

STORM KING ART CENTER

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

ROBERT GROSVENOR

February 21, 2018

Interviewed by Sarah Dziedzic
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Interview with Robert Grosvenor and Jackie Grosvenor	Robert and Jackie Grosvenor's home
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	East Patchogue, NY
February 21, 2018	1 audio file
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Audio File 1

Dziedzic: Today is February 21, 2018 and this is Sarah Dziedzic interviewing Bob Grosvenor for the Storm King Oral History Program. So first, I was hoping we could talk a little bit about your background. So I wanted to ask you about the place where you grew up.

Grosvenor: I grew up in Newport, Rhode Island. I was fortunate to be there, very beautiful place, and then we moved to Arizona. We sort of split our time between Arizona and Newport. Similar in the way that they were very sort of flat landscapes, the ocean in Newport, and the desert in Arizona. Which were formative to me, important to me, I think.

Dziedzic: How was it that Arizona came into play?

Grosvenor: Because I think it was warm in the winter. It was warmer than [laughter] Newport. [00:01:00] There were desert schools out there that I went to, boarding schools, and so it was convenient for my parents, I guess.

Dziedzic: So this was the 1950s or so, when—

Grosvenor: Yes, or earlier, I suppose the '40s and '50s.

Dziedzic: For me, for my generation, that's where we learned about how The Future was built, in the desert, in the 1950s. It's kind of, you know, jumping forward to all of a sudden you're in The Future. So, I'm wondering, for you as a kid, what was that sense like?

Grosvenor: Oh, it was fantastic. I mean, there was nothing there, and then all of a sudden, a small Frank Lloyd Wright house would be going up to my right, and then I'd look over the left, and another one would be going up on the left. And it was—it was a fantastic future. It was so different than New England, you know, all the buildings—everything was new, [00:02:00] you know. So, it was very, very important to me, to be there.

Dziedzic: And what sort of space did you live in?

Grosvenor: What sort of space? I don't understand. You mean house, or something?

Dziedzic: Yes.

Grosvenor: Just sort of an ordinary house, a modernistic house. The [Isamu] Noguchi table, and stuff like that. But it was a brand new thing for me, when I was a kid. So, yes, I suppose it was very important, yes. Things were pure, colors were different. There were colors there, as opposed to Newport, that was all gray, usually. But the space, I don't know whether it was important or not.

Dziedzic: I'm thinking of those Frank Lloyd Wright interiors that are actually really dark and tight.

Grosvenor: Yes, I never really went into the houses, I don't think. I went to Taliesin, but I never went into the private houses, I don't think. But I saw the extraordinary roof lines, and the proportions of the small buildings, [00:03:00] beautiful.

Dziedzic: Were you doing any kind of art making when you were young?

Grosvenor: No, I wasn't doing anything at all. [laughter] No. I was discouraged from doing most things. No, I didn't.

Dziedzic: But then you ended up going to study art. So how did—

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: —how did that come about?

Grosvenor: It was sort of escaping from New England, and going to Europe, and just finding new things. And trying to put things together, and just a beginning. And being around like-minded people who were also putting things together, like everyone else, I suppose.

Dziedzic: I think I read that it was some family friends that had recommended that you go to study art in France? Was that—

Grosvenor: Yes, it was partly that, there was a cousin of mine, William Congdon, who [00:04:00] was very helpful to me, who was a painter. And I thought it would just a different situation, that I had a need for, I guess, at the time.

Dziedzic: And what did you make when you were there? I read that you studied architecture, is that—

Grosvenor: I did, somewhat. I made school projects. Some of them were boring, some of them of course were more interesting. It was just nice being with like-minded people, I suppose, in school.

Dziedzic: I think I read too that there was something about the architecture—what we were talking about with Chinon [France] before we started—that medieval architecture was interesting to you.

Grosvenor: Yes, that was interesting to me. And also, if you've seen some of my photographs that I've taken recently, there's certain humble, or small little sheds and buildings that I've always been attracted to. That's important [00:05:00] to me. Not only the great buildings, but just little things one sees by the side of the road. Right, you know? Yes.

Dziedzic: Were you taking any photographs over there?

Grosvenor: No, I wasn't. Not at all, no. Never did.

Dziedzic: How did you end up deciding to come back to the U.S.?

Grosvenor: I think I was called by the Army to come back. I had to. I had to go into the service for a short time, for six months. So I came back for that. I came back for that. Not particularly willingly, I wanted to stay there, but I had to come back.

Dziedzic: Did you serve in the U.S.?

Grosvenor: Just for six months, yes. Sort of a, six months, Army. [laughter]

Dziedzic: I cannot relate, [00:06:00] believe it or not. [laughter]

Grosvenor: Well, I couldn't relate either. But, I don't know. We had some fun, because there were a bunch of people from downtown New York City that were in the Army, and we had some fun. But it was pretty grim, generally pretty grim.

Dziedzic: Where were you stationed?

Grosvenor: Here and there, in the dullest, most remotest, awful places. And I made friends with Peter Campus, the video artist, and that was good. And some other people.

Dziedzic: So then, how did you end up moving to New York City?

Grosvenor: I just, I guess I was in Philadelphia, going to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and people there, teachers recommended to go to New York maybe. And I heard about things in New York City, so I decided to go there. Yes.

Dziedzic: What were you doing when you were in Philadelphia, [00:07:00] in terms of—

Grosvenor: Oh, I was going to that school, and working at odd jobs. And you know, the usual sort of thing. Nothing very interesting, I don't think. [laughter]

Dziedzic: You'd been painting, is that right?

Grosvenor: Yes, painting. I didn't really know about sculpture. I'd heard about it, but I'd never put anything together like that.

Dziedzic: And then, when you moved to New York, how did you, I guess, get your feet on the ground?

Grosvenor: I think actually, I somehow, while I was in the Army—I've told this story before but I saw some art magazines, and there was a review of a Mark di Suvero exhibit at the Green Gallery. And I thought wow, this is interesting stuff, you know? And so, I was looking for someplace to work, and I ended up in his building. He [00:08:00] came to the door and I saw these wooden sculptures behind him. And he said, "Yes, there's some room over there you can have." So I ended up there, which was quite good. And through him, I met other artists at the Green Gallery, and I went to the Green Gallery, and it sort of opened things up for me. It was an important time.

Dziedzic: I wanted to ask about your studio space at that time.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: I've seen photos of your work in studio spaces, and primarily documentation of your work in these interior spaces. So, I'm just curious about what kind of space you had to work with then, and what sort of influence it had on the work you were making.

Grosvenor: Yes, I never experienced that loft kind of space. There was one large loft room, and then above that was another large roof, another large loft room, so I made [00:09:00] a ladder up into there. And then I had two rooms. It was in a time where—and then there was another floor above that, so I made another stairway. So, it was really a huge area that I had. And people did that, at that time.

Dziedzic: You had the three floors?

Grosvenor: I had three floors. And Mark had three or four floors. It just went on and on. And the next building to us was wonderful. It was completely empty. And people would just come in, never pay any rent or anything, it was wonderful.

Dziedzic: Yes, I think I've heard that the way that you got a studio was, you bought a padlock and you put it on the front door.

Grosvenor: That was later on. Yes. [laughter]

Dziedzic: There were also a lot of artists down on Front Street at that time, right?

Grosvenor: Yes. Well, earlier time, there was—you mean Ellsworth Kelly, that group of artists. Yes, that was a little bit earlier. I didn't know those people at that time. [00:10:00] They might have actually moved away by the time I was on Front Street. I don't know.

Dziedzic: And how long were you in that space?

Grosvenor: How long, Jackie? About a year or so?

Jackie: Year, year and a half.

Grosvenor: Maybe a year and a half, I think, yes. I think the rent was \$25 a month, something like that. [laughter]

Dziedzic: Amazing!

Grosvenor: Yes, it was amazing, because it was just endless. I mean, oh gosh, and then breaking out the wall, and having the roof next door, and then finding there's a hatch in the roof, and you can go down to that floor in that building, and that room is empty. Oh, fantastic, it just goes on, and on, and on. [laughter]

Dziedzic: Wow. When did you start making sculpture?

Grosvenor: I started just a little bit at [00:11:00] Front Street. I'm not sure quite what year that is, maybe 1963 or something, '62? Something like that. I started kind of putting things together a little bit.

Jackie: Probably '62.

Grosvenor: But nothing very important, certainly.

Dziedzic: What sort of materials were you using?

Grosvenor: I think I was using probably plywood and two-by-fours, the material that I used for a long period of time, I guess. Yes.

Dziedzic: And what about the scale of the work? I think this would be things that you maybe don't consider to be "work," but—

Grosvenor: Yes, I think they were probably quite large, six feet high and six feet long, something like that. Nothing that could go on the table. Usually something that went on the floor that was sort of large, I guess, yes. Large.

Dziedzic: Were you making outdoor work at that time?

Grosvenor: No, I never was making any outdoor work at all. [00:12:00] I was always indoors, there was nothing outdoors, except the street, so you know, I never went out to the country much. I was just pretty much in the city here.

Dziedzic: And what were you doing when you weren't making art?

Grosvenor: When I wasn't making art? [laughter]

Dziedzic: Well, entertain the question.

Grosvenor: Oh I don't know—I really don't know. I was doing what everybody else was doing. Had a good time, I suppose, yes.

Dziedzic: I'm curious to know how you learned how to do the kinds of construction and engineering that went into the works that you made. I'm just wondering if you had jobs in construction, or—

Grosvenor: I had odd sort of carpentry jobs. I guess I learned from that. And I learned from the people that I was working with. And it was quite simple, just the saw and the drill, and basic tools. And other people were around me, they were doing it, and I was sort of learning [00:13:00] from them, I guess. Yes. And so, I applied that to the sculptures that I was putting together. Yes. There wasn't really any engineering to it, I don't think. People have mentioned that to me, but it's pretty basic, actually. Quite basic.

Dziedzic: So you were working out the kind of balance, and the construction of the sculptures, just sort of by feel?

Grosvenor: I think by feel. Most of the things I do is through my instinct, or intuition, I think. You know, I don't really have any program or something.

Dziedzic: I think that's perfectly okay. [laughter]

Grosvenor: Is that okay?

Dziedzic: Yes. And then I'd saw in the interview with Hans Obrist about *Topanga* (1965) being your first sculpture.

Grosvenor: I would think so, yes. That was the first sculpture.

Dziedzic: I wondered if I could ask you [00:14:00] about maybe not so much what it was about that sculpture that made it your first your first work but—

Grosvenor: Oh, I think I moved it to a different place on Broome Street, and it was a huge empty loft, again. I happened to be looking through a magazine, and I saw a small photograph of Kitt Peak Observatory, and I thought oh, that's kind of interesting, you know? And I thought I could do it without resting the diagonal, the bottom of the diagonal, on the ground. And so, I put that together. That was sort of the first, I would say, work of mine, completed work. Yes. But I sort of copied a photograph. And I actually thought that people will never know this, you know? Kitt Peak Observatory, nobody knows about that. But of course it's a great, fantastic thing. But it's all right. I've copied a lot of things [00:15:00] making various sculptures. I've copied a lot of things. But I think people do that, don't they? Either wittingly or unwittingly.

Dziedzic: And what was it that you were not quite getting, I guess, in your earlier work, that that work illustrated for you?

Grosvenor: I don't understand, sorry. Oh, maybe I do. Maybe it was just such a clear image, the observatory. It was just so clear. And then I thought yellow and silver, and I thought I could do it. And I did it, and people sort of responded to it, I think. It was clear, whereas the earlier work was just confused, and confusing, you know? To me, and to people who looked at it, I think, it wasn't a very—it wasn't very good, but it was just a beginning really, yes.

Dziedzic: I think it's interesting, because they really do have the same shape, the observatory and your work. [00:16:00] They're clearly the same shape and the area of focus is—or one of the areas of focus is so small, the space between the floor and the bottom of the diagonal.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: Sure. So I'm wondering if that was, like you're saying to me, you know, I thought I could do it, I thought I could build this shape—

Grosvenor: I thought I could do it. And then I found, like you're saying, that space between the floor and the bottom of the diagonal was an important area. A nice thing to look at, or to think about. So that cropped up in works later on. The next work was a work that was a diagonal from the ceiling, and then up again almost to the ceiling. Which was a black and red sculpture, in the show at the Jewish Museum.

Dziedzic: [00:17:00] Of course I've just seen photographs of that, but you know, to me, it's like a crowded exhibition in a sense, because there's so many things that have come from that—art historical trajectories, I'd say. But then also there's so much sculpture in those spaces, [laughter] it feels—looks full to me.

Grosvenor: Well, I didn't feel that way particularly, because I felt it was a huge room, with a high ceiling in the museum. There were other floors where maybe things were crowded, but I didn't really go to those floors. I was working on that in the installation, and it was really, it was beautifully set up, Walter De Maria's portrait of John Cage, you saw immediately at the door, and then [Donald] Judd behind it, I believe. And I'm only talking about [00:18:00] the sculptures that I remember. There was a [Ronald] Bladen, and then there was my piece.

[Side conversation]

Grosvenor: But there seemed to be plenty of space. And occasionally they would move a piece in, and look at it for a while, and then they'd take it out—fortunately, they'd move a sculpture from downstairs, and they'd look at it, and no, they don't want that. So there was actually plenty of room, it wasn't crowded at all, I didn't think. Might have been downstairs, but I don't know about those.

Dziedzic: It could be that I'm inferring that it feels intellectually crowded. [laughter] Maybe not physically crowded.

Grosvenor: Maybe. Intellectually crowded, I suppose. In retrospect, one thinks of that, yes.

Dziedzic: Sure, yes, exactly. Only in retrospect. But I did wonder what the feeling was like, I guess, before that exhibition happened. Was there any kind of communication between the artists that were involved, or any sense [00:19:00] that it would be as important as it turned out to be?

Grosvenor: I don't think there was. At least I didn't feel that way. It was one of the first exhibitions for me, but I didn't think it was going to be that important at all. No, I had no idea. I thought it was nice being next to Ronnie Bladen, and that's about as far as I went on that. I didn't realize that, no.

Dziedzic: I wanted to ask too if there was any work that you discovered through that exhibition that you then, followed?

Grosvenor: I don't know if Tony Smith was in that exhibition or not. Maybe not, I'm not sure.

Dziedzic: I don't know.

There was a British component to—

Grosvenor: There was a lot of British people, yes. Quite a few British sculptors whose names I really—

Jackie: Do you remember any of the names?

Grosvenor: No, I'm trying to think. Yes. [laughter] Sorry. No, I should though.

Dziedzic: That's all right. And you went on to show with some of those sculptors [00:20:00] too in group shows, I think Bladen and also [David] von Schlegell.

Grosvenor: Yes, yes.

Dziedzic: So, what was the experience of having these group shows, and what sort of coordination went into that? I'm asking very generally.

Grosvenor: Yes. I'm trying to think.

Dziedzic: You know, in part because your work now seems—it's solo, it's presented in this particular way.

Grosvenor: Yes. It was a lot of work. It was a lot of carpentry, it was a lot of putting things together for particular shows. Some of those early works of mine were difficult to move. It was easier to put the thing together onsite. So, it was fun though, you know? I enjoyed doing it. Sorry, I have difficulty with that question, I guess.

Dziedzic: It's all right. What prompted you to move your studio to Soho?

Grosvenor: I think because, [00:21:00] again, I think I ran into a couple of friends, and they said it's so great up on Broome Street, it's so great, you got to look around. And so, I just looked around, and all the businesses were failing that used to occupy those lofts, you just walked from one to the next and see—fourth floor's nice, because it's a nice view. But the second floor is good, too, because it's so close to the street, you know, deciding which ones to get, I guess. So I ended up on, I think, on the second floor there. Which was great.

Dziedzic: And that's where you lived also?

Grosvenor: Yes, yes, I lived there too. Right.

Dziedzic: I did want to ask a little bit about moving the work around. Getting it in and out, which I guess is still an issue for a lot of people, especially in New York, where you have elevators or windows to lower the work through.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: And you said there was kind of an outdoor space in Soho, like a roof space? Or was that kind of a theoretical roof space? [laughter]

Grosvenor: Yes, that wasn't [00:22:00] really my concern for art. It was just a place to go up, and it was very nice on the roof, right? And look around and stuff. But it wasn't a place for art. But at Broome Street Jim Rosenquist had the floor above me on Broome Street, and he put a work on the roof at Broome Street, which was very beautiful. I think the name of that work is *Tumbleweed*. Which was an extraordinary sculpture. It was shown at the Green Gallery.

Dziedzic: Can you describe it? I'm not familiar with it.

Grosvenor: Yes, I think it was two-by-fours, they were crossed two-by-fours. Maybe wrapped with barbed wire, and then there was some neon going through it. I think, yes, the name of it is *Tumbleweed*. You can see it, it's a very beautiful work.

Dziedzic: I will look it up.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: So what lead you then to [00:23:00] start making work that was outdoors? How did that space to do that come about?

Grosvenor: I think I was asked by Storm King, perhaps. Do you think? If I'd come up and have a look at Storm King. And then I was asked to do this [indicating sculpture from 1969 in Guiberson Collection]. I was given the outdoor space for that. This came before Storm King, I believe. I believe, I'm not sure of the dates.

Dziedzic: Yes, I think this is—it could be that this one was first, and this is—

Grosvenor: I don't know, it doesn't really matter, does it?

Dziedzic: [laughter] Well—

Grosvenor: Thanks. Oh no, this is not. [00:24:00] It doesn't really—they're pretty close.

Dziedzic: Sure, yes. And, but do you think that the—

Grosvenor: I thought this was first, maybe. This came before Storm King, it was an open sort of thing.

Dziedzic: We're looking at the piece from the Hornick Collection [from 1970–72].

Grosvenor: This is from the Hornick Collection.

Dziedzic: Yes. So, this was a commission too.

Grosvenor: Yes, it was. And we don't know what happened to it. We don't know whether it was cut down, or whether it still exists. It's not far from Storm King, right?

Dziedzic: That's right.

Grosvenor: It's in New Jersey maybe? Do you know whether that exists or not, that collection?

Dziedzic: I asked David Collens about it, and maybe he thought that when the family passed away, that maybe Paula Cooper bought it back?

Grosvenor: Bought it back? Bought this back?

Dziedzic: Or that it may have come through the gallery again.

Grosvenor: Because I talked to Paula Cooper, not long ago about this, and she said oh, [00:25:00] we're working on that, we don't know where it is, or something like that. I don't know.

Dziedzic: Oh, oh, okay. Well, that was just speculation, I think, on our part that maybe that's where it ended up. But—

Grosvenor: Yes, that was quite a nice collection, as I remember.

Dziedzic: Yes, this is, that location is off the Palisades Parkway.

Grosvenor: Oh, ok.

Dziedzic: Yes, it's up there somewhere.

Grosvenor: I remember we went there once, didn't you go with me [talking to Jackie]? Because I wanted to photograph it.

Jackie: I think we did go there.

Grosvenor: And the butler came out and said to me, "You, I almost shot you," he said. He said, "We shoot people who come on this property." I said, "I'm sorry, I'm just the artist."

Dziedzic: Yes, it's in the New City, New York.

Grosvenor: New City, is that it?

Dziedzic: So, that was a commission also?

Grosvenor: Yes, it was. Yes.

Dziedzic: Was that the first time that you made work that was outdoors?

Grosvenor: I think so, yes. That was the first time. Yes. [00:26:00] It's very similar to the Storm King sculpture [Untitled, 1970].

Dziedzic: I think this one is steel, and the other one is painted aluminum.

Grosvenor: I think this one is painted aluminum, yes.

Dziedzic: Yes. So, I'm interested in how did you make these? Or did you work with a fabricator?

Grosvenor: This, the one at the Hornick's in New City, this was done by a fabricator. This one in Rhode Island, aluminum piece, was done by a fabricator. As was the Storm King sculpture. So I felt a little distant, I don't think I was very comfortable working like that. I think I like to make things myself. But this was a little bit over my capabilities at the time.

Dziedzic: Yes, I think that's I-beams welded together.

Grosvenor: I think that this sculpture is long lost, and I think this one is long lost, too. [00:27:00]

Dziedzic: You worked with the Lippincott foundry for those?

Grosvenor: I worked with Lippincott with the Hornick, I believe. And this one I can't remember who I worked with. Another small foundry, I think in Brooklyn.

Jackie: And what about the Storm King piece?

Grosvenor: What about the Storm—it was Lippincott, too.

Jackie: That was Lippincott.

Dziedzic: Did that connection come about through the gallery? When did Paula Cooper start showing your work?

Grosvenor: When the gallery first started. She was the director of a group called the Park Place Gallery, which was in the '60s, mid-'60s, I guess. And then when—and then she called it, she started her own gallery—and Park Place sort of dispersed. I think people wanted to go to the West, to something, you know, to Colorado, the freedom of the West. Something like that. I don't know. [laughter]

Dziedzic: And you'd been there already, right?

Grosvenor: Yes. I loved it. [00:28:00] But they really got into that, they loved that stuff.

Dziedzic: Oh, you mean the earthworks?

Grosvenor: Well, not earthworks so much as just the sky, and the desert. I didn't go out there. But—

Dziedzic: Did you think about these as earthworks?

Grosvenor: Earthworks? No, I don't think there was any earth really involved, was there? I don't know. I think of earthworks as sort of moving the earth around, I guess.

Dziedzic: I ask in part because I've seen that written in some way, and it surprised me, so I wondered if you had any feeling about that.

Grosvenor: About earthworks?

Dziedzic: About these outdoor works being earthworks.

Grosvenor: I never thought—I did do one work that was sort of an earthwork, which was a buried steel plate, a trapezoid that was buried in the earth, where you see just the top view, and this is all underground. I guess that was sort of an [00:29:00] earthwork. [laughter] But these, actually I don't think

about these three sculptures too much at all. Storm King, or these other two, I don't know. I think it was just sort of something I had to get through, you know? I don't want to put them down, but it was a brief—well, anyway. I don't know what I'm saying. Okay. What's the next question? [laughter]

Dziedzic: Well, I guess of course, since this is my focus, I'm looking some kind of relationality to other things that you've done.

Grosvenor: Right, yes.

Dziedzic: And of course, this work, I can't remember the place where you did it.

Grosvenor: Holland.

Dziedzic: Yes. That one, you know, in particular, I suppose the shapes are similar, and the flatness, I guess—

Grosvenor: Yes, sort of, yes.

Dziedzic: —is similar. And I think I read somewhere that you talked about these sort of works as drawing in space. [00:30:00]

Grosvenor: Yes, that's right.

Dziedzic: So, you know, I suppose I see relevance to some of the works that you've done that were, T-shaped like a T—

Grosvenor: Well, yes, T-shaped, right.

Dziedzic: —sort of with the ends of the T coming down to the ground. So.

Grosvenor: Ends of the T coming down. Well, let's see, I did one ceiling T piece, like that, and the floor was down here. And then I did one floating T piece, if you will [*Floating Red Double T*, 1965-68]. And this was the water here. This is the floor, and this is the ceiling. Is that what you mean?

Dziedzic: Yes. And the floating one is, I think, one of my favorites.

Grosvenor: Oh, that's nice. Yes, I like it too, I guess.

Dziedzic: I wondered if you could talk about how it worked.

Grosvenor: [00:31:00] Well, it was sort of a difficult problem. Wonderful lady's house, and there were lots of sculptures on the lawn outside, and then there was Long Island Sound out in front of the house, and I thought it would be nice to do something out on the water. So, I put this together, fabricated it myself. It was a floating element underneath the water that you didn't see that kept it supported. It lasted only a very short time, but luckily we got one photograph of it, which is the one photo. But, you know, it's kind of interesting to watch the movement of these two things, I think.

Dziedzic: Yes, I would have loved to see that. I've just seen a black and white photograph of it.

Grosvenor: That's the one photo.

Dziedzic: Yes. But they were red, right?

Grosvenor: Were they red? I guess they were, that's right. [laughter]

Dziedzic: And I think that's kind of what [00:32:00] led me to want to ask you a little bit about the other artists that worked with kind of water images. Because that's a part of your photography too, it seems.

Grosvenor: Who—oh yes. Like who—what other artists?

Dziedzic: Well, like I mentioned, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, working with the water in a lot of ways, and—

Grosvenor: Really?

Dziedzic: —and then I also thought of artists like Susan Philipsz¹, who does sound work, but in some cases, in particular places, outdoor spaces, over water.

Grosvenor: Huh, I don't know that work, I don't think. Sound near water, huh? That sounds interesting.

Dziedzic: There was something at Governor's Island since it's been open, and having art installed, that was going out towards the water, and it was a sense [00:33:00] of indecipherability, I suppose, because of the way that the water—

¹ Dziedzic mistakenly said Janet Cardiff instead of Susan Philipsz

Grosvenor: It sounds beautiful.

Dziedzic: Yes, it was, it was really beautiful.

Grosvenor: I don't know that artist's work, I'm afraid. And I don't know, I also don't know of Gonzalez-Torres' work with water.

Dziedzic: He took a lot of snapshots also, and sent them to people, and sometimes those became puzzles that were then put together, and I think the theme kind of comes up even with the curtains, the beaded curtains that he did. There's kind of a Florida water connection too, a little bit.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: I think, as I mentioned, I worked with his work a bit, so there's a lot of different areas that you can think about with his work, I think.

Grosvenor: I see. Now you mentioned a Robert Barry a while ago, I think. And did Robert Barry do a piece where water was dripping over a light fixture, and then onto some rugs? Or was it [00:34:00] someone else? That was a beautiful piece with the water. Do you remember that?

Jackie: I don't remember that.

Grosvenor: That was at the Castelli Gallery some year ago.

Dziedzic: I don't know if that was him, but it reminds me of the releasing, in the desert of, was it water—mist, or air, or something like that? That's the work that I know of his, that it just sounds like the desert parallel to what you just described. [laughter]

Grosvenor: Because I know Robert Morris did something with mist in the air, or fog, right? I believe?

Dziedzic: Oh, I don't know.

Grosvenor: Okay. But this was beautiful inside. It is a lightbulb hanging, just a lightbulb, and water was coming down the cord from the ceiling. And then around the lightbulb, and then dripping down onto carpeting that was kind of messed up, and it was really one of the sculptures that has stuck with me. And I think it's Robert Barry, but I'm not sure. It might be Robert Whitman though, I don't know. [00:35:00]

Dziedzic: I don't know of Robert Whitman's sculptures.

Grosvenor: Maybe it's not Robert Whitman.

Dziedzic: He was part of the Happenings, I know.

Grosvenor: Ok.

Dziedzic: Well, we both got some research to do!

Grosvenor: Research to do. [laughter]

Dziedzic: So, I guess I'm looking back over your work with monovision for this [Storm King] project, and I was thinking about the kind of horizontal elements that those pieces, I think, made very obvious, made very clear, and that seems like a theme that's come through your work to today, that—

Grosvenor: Yes, it always has. Yes, always has.

Dziedzic: I'm wondering about the relationship between [00:36:00] these works, and the timber wood pieces.

Grosvenor: Oh, that's a tough one. You mean from what I'm doing now, or these works we've been talking about on the timber?

Dziedzic: The works we've been talking about, the kinds of lines in the landscape.

Grosvenor: How did the timber pieces start? Oh.

Dziedzic: Well, where did you get the wood? That's my first question.

Grosvenor: Well, there was so much destruction of smaller buildings in the city at that time, that a lot of that wood was saved, and taken to a secondhand lumber place. Which there were several of these places in Brooklyn, and it was very, very inexpensive, and they wanted you to take this material away. So I was just lucky to run into very inexpensive material, and I thought I could change the direction of-- [00:37:00] instead of an absolutely straight line, I could slightly change the direction of my breaking the wood. So, I worked like that for a while. And then, instead of using one piece of wood, one log, I put several logs together to make more of a mass.

Dziedzic: And the creosote, was that something that you added to the wood?

Grosvenor: Yes, I always added that. I don't know why. [laughter] I think I liked the color of it or something. The smell was pretty strong. Pungent. [laughter] And then I found out it was dangerous, too. It's not a good material to be around. But it was just a secondary thing. Somehow I liked the color. And then, the color that it gave the wood. [00:38:00] And then I found I could use motor oil, and it was just as good, and not as dangerous, so I sort of changed that.

Dziedzic: I wondered if that had any kind of connection to the growing up in the West.

Grosvenor: Not really. I mean some people call them railroad ties, but they're never railroad ties. I never used a railroad tie. And railroad ties are deeply steeped in creosote, but I just sort of put it on with a rag, very lightly. But I never, they were always described as being made of railroad ties, I never thought of that, I never used that. Never did.

Dziedzic: And so they also weren't telephone poles, either?

Grosvenor: Yes, some of them were telephone poles, that's right. Yes.

Dziedzic: And you'd come across those in the same kind of way as the other ones?

Grosvenor: Yes, there were places that actually had those for sale. So, I was surprised to find that out, but [00:39:00] it was good for me. Yes.

Dziedzic: The telephone pole store?

Grosvenor: [laughter] Yes. Yes. Staten Island, and places like that.

Dziedzic: That was the early '70s, wasn't it? The mid '70s.

Grosvenor: Yes, I think so.

Dziedzic: When did you move your studio to Brooklyn?

Grosvenor: What year would that have been, Jackie, do you know? That would have been—God, '75? Or no, I don't know.

Jackie: I'd say '75, '76.

Grosvenor: That's right. Really?

Jackie: We were on Broadway, living on Broadway.

Grosvenor: Oh, that's right.

Jackie: I think it was '75.

Grosvenor: And yes, about '75, and that was another building where you had your pick of floors there. That was wonderful. Nobody was there. It was great. And then there was an outdoor yard next door, nobody cared, it was wonderful. And then plenty of telephone poles around. [00:40:00] It was nice.

Dziedzic: You said it was on Broadway, in Williamsburg?

Grosvenor: No, we lived in Manhattan, we lived on Broadway. And then Williamsburg was South 3rd Street. And then I expanded from South 3rd Street to South 2nd Street. [laughter] Just went on and on. This is like being in Front Street earlier on. Williamsburg was nothing at that time. I mean, it was good though. We had boats, and cars, we had everything. Junkyards, and it was fantastic. [laughter] And then Bill Jensen moved in. I invited him there, invited Jim Clark there, both of those guys had a great time there.

Dziedzic: [00:41:00] So how did these, the timber beams, get outside?

Grosvenor: How did they get outside?

Dziedzic: How did you start showing them outside?

Grosvenor: How do you want to answer that, Jackie? Timber beams outside. Maybe I was invited to a couple of shows that people asked me, can these things go outside? I think it was as simple as that. And so we put them on the lawn, which was a little bit unusual to me, but it seemed to work, sort of. It seemed to work. So, we did do—I did do them inside and outside, both. Both places.

Jackie: *documenta* [6], right?

Grosvenor: There was a show in, yes, Rhode Island.

Jackie: *documenta*, and outside.

Dziedzic: Part of why I'm asking is I guess, just to get a sense of [00:42:00] the function of outdoor work for you. And then the other part is conservation-minded questions for your work that's at Storm King.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: So, just the—as someone who, you know, lives with my partner's studio in our apartment, getting things outside, building them in a small space, these are all kinds of concerns. So it sounds like your studio situation enabled you to build work that was just as big as anything, any space that you might have outdoors.

Grosvenor: Yes, yes.

Dziedzic: But that putting it outdoors maybe wasn't necessarily—you didn't design the work with the outdoors in mind, an outdoor space in mind.

Grosvenor: No. And especially now, I feel very uncomfortable with the outdoors. I'll show you an outdoor studio that I have. But, I don't like the wind, and I don't like the rain, and the work is very delicate now, so I don't have any feeling for the outdoors, really, too much. Certainly not for my work. [00:43:00] It's much too delicate, you know, so—but at that time, things were just more open, it seems, and I had more opportunities to do things outside. I've never had a request to do anything outside, have I? In years, since Storm King, that was the only thing I ever did. You know, really, pretty much. Nobody's ever said, asked me to do anything. No. And I'm perfectly happy with that, actually. Funnily enough.

It's, does that—

Dziedzic: Yes.

Grosvenor: So you're dealing with a situation where your partner makes sculpture in your apartment, and he'd rather have more space, or something? Is that it, or?

Dziedzic: [laughter] Well, sure. But I was using that as an example to belabor the point of the kinds of limitations that artists face—to build their work where it will eventually be installed, [00:44:00] that there's often a lot of: we'll build it out here, but then we'll install it in there.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: And then once you move it to that space, whether it's indoors or outdoors, outdoors, there may be some just adjusting that happens, or some changes that are made.

Grosvenor: Oh, I see. I rarely run into that problem, I guess.

Dziedzic: And like you were saying before, in some cases, your work was too big to build in the studio, so you'd build it wherever it was going to be installed.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: I read a bit about the wooden piece that you did in Fresno, where you talk about the hard pan.

Grosvenor: Yes, right.

Dziedzic: And so, that seems kind of like a discovery of that landscape, in a sense.

Grosvenor: Yes, yes. Forestiere Gardens are there, you've heard of that place? No? It's sort of like the Watts Towers in a way. It's a singular person who made an incredible situation for a loved one. And used the hardpan, dug into the [00:45:00] earth, and created beautiful gardens. It was windy there, so they had to put the gardens underground, but he had to have an opening. It was very beautiful. One of the great spots in America, actually, Forestiere Gardens, Watts Towers. I was always lucky enough to find places that were very expansive, so that I could do pretty much what I wanted to do, I think. As far as studio goes, inside and outdoors, I guess. But I don't have any interest really in the outdoors. I like it in Florida, because the water is right there. You know, and it's nice and calm, and stuff. So I can take photographs and things.

Dziedzic: I think that some of the writing about your early work takes the architecture of the space, the gallery space, into account. Particularly the cantilevered pieces that are a certain distance from the floor, a certain distance from the ceiling.

Grosvenor: Yes. [00:46:00]

Dziedzic: So I just was curious about do you have those concerns when you're working outside? How do you deal with the fact that you don't have those walls confining you? I'm interested in hearing about that maybe in the context of the Storm King piece, too. Because in a sense, it's—

Grosvenor: That's a big question, that spans a lot of things.

Dziedzic: I know.

Grosvenor: Sometimes, some of the ceiling pieces were designed for particular ceiling height. And then they went to another space where the ceiling was maybe a little higher. So, I didn't have the relationships with the floor, say, that I needed. Like the Whitney did something, a sculpture of mine, where the ceiling was a little bit high, but it still looked okay, but it wasn't perfect, because the original installation was built for an original situation. And then at the Whitney, it was a little different. But it was okay. [00:47:00] And so that's happened a few times. As far as Storm King goes, I think I went to Storm King with two two-by-fours, and some clothesline, and we planted one, and two, and then stretched the clothesline across. And that was it, that was the sculpture, pretty much.

I wondered if you ever got anywhere with, did I talk to you about the photographs from that guy? What happened with that, anything?

Dziedzic: His son did write back to me, and said that he did have his father's collection of photographs, and I think it had been moved a couple of times, so he was meaning to go through them all at some point. We didn't get the photographs. But I did get a response from him, at least.

Grosvenor: Yes. Maybe you should—I mean if you're interested, keep after him.

Dziedzic: I certainly will, [00:48:00] yes.

Grosvenor: Because yes, his father was very important to me, and very helpful. And I think there could be some information, valuable information.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: Now was that a photographer that you brought with you that day?

Grosvenor: His father, Larry Cox, was a photographer, and a good friend. And yes, he was a photographer. Is that your question? Yes, yes.

Dziedzic: Well, but he came—you brought him with you to take photos of that day? Or was he—

Grosvenor: I brought him with me, because we needed me on one end of the clothesline, and him on the other end, [00:49:00] and he had his camera with him, and he took some photographs, I think. [laughter]

Dziedzic: Well, that answers that. And—

Grosvenor: [laughter] That answers that.

Dziedzic: [laughter] You need two people for two two-by-fours. And now, how did the commission with Storm King come about? It sounded like you weren't part of the negotiation so much. But what do you remember of that?

Grosvenor: I think Paula Cooper handled the negotiations. I'm not sure whether I actually met Mr. [Ralph E.] Ogden. I think, I don't know whether I did or not. I did make a model of the sculpture, which I gave to him. And he gave it back to me. And there was really little negotiation as I remember, at all. There was nothing much at all. [00:50:00] I think Paula Cooper handled it mostly, all of it. Yes.

Dziedzic: I do think we have a drawing.

Grosvenor: Oh yes?

Dziedzic: Maybe the masking tape drawing of the sculpture that you did, that it somehow came back to us in the '80s.

Grosvenor: Oh, really?

Dziedzic: I wasn't able to find it yesterday but, I believe we do have it. Is that what you mean by a model?

Grosvenor: No, this was a model made out of wood, I think it was about this big. And, which is long since destroyed, I think, yes.

Dziedzic: That's too bad. And that was the one site—where you ultimately built the work—that was the only site that interested you?

Grosvenor: Well, I mean the—as I remember, Storm King was rather empty at that time. I mean there were some things there, and I remember driving into Storm King, and looking to the right, and that seemed like a nice flat area, I think. So, [00:51:00] we started, you know, thinking about that. I didn't go any further into Storm King, I think. And then Dorothy Mayhall would bring the cookies down to Larry and myself, which was very nice. [laughter]

Dziedzic: Did you have a reputation for liking cookies, or was that just a gesture?

Grosvenor: No, I think she did that. That was her way of being so nice, I think.

Dziedzic: I think, often at Storm King, there's that sort of consideration. Which is kind of a—visiting a family house kind of feeling.

Grosvenor: That's nice.

Dziedzic: When did you come out with the two-by-fours? Do you remember that time?

Grosvenor: I don't remember the year—the date, I'm afraid I don't. It would be Lippincott—would probably be six months [00:52:00] before Lippincott started, started work on the sculpture, I think.

Dziedzic: Do you remember what season it was?

Grosvenor: I think it was the summertime probably, must have been, yes. I think, I don't remember. Not coats and jackets, I think it was either spring or summer probably, you know?

Dziedzic: Were you concerned about the—at the time, there was a lot of Storm King that was kind of dug up, and being built. Now it's pretty much landscaped. But did you have any concerns about kind of competing with the landscape in a way?

Grosvenor: No, not at all. I mean, it was just a beautiful flat area. And there was sort of like mountains in the distance, I believe, or hills, sort of, and that gave it a nice feeling, too. And then I remember the driveway went up to the house, and there was sort of a circular area, and I think, and I heard that Cristo was going to—there was a depression, maybe, in the (inaudible). And he was going to fill it up [00:53:00] with oil drums. And then that never happened. And I always thought that gee, that maybe should have, you know?

Dziedzic: I'd never heard that before.

Grosvenor: Yes, then they filled in the area. They filled in the depression. Made a sort of hill out of it. And I think another sculptor put a sculpture on there. I don't know what's there now.

Dziedzic: How did you deal with the scale and the size? How did you know how to make it that size?

Grosvenor: Well, I think by just stepping back to the driveway, and realizing the amount of space we had, and just trying to get some sort of proportion there—something that related to the background, the hills in the background, and I think there was also a hill to the left. Just a size that fits. [00:54:00] It was similar to working in a room, to doing an exhibition in a room. Or a gallery, I think. It was just a larger, you know, a larger size.

Dziedzic: There's pictures in the back of this binder, I'm not sure if you saw them, all the way at the end, that are sculpture in the snow.

Grosvenor: Yes. Oh, good. This refreshes our—ok. I see. Okay. Yes, we're on the top of the hill, that's right.

Dziedzic: Yes, so the driveway is down here.

Grosvenor: Yes. Oh, that's right. Yes. Okay. I get it.

Dziedzic: Did you have any other sites that you thought might be—that you considered to site the work?

Grosvenor: No, I must have driven in, and seen [00:55:00] this site to the left, and I just immediately responded to it, and I liked it. And I think went up to the house to talk with someone, I think, and then this just seemed like a natural spot for it. So there was no consideration, and no—I wasn't thinking about other places at all, just this spot looked good. And these squares were not there at that time.

Dziedzic: There's some, I think the date of the work is 1970. I know there was some discussion about that years ago, or something.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: Hammering out that detail, that the work had been—that you'd thought of it a few years prior. When you were commissioned to do this, this became the site where this work would come to fruition—be built. Does that sound like the right timeline to you, or?

Grosvenor: I think earlier [00:56:00] seems better, but maybe 1970. I think '68, don't you think? I think there's a plaque or something, isn't there a little sign that says 1968, near the sculpture? I thought so, I don't know.

Dziedzic: It might say 1970.

Grosvenor: I don't know. I'm sorry, I can't answer that exactly. No.

Dziedzic: But it wasn't that you had a drawing that you then said oh, aha, I'll build this at Storm King.

Grosvenor: No, no. God, no.

Dziedzic: It was—

Grosvenor: No, no, it was just—you know, being invited to go there, and going up there, seeing this nice spot, you know? And then, going with my friends and stringing it out, and it was as simple as that. There wasn't any, you know, preliminary things—oh, I think I'll do something like this and then thinking oh boy, I'll do that up at Storm King. No, there was nothing like that at all. No, nothing like that.

Dziedzic: [00:57:00] How did you work on it? I guess between the time that you came there—between the time that the commission started, and the time that it was actually planned out with Lippincott?

Grosvenor: Well, I guess I probably had a piece of paper with me, and a pencil, and I—the longest points, I forget whatever dimension that was, and then the height that we figured out, and then the length of the mass in the middle. So there were several numbers that I wrote down, and took them to Lippincott. It was quite simple. Yes.

Dziedzic: Did you ever have any interaction with the landscape architect at Storm King? His name is Bill Rutherford.

Grosvenor: Never heard of him, no. Oh, he's a landscape architect?

Dziedzic: Yes, he was the one that was kind of moving the earth around, basically, to give Storm King the kind of—

Grosvenor: No, [00:58:00] I never heard, no. Nothing.

Dziedzic: I mean, this is a pretty untouched area here, I think it's around the corner where, like you said, that's where the gravel pit was.

Grosvenor: I see. Yes.

Dziedzic: How did you decide on the materials? I guess I'd like to hear about this day, this was March 28th, '74.

Grosvenor: I see. It seems pretty clear that it would be made out of steel. I mean, with more time I suppose I could have mocked it up out of plywood and looked at it for a while, but there didn't seem to be a need to. Steel seemed to be the way to go. I mean, it was economical, and it's lasted for a long time. It's simple as that, really.

Dziedzic: How did you decide that you would paint it? [00:59:00]

Grosvenor: Because I liked the black, I guess. I did do some black, some works that were painted black, and I felt comfortable with that color. Or non-color, whatever.

Dziedzic: I'd read that you enjoyed painting it, too, since it was a way for you to finally be engaged—

Grosvenor: Yes, at least to be—and to physically, with a roller. I think at one point I did go up and paint it with a couple of friends, we had some fun. And it was good to be in touch with the work, which I hadn't been before, really.

Dziedzic: So you do your own fabrication for sculpture, is that right?

Grosvenor: I make my own work, yes. Which, people find unusual, I don't know why. But, anyway. Yes, I do, I enjoy doing it, too. I like to make stuff. Yes.

Dziedzic: [01:00:00] Let's see here. I have a lot of smaller questions I think about Storm King—

Grosvenor: Sure.

Dziedzic: Were you in conversation with anybody about the base of the work? The structural aspects—

Grosvenor: Underneath, you mean?

Dziedzic: Yes.

Grosvenor: Like the—no, not at all. I think that was done by Lippincott. The foundations I suppose, you know, that was all done by him. I had nothing to do with that at all, no.

Dziedzic: Can you kind of take me through some of the photos of installing the work in here?

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: I think they're somewhat in order. I guess that's you and Dorothy Mayhall.

Grosvenor: That's right, it was a cold day, I guess. Yes. I don't think [01:01:00] I was there the day this was done.

Dziedzic: I think these were all the same day. It may have been a different time of day. I wonder.

Grosvenor: I think this was done, Lippincott maybe here. Was Mr. Ogden was alive at this point, do you think? I don't know.

Dziedzic: You know what? He died right around that time. Could have been the following year. It was either '74 or '75.

Grosvenor: And what did he do actually, Mr. Ogden?

Dziedzic: Well, he had a factory nearby called Star Expansion. And they manufactured fasteners, like screws and—

Grosvenor: Oh, okay.

Dziedzic: So, he moved the factory up there at some point. Lived there, and had a working farm, and acquired this land with the house [Museum Building] on it and started the Art Center. Started it in 1960. [01:02:00]

Grosvenor: I know I wasn't there when this was going on. Wow, well that's quite impressive, isn't it? You see this one, Jackie?

Jackie: Oh, wow.

Dziedzic: So there are photos of this big central steel piece being brought over and oriented.

Grosvenor: Yes, see? That's kind of good.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: So you think that you weren't there on the day of these.

Grosvenor: I'm pretty sure I wasn't. It was very difficult to get there, you know?

Dziedzic: Yes.

Grosvenor: I mean, we only had a broken down car, and that was about it. You know? [laughter]

Dziedzic: Yes. So then you said you went up there with friends to paint it.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: Do you recall who came with you?

Grosvenor: I think Jene Highstein and Suzanne Harris. And we did take a film of the painting. And then, the film had melted, right? Or something. Just through age, it melted. So, I went to a restorer, and they said this is too far gone. So that's a shame.

Dziedzic: That's too bad.

Grosvenor: It was like an early video. What was that called in those days?

Dziedzic: Digibeta or something?

Grosvenor: What, say that again? [01:04:00]

Dziedzic: Digibeta?

Grosvenor: Something like that.

Dziedzic: Beta something.

Grosvenor: I think so. Betamax or something maybe. I don't know.

Dziedzic: That's a shame. Wow.

Grosvenor: Yes, I know, it was a shame. In fact, she was right in here, we had the damn thing, and now—

Jackie: Oh yes, we had it for a long time.

Grosvenor: And it just sort of melted or something. [laughter] Because we walked all up, you know, we walked across the top. Which I guess some people do, don't they? I don't know.

Dziedzic: Unfortunately yes, some people do.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: Well, I wanted to ask you too about—your work is interacted with very heavily by visitors. You know, people touch it, people go under it, people go around it, on top of it.

Grosvenor: I don't like that at all. I really don't. I really don't. I respect sculptures, and I think other people should too. I absolutely do. [01:05:00] I remember going to Socrates Sculpture Park, and people were sitting all over a Tony Smith sculpture. It really upset me. I don't like that kind of thing at all. No. But, I guess that's what you have to put up with at Storm King. People doing that sort of thing.

Dziedzic: Yes, unfortunately, yes. That's part of the staff that's on the grounds is to keep people from touching the sculpture. I guess that sunscreen is really detrimental to the paint surface.

Grosvenor: Really? Oh. What do people rub their faces on the sculpture?

Dziedzic: [laughter] Well, I think they rub the sunscreen on their hands, and then rub that on their face, and then if they touch the sculpture—

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: Yes. I'd say it's fairly rare, if it does happen.

Grosvenor: Yes. Like there's really quite a nice sculpture of just a roof, you probably know it, right? I can't remember the name of the artist.

Dziedzic: It's Alice Aycock.

Grosvenor: No, it's another artist whose name I can't remember.

Dziedzic: There's another roof that's Heather Hart.

Grosvenor: Maybe that's it, yes.

Dziedzic: Yes, that was kind of like a temporary sculpture from last year.

Grosvenor: I see. Oh, that's just temporary? It's going away. But I noticed when it was up, [01:07:00] railings were put around it, which sort of hurt the sculpture, I felt, because so many people climb on it. But maybe that artist, maybe Heather likes the fact that people climb on it, so.

Dziedzic: It was actually, it had an element of activation to it—

Grosvenor: I see.

Dziedzic: —that you would activate it by engaging with it in a way.

Grosvenor: Okay. So that artist believes in doing that. Climbing around.

Dziedzic: There were performances on that space over the summer, too. Like music performances, things like that.

Grosvenor: I see. So I take the other—I'm opposed to that sort of thing.

Dziedzic: So you loved the house and the roof, but not the—

Grosvenor: Yes, yes. [laughter] But that's okay.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: So, let's see here. With regard to outdoor work, I think you've made this pretty clear, but I just want to ask what amount of weathering [01:10:00] on your sculpture might be okay, and where you feel like it needs to be repainted, or resurfaced, or—

Grosvenor: I think Storm King is taking care of the sculpture very beautifully. And I mean, it's wonderful the surface that you've reached, and the blackness of the thing. I think it's perfect, and I'm very happy with—I'm very happy with that, yes. If that's your question, I think. Yes.

Dziedzic: Yes. And also sometimes with outdoor works, there's a sense that it would become aged looking in some ways, that it will look weathered.

Grosvenor: But I don't think this particular piece would be weathered, not particularly, do you? I think it's beautiful the way you've kept it, yes, I like it.

Dziedzic: Nor would you want it to look weathered.

Grosvenor: No, not weathered, not really.

Dziedzic: We chatted about [01:11:00] some of these things. I did want to ask about, as I mentioned, the Von Schlegell work.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: What I've heard from David [Collens] is that that area with your work, and the Von Schlegell squares, is something that a lot of the artists who have work in Storm King's collection really like. That's their favorite spot. So, I just wondered if the Von Schlegell piece came after your work, what was your thought about how that affected your sculpture?

Grosvenor: It did come after my work. And I don't think—David [Von Schlegell] and I were good friends, but I don't think we discussed this, did we? Particularly? I don't remember talking about this with David. And then, I saw photographs that he'd put his work there, and I think it's fine. I think there's enough [01:12:00] space between the two, and they're not bad together. I think it's okay. Yes, I think it's fine.

Dziedzic: I really love them together.

Grosvenor: I haven't thought about it that much. But okay, I'm glad you do.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: I wondered if you'd like to say what you think about the work now.

Grosvenor: About my work now?

Dziedzic: The work at Storm King, and these kinds of lines. You know, if we could think of these bas being related.

Grosvenor: Quite honestly, [01:14:00] I don't think about it that much. I don't, I'm so involved with what I'm doing lately, I guess. And I'm indoors, particularly. I really don't think about it that. I don't think it's a bad work, I think it's okay. It's acceptable. And I wouldn't have changed it. I feel a little bit distant from it in the way that I didn't build it myself. I couldn't have built it myself. But I wish I had had more of a hand in it, you know? But I feel comfortable with its location, and I feel comfortable with the sculpture in general. I've never heard anybody remark on the sculpture over the last many years, since it's been sitting there. Never heard anything. Maybe you have, but I haven't.

Dziedzic: Well, like I said, from—

Grosvenor: But I don't know what I should hear. [01:15:00]

Jackie: I think certain friends have gone up there.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Jackie: And you referred to the other artists.

Grosvenor: Oh, okay.

Dziedzic: Do you have any feeling about this kind of place-making potential of sculpture—I'm thinking of this [Carl] Andre quote about, he said a sculpture as form, sculpture as structure, sculpture as place. This sense of a sculpture creates a place—whatever it might be, some area of focus, or some kind of forcefield or something.

Grosvenor: That's one of my favorite comments, is that one. [01:16:00] You reversed it a little, it's form, then structure, and then place. No, it's just a wonderful thing, and I believe in it completely, yes.

Absolutely. I mean I've never been able to achieve something like that. But I certainly, I love that statement, yes. I love his work, too.

Dziedzic: I wondered if that applied to the work that you're making now, in a sense.

Grosvenor: I don't think so. Because I'm still constructing, I'm still constructing things. And I'm trying to make the place. I'm sorry, I can't really answer that fully. I can't.

Dziedzic: I know you've kind of pushed back on the idea of, I guess, your work being shelter. Like shelters of some sort.

Grosvenor: People have mentioned that to me, but I've never believed that they are shelters. I mean what are they sheltering, really? I don't see that. [01:17:00] I don't see that, do you?

Dziedzic: Well, you have this other description—that there's a top of a sculpture and it covers what's underneath.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: So, that doesn't have to be a house, or a shelter.

Grosvenor: No.

Dziedzic: It can just be the top of something. And what's underneath.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: You said it more eloquently!

Grosvenor: Did I? I forget what I said. I don't know.

Dziedzic: I could dig around a little bit and find it, it might be helpful if, you know, here, if you have an update to it. I think it was a conversation that happened between you and Joan Pachner at [01:18:00] Storm King.

Grosvenor: I think John Yau said it rather well, that these things are absurd. To think of them as shelters for anything—they don't work as shelters. Which is my hope, that they don't.

Dziedzic: I do want to find that. And I think we're also coming to the end of our conversation here.

Grosvenor: Okay.

Dziedzic: So, let's end on the present, if I have it here.

Grosvenor: I like the story I was told about Nam June Paik. He wanted [01:19:00] some plantings around his sculpture, and I think Storm King did some plantings around it, and he said he didn't like those plantings. So Storm King said, "Well, go to 8th Avenue and get the things that you want." So, he bought some palm trees, and sent them to Storm King. I love that. It's just great, huh?

Dziedzic: [laughter] Are the fake flowers part of the work perpetually?

Grosvenor: I don't know.

Dziedzic: Or maybe those were the replacement for the palm trees.

Grosvenor: Maybe. Sounds good though.

Dziedzic: I liked what John Yau wrote. That the walls, the gallery space is also—becomes part of the sculpture.

Grosvenor: That was nice, wasn't it? I liked that too, yes, we liked that, yes.

Jackie: That was great.

Dziedzic: Yes.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Jackie: Yes.

Dziedzic: Yes.

Grosvenor: It's wonderful to learn from writers, isn't it? To learn things. God.

Dziedzic: Right. This element of, you know, the elements that you use in your sculpture lose their [01:20:00]—sense of instrumentalization. They no longer become the instruments that they are.

Grosvenor: Yes.

Dziedzic: You see them and you buy them to dig a hole, or cover up space, or something. But it's interesting too, thinking about this interview, because there's a way in which your current work kind of takes away language from me. And that's a refreshing thing.

Grosvenor: Yes, it does do that. People—yes, I've heard that too.

Dziedzic: Yes. So there's a sitting-with-it that happens.

Grosvenor: Yes. Maybe that's because—well, I'm not very articulate, you see, and so it's all visual, isn't it? It's—yes, I'm afraid.

Dziedzic: It's refreshing.

Grosvenor: That's good.

Dziedzic: So that any writer can put words to your work is amazing to me. [laughter] [01:21:00]

Grosvenor: Yes it's amazing to me, too.

Dziedzic: But it's good to know that you like that.

Grosvenor: Oh yes, very much.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: All right, let's end there.

Grosvenor: That's it.

Dziedzic: Thank you.

Grosvenor: Thank you. Wonderful questions.

END OF INTERVIEW