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**SKOWHEGAN SCHOOL  
OF PAINTING & SCULPTURE  
Skowhegan, Maine**

**Lecture by Lennart Andersen  
Summer 1965**

Lennart Andersen [hereafter LA]: These paintings, or photographs of the paintings will date back to 1951 when I think I made some decision in my work which I've since, more or less, carried on. Previous to that, I was pretty much involved with an expressionist idea, an emotional, ???, political, and I thought at least, that I was interested in those things. One day I realized that I was really interested in the style, not in what they were saying. Once I realized that I was interested in style, I was quite free of all the angst, etc, that the paintings implied. I decided, I don't quite how overnight or how quickly I made this decision because when I go through the paintings, I seem to remember that I may have made a decision very quickly. When I look back, I see that there were pictures still going on that, there were a lot of things hanging on, so obviously it took a little longer than I remember it.

The view point decided to take, if that's the right, to decide, was to let the subject matter, whatever it was that I decided to paint exist purely without any stylistic or I should say cornered picking out of the cubist viewpoint etc. Cezanne was pretty much decided upon at this time, not to be an influence. This I think was very difficult for me because I was in art school when I did it. And I was in a very advance guard situation and everything was painting something either of Cezanne like or post-Cezanne. And for me to want to do this was a little difficult. I didn't do it purely on my own, there were quite a few modern painters around who appreciated what I did, they appreciated what little talent I seemed to have when I would drop off my expressionist garb. And so I did have some encouragement from that level. I guess we can start slides now.

Now you can see I think that if this has any stylistic things to it, it's possibly and partly my ineptness. I've always been interested in a street scene. I don't know why but I seem to think that there are these categories of still life portrayed in lifescape and street scenes. I'm always ??? and I almost always have had this idea of a figure having undergone some kind of a ??? I don't know. Maybe if I wanted the subject matter, I don't know, anyway the subject matter will remain ???

There are a number of reasons for wanting to paint a picture that may not even seem important to

anyone else. But in this particular painting, I wanted very much to have a figure running out of the painting, straight out. And I wanted him in the foreground. At the distance which I was standing, any figures that would in the foreground really got to be so large that they obliterated ??? when I started to them, ??? obliterated the scene behind. So as I painted it, it gets smaller and smaller, and he ended up behind the ??? bending over, you can see white ??? shirt and a head. Next slide.

Well this is the man I wanted to put in the front. I did a large picture of him. I think at this time, I was very very interested in Corbet. You can't tell, I'll tell it to you. He painted a picture, Corbet was always ???, he painted a fire engine, the fire company on the way to a fire in some village with the horses and all the men running alongside ???. So it makes me think of this picture for some reason or other. Next slide. Kind of an ideal subject I thought for someone who is going to stop editorializing ??? a portrait. And at the time, I did a number of students in school, and there would be three or four or five now dead that I did. This I think was the one I liked the best. I could cope with the head. You've got a figure ??? I felt that I could get closer to a street scene and ??? looking to the pictures. There's so much to know. I must apologize for these slides. They've just been kicking around in drawers for many years.

Still very Corbet and Chardin. I think the dirt's on the slide, not on the picture. OK. I was fortunate in getting some colored slides when I was in school for one of the people I painted paid me by taking some slides. If I could say something about photographs. In my position I found my photographs were a bulwark in situations where you're not filling your work, and you have a tendency perhaps to lose track of yourself. You have no public personality, you can't point to yourself and say I did that or anything. You can have a bunch of photographs of things that you've done and go through them occasionally, but ...Now there's about nearly a year in between these colored slides and this particular painting in which I pretty much denounce any street scene at all. And ??? still life. And it was a very miserable year. I didn't get too many. But then following that, I came to New York and started again. And this is a street scene that I have since destroyed, but it's good to have photographs that I saved. Every time you move, you throw out a painting or two, but if you have photographs, you can at least keep track of what's happened.

This is the next street scene that I got involved in. You see I'm getting quite ???. This is right at the high water mark of abstract expressionist painting, and I was living on 10th Street, a couple of doors from the Tanager Gallery when I began this painting. And at one point, it was a completely abstract expressionist picture, and I draw a lot of residue from that, mostly at the bottom. One of the problems I have in painting a scene like this is finding out the scale that the picture will, the figures ultimately will take. And I, certainly on this one, worked months with certain figures which were almost double the size that they ended up before I realized what felt right as far as scale went before me. And the painting tended to sink down into the center of the canvas, which forced an awful lot of space out in front. I regret, it was something that I couldn't control, but I tried to make some kind of a feeling of almost like a cliff scene going on. Perhaps if you were looking at a scene from a great distance through binoculars, or something like that, where you get perspective very flattened. Eye level becomes pretty flat through out a whole ???.

Before it burns up, I guess ???. Now I think there will be a few things that I did in conjunction

with this picture. Actually the next five or six things will be things that I did at the same time, carried on around the same time. They're not all that I have. They just have to be one of Edward's photographs. This is a study for the woman on the ground. ??? It's oil on paper about typewriter size. Next. I was very interested and influenced by what I thought fresco painting was at the time. I hadn't been to Italy, and the only frescos I'd ever seen were Diego Rivera's in Detroit, which didn't agree at all with what I had in my mind, but certain books on Piero really fired me up. I began to get interested in very very close color harmony. This is ??? The background is gray, the ??? is a rough warm red trunk. I began to get interested in this very close thing. I talked about it as something about color kissing, when one's color and form came together, and the color still held its place without becoming modeling or broken. I was interested in a piece I read just recent of Albert's saying that he was interested in quite the same thing. He used as an illustration the Pompeian red ??? Now this is a very small painting about 10 x 12. I tried to paint the whole scene giving what I stored up and accepted in drawing in like two hours because I felt that my painting was becoming very stiff. And I really wanted to free it a little bit. I didn't get very many of these. This is about really the only one. My imagination would fall down. I couldn't think fast enough ??? paint, you'd have to finish it, you couldn't carry it on. I didn't want to carry it on. When you have to imagine 8 or 9 figures moving and especially with a scene and ??? what's happening, it got a little tough. I still think it's a good idea, however ???.

This is the first of two still lifes that I painted. This one took about 2 days and I don't ??? too much to say about it. I painted the left hand side ??? the right hand side, and vice versa with the drapery. ??? One is rich and the other one is completely down to the bone. The thing that I think is interesting about this is that I go through these very dull periods when I can't get any painting, and I decided since I had such good luck with this, that I ought to paint it very quickly, then I could do ??? another still life, and I worked three years ??? I don't have a black and white of it, but it does show up if we get to any color slides at the end, it will show up in an exhibition ???

It shows that you're not the same person. There's about two years difference between the first and the second. I was also very interested in acting out of ??? ??? There were more paintings ??? but I don't have photos of them. From now on, just about, they'll paintings that I did in Rome and when I first got there, I did a couple of portraits of people around me at the Academy. This is very small oil on cardboard, it's about maybe 7 inches wide, 11 inches high. Next. This is cropped, I'm sorry to say. I find that photographers don't believe what I paint. Actually he's cropped where there is a division in the composition, so that the scale of the head to the canvass is a little smaller than it appears here, and I think it has a little better face. She's sitting by a screen, and then the ??? comes in, they're right angles. Next.

Oh, this belongs with the other pictures. This is a New York painting. I subscribed somewhat to the idea that it didn't matter what you painted, it was what you did to it, and what your attitude was.

And so I at one time bought a box of Victorian family portraits, postcard size, and I brought them home and worked on this painting for a couple years using ??? The boy who was posing, evidently shifting his head. You know they had these long exposures I guess, and it was very difficult, and I got all fouled up trying to make sense out of this. It was a very blurry head, but I liked this, I still like the feeling of the thing. ??? I've done portrait heads in one sitting. This is a, as the term goes, ???, picture. I was interested in disavowal of the face of a head, without

anything more. Partly because I couldn't paint any more than that. If I was going to give everything I had to the head, I wasn't going to have anything left over for anything else. And I wanted it done at one time. I felt that, without details such as collars and ties, a head had a timelessness, it could compete with Roman portraiture.

This is an oil on paper. It wasn't done in one sitting. It's 8 x 10 inches. Next. This is one of my ???. Graham Greene writes novels with conceits of entertainment. This is an entertainment to me. I would make use of certain things that have happened in modern painting, and using them for my own mysterious end. Also, very ??? with some cubist ideas. Whatever I felt like throwing in, ??? every once in a while I'd do it. Color is very warm in that painting. This is the beginning drawing for a portrait. Now I wish I had done what the drawing pointed out, but the painting changed quite considerably. I worked on it for a very long time. It was a woman who was staying in Rome for the first year I was there, and I ended up chasing her to Rotterdam, to get the last drawing. After she left, I took the head off the portrait. The portrait is next. The head is completely from the drawing, and it doesn't have any of the strength really, but I think one of the better compositions.

The kind of admiration that I had when I painted this was for a painting of Degas, the Countess Morgille, which is in the ??? Museum in Paris. A great painting. Next. Here we are back at ???

This is a beginning. When I went to Rome, I had in my mind that I was going to take another crack at the ??? and before I left, I went around a couple of blocks in New York where I lived, and took a few photographs of the buildings and a couple of background things so that I could have material for the background. As it turned out, I used two different places, two different buildings, combined in these paintings. ??? This is a composition in color, oil on cardboard, 16 x 20 inch compositional study for the big painting. Now, I think you will see about 3 or 4 shots of the my enlarged painting as it progressed. And I'm sure that you will think I wrecked it, but I agree. The first shot I think is very close in its scale to what the sketch was. I was painting those in 77 x 99 inches. Already I'd moved the curve into the painting. And I had the same trouble, as you will see, with this painting that I had with the other one. The figures kept getting smaller, and the space kept getting greater. I don't know why that happened. This was pretty much a squared off thing from the sketch, but I still couldn't hold on to the scale. OK, next.

Could be straightened out. I had such a hard time drawing a horizontal on the pictures. Now this I think is the best stage, from a photograph standpoint, that the picture was in. I made a lot of ..the idea of the picture, frankly, was for me to finish something. Sketch is great, you can make marvelous sketches, but really a sketch isn't an idea, it isn't a concept, and I wanted to make a finished painting and see if I could make it hold. Unfortunately I kept changing and changing things. And it ended up with about a month left before we came back to America, and I had this very large painting, and I probably didn't think I'd have another studio large enough for me to work on it. I think I forced it very much, too much, and almost everything from this point, I quite regret it. The next slide.

??? and I think I choked it off. I think it can be finished, but not the mood I was in. ??? I'd come in at night and say, write down a list that I had to finish this and this, and that and that, and I had about 12 things. And the next day I'd come in and I'd ??? them. ??? I noticed that the little figure though has changed quite dramatically in this painting. The idea originally was for a very

small pictures, to be running that across it. Very large scale figure. ??? a great jump in scale. ??? So the cloth just got moved back ??? and the figure of the boy became very energetic, much too energetic for the place he occupies in the painting. ??? The idea before was a little better. Could you go back to the other one. He was, kind of a dancing toy like figure. It's incomplete but I like it better.

There was a little toy sold around Rome at this time at Christmas time, it's called Jimmy, and it's balanced on one thin toe and it carries weights on a piece of wire, so that he's balanced like this on a single pedestal, and he swung around on his tip toe. That was the idea I wanted to get in. It was a marvelous toy, I don't know whether we have them here or not. OK. There were a lot of drawings for this painting. Some pictures of sections of it. This is a small oil on canvas board. ??? a different idea for this size. I had an idea to paint a very emotional group, very emotional group, but I couldn't seem to make it sensible in the picture. I like the idea of the columns and the steps coming out of the girl, the woman standing over it. That was another period in this painting where her face is pointing up straight up that column, and she's bending back with her head, but actually moving forward, very contortionist like. I've been drawing that idea--or much more exciting than what I actually ????. Sometimes you make drawings of what you would like to put in the picture if you had your druthers. Next. The pastels ????. Oh gee, I forgot to tell to watch for this man who's running out the picture. There was one street scene where I did get him in at the side, a very small ???, the one that was destroyed. In this particular painting, I got the girl, I turned it into a girl, and put her on the steps. It gave her plenty of room to run, and she's running straight out. And the idea comes from, as far as I know, from ????. And I think it came from originally from that too. All these years, I think I must have known that painting. ??? pastel studies ahead. This motif of a head straight on, mouth open is not by any means original to me. I can't claim any originality, but I know that there's and Edwin Dickinson portrait with the mouth open, pointing straight. I think his portrait, at least ???, was the Cellini with the head of Medusa, holding it up the head, just like this, mouth wide open. There's a Caravaggio self portrait of a head where he painted himself on a shield. It's the same motif. I figured that it was all right for me to do this since all these people ??? Next.

That's a little oil on paper study. ??? If I haven't mentioned Degas, this is the real man of my life. The whole painting is based on ??? exercising, girls on one side, boys on the other. Next. This is a charcoal drawing. The thing in Rome, it seemed to be the place to try to paint classical pictures, and a number of classical figures and subjects were ??? running, getting away from Eros. This is about the last portrait I did in Rome. Same idea. Two hours sink or swim. Actually I tried another one of him, it was the other way around. I turned the canvas over after a half hour and began again. I stopped the first one. Next. This has the look of a painting I wished my big painting had turned into. It's much gentler. I got away from the extreme Roman sunsets where sunsets on those pink buildings in terms of their spire, and I was dying to try to get that into a painting. When I got back to ???, and quieted down. ??? A ??? I can handle a little better. I began a few ???, mostly from drawings, never finished it. I think one thing I was looking at it yesterday, and I think one thing turned out all right that I thought was a nebulous, and that was I've got a pretty good portrait on this thing, and it doesn't take away from the fact that it's a figure. It isn't a portrait either, it seems to be a fairly good balance. I ??? got all wound up on the head, for months. Next. Oh that's that Pompeian color too. That's that warm red tone. It's very close ????. There were more nudes. I guess I don't have photographs of them.

But now, to me, I made a previous change in this painting. I grew tired of what I was doing. I felt that it wasn't from life, it was an idea that I carried around in my head about painting, what colors should do. It was really the kind of thing that I think a lot of abstract painters have in their mind. That's a fine idea. I still carry ideas about what a picture should look like, but I think what resulted was a kind of a poetry, poetic look, and I began to feel that it was also sentimental, and I wanted my paintings to become more prose, if that could be the right word. Facts. quiet, calm. I even became quite less interested in portraits, figures, anything figurative. And I'm still kind of in that space. I worked on this last year with my paintings in the last year. And here's another little one. ??? I don't know what people who don't paint still lifes think, they think that a painter just walked into a studio and paints a still life or finds something, but to paint a picture this scale, 50 x 60, or whatever it is, it doesn't matter. It's 5 feet wide. You just can't make it up or take it as it comes. At least I couldn't. I ??? completely and arrangement. You probably feel too arranged in your mind. I think that certain things are very successful about it, and other things I don't think are very good. It's terribly overworked. I think the idea that ??? lying on the floor was the closest thing that I came to a stroke of genius. It really makes the painting. It kind of like put the wrench in the picture and turned it. The part I don't like is I never could find the answer to the other side. To the box in the car. I think it was closer to the answer than I thought at the time because it really had to be quiet over there, in opposition to the other side. And it has to not be quite the same thing, but another thing poking into the center, as the drapery on the upper left, in the latter one, and the upper right. Is that the end? I'm not apologizing too much for my photographs, but this one is very dark. It isn't as dark as this print, but the print's much too dark. Then last summer, and still part of the same idea, I think that still life took me much too long to paint. It should have been done in about a week, and it took me about 6 months, because I couldn't find compositional answers to thing., hence having to try things. This comes closer to what I'm thinking about now, trying to find a paint equivalent for

### **[AUDIO BREAK]**

every plane so that the whole picture is painted, and it is not longer, the idea of fields of color working and kissing more or less. OK, next. That was a one afternoon thing that was meant to be carried further. Now I'll show you some landscapes if you don't mind. This goes back to when we went to Greece, spent two months in Greece, and I bought a sketching easel, and we went out, and I started doing landscapes. This is just about the first landscape that I can honestly, that I think I painted ???. And I was looking at it yesterday and there are things compositionally that I would never do now, but I like it here. I've illuminated the ground plane. I think this is the painting that is frankly the most Dickinson that I've ???. I studied with Dickinson for a month at one point. But I was just beginning and you start from what you have in hand. The sunsets pictures, I think it's quite orange and green. It's a cliff with hills, there's no sky in this picture, even though you may think that there is sky, it's all hills, all the way back. Next.

A little tree on ???. These are all, I still more or less do one shot landscapes. You either do or you don't, and try to do another one the next time, and think differently about it. Next. We can go right through these, I think I won't comment, I think they're pretty...

Now we come back to America. I've been painting the last few years around New Bedford, a place called South Dartmouth. Actually right around this bridge. I painted the bridge from a number of angles. Still trying to get it right. Still one shot thing. This is the first ????. This is the same place, only looking the other way. Moving around the front lawn of that house, looking down. I was standing in that plot of ground out near the water when I painted that. 14 x 18.  
Next.

Is that it, no there's one more I think. The bridge again. Next. This is Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard. Very warm picture. That's it, isn't it? I have a few slides...since we haven't had any color since those first school things, I have a few slides that were taken of an exhibition I had two years ago, and you can get a little bit of an idea of the color. They aren't pictures of paintings, they're just pictures of the room with paintings in. Oh, this is good. This is a shot of the painting while it was being done in color. My cousin came to Rome and took these shots. I took the canvas off the stretcher because I felt it needed a hard surface after a while to work against. I was beating it up so much, it was going to sag too much. On the first street scene of the one I did in New York, there was a woman on the ground, with her hands up. It's changed to the boy now...it's a different scene. The other street scene is on this side that I was talking about.  
Next. This is to show you some paintings that I don't have photographs. Next. Color is good in this, low, but fairly accurate I think. That little painting there is done from a Muybridge photograph.

There's the other still life...It's dark. The photo is dark. The street scene here is I think about 50 inches on the width. ??? Is there any more? Oh, this is a drawing from the ??? that I showed before with some different changes. This is an oil on paper portrait for this side. That it? Thank you.  
I guess that's it. (applause)

**[END 1965 LECTURE, 55 MINUTES TOTAL]**