pricing pieces in relation to the time that went into them. And when I look back and think of how cheap my pieces were in the early days in relation to the time that went into them, but in the early days I felt I had to price them to sell so that I could keep on working, that I could buy -- well, with me I had to buy gold. I couldn't stockpile a whole group of pieces.

MS. YAGER: And even balancing your time. You know, I know for many decades you balanced teaching with your work. Is it good to have that balance?

MR. MILLER: I think -- the teaching was certainly an income for me that I knew was coming in every month. And that certainly gave me confidence that I could do my own work. Fortunately I was able to sell it, but I was never knowing how much that work was going to bring in. Other craftsmen who aren't relying on teaching and are relying entirely on their own work have a different point-of-view of the relationship between the two.

So I -- see, I never knew I was going into teaching. I had no idea what I was ever going to do when I got out of art school. And just by accident I got started teaching, and it was wonderful to be able to do the teaching and have an income that I knew was coming in, and then be able to have some time to do other things that I wanted to do. And all my life I've been trying to be able to get out into the wilderness or the mountains, and that sort of thing, and still be able to do my own work.

MS. YAGER: So one of the questions was, what's next for you? I have down a book, a film, an exhibition, but each time I've kind of posed those to you in formal things, you're like, "No, the work, I need to do the work."

MR. MILLER: Yes, well, that's really, I mean, it would be a tremendous agonizing chore to write, to prepare a text for a book. And even to assemble pieces for a show or something like that --

MS. YAGER: To gather them back.

MR. MILLER: To gather them back. And to be worried about the borrowing process and getting things back to people and so on. So, no, what's next is just the next piece, and hopefully the next piece will pay for the relaxation of another trip to some place.

MS. YAGER: To Antarctica. [Laughs.]

MR. MILLER: Well, there are other places I'd like to go too. I'd love to go back to the Mayan ruins, in spite of I hated the heat and all that, but they were so inspiring in terms of the design and the feeling of the place. It was just wonderful.

MS. YAGER: Is there anything that we haven't discussed, that's important to you?

MR. MILLER: We've been going so long I think we've covered it. [Laughs.]

MS. YAGER: Well --

MR. MILLER: Is there anything you think --

MS. YAGER: Well, the only thing that I wanted to just mention, you know, in looking at -- researching you on the Internet, which I know you don't look at the Internet, but you are really considered a national treasure by many artists in this country. You know, you've been an artist, a teacher, a goldsmith, an enameller, a granulation master.

Allan Heywood of Heywood Enamels wrote a statement that I thought was pretty stunning that I'd like to read. It says, "It's most unlikely that such a historically unique and conceptually original body of work, work of the elegant beauty and intricate complexity of these masterpieces produced consistently over such a long period of time by a single individual will ever be matched."

MR. MILLER: Well, I don't, you know, know about that. But my one feeling is that I've been very centered on certain types of pieces, and I've always dreaded the idea of a big show because I thought that people would see too many repetitions of ideas that were tried this way and that way and so on. Well, I think we talked before, I've only had about three major different types of -- well, maybe four -- of elements in my design.

MS. YAGER: I've talked to some artists, and they think that we each only have three ideas and that we work on them our whole life. [Laughs.] I don't know.

Well, John Paul Miller, I want to thank you personally, and on behalf of the Archives of American Art, and on behalf of a multitude of artists and jewelers who will be challenged and inspired by your work in the years to come for agreeing to this interview. And most importantly, for your decades of labor, exploring the art of the metalsmith and the goldsmith.

MR. MILLER: Well, thank you, and I've enjoyed it. And I hope that you're right, that some people will benefit from the time we've spent, but it's been a strange thing for me, I mean, to go through a life in a couple of days.

MS. YAGER: And fit it into these six discs.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. Well, we fitted it, haven't we? I think we've --

MS. YAGER: I think you've beat Lalique; and I didn't think it was possible in this century to do that, but I think you have. So I think you've surpassed him as a one-person, rather than a whole atelier.

MR. MILLER: Well, maybe, and that's -- there haven't been many examples of people who, before our time maybe, where the craftsmen, the designer carried all the way through. And I think that's unique, perhaps, about our age now. Mr. Potter did his own work, but here in Cleveland, I think there were a lot of people that work from, you know, somebody would design a piece and somebody else would do it.

Well, at Potter and Mellen, Fred designed lots of pieces that Solve made. They had some very good jewelers that worked there, he designed pieces and the jeweler executed them, so. And you know, in the early days I thought Fabergé did his own pieces, I was that uneducated.

MS. YAGER: I thought that about Lalique.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, well, I did too.

MS. YAGER: And I figured, okay, forget it, don't even bother. I shouldn't even try. [Laughs.] And then I found out he had 85 people or more.

MR. MILLER: He had -- he found the right people to do the pieces.

MS. YAGER: And the time period that fostered all of that. I think that you've been in a bit of a unique situation here with strong leadership of museums, the benefit of patrons who had vision to support artists' work, and the support of corporations. And, you know, Potter and Mellen, so many -- there's been such an interesting mesh of things during this time period in this place that have really yielded some pretty great work.

MR. MILLER: You've heard of Severance Hall? It's our big music hall here in Cleveland, that was built by John L. Severance for the Cleveland Orchestra. But John L. Severance even visited my Saturday morning class, at one point, at the museum, came through to see what was happening in the museum Saturday morning classes.

MS. YAGER: You mentioned over lunch that Daniel Brush looked over your shoulder in a Saturday morning class.

MR. MILLER: Well, he looked over my shoulder while I was working in the afternoon, I didn't -- I never taught Saturday morning. I did teach enameling at night school for a couple of years. Fred taught silversmithing at night school for quite a few years. In the early days most of the good faculty taught day and night school, and then they decided that they weren't going to have the regular faculty teach night school any more, or Saturday morning classes, for that matter.

Which in some ways was too bad, because I did in Saturday morning classes get exposed to some of the best teachers that eventually I would have in day school at the art school. And they were good teachers for young people, too. You know, they understood the younger person's abilities and viewpoints, and so --

MS. YAGER: I think children respond to content and complexity in ways that most people don't believe they can.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. So I'm hoping that the school will somehow or other realign and get back to a program of Saturday morning and night school and summer classes, because for the young people in Cleveland, I think that's very important. And I don't see how abandoning it entirely for one whole year --

MS. YAGER: Which is what they're doing now instead?

MR. MILLER: -- which is what they're doing, how that can possibly do anything but harm the institution. And I think it's going to take years to rebuild that.

MS. YAGER: It's like a farmer not sowing seeds one year.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, it's tragic.

MS. YAGER: Well, thank you so much.

MR. MILLER: Well, thank you. I'm very honored to be involved in something like this.

MS. YAGER: I'm honored to be involved as well. Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Okay.

[END]