

Warren MacKenzie

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Interview with Warren MacKenzie

**Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on December 8, 1994
at the Home of Warren and Nancy MacKenzie**

Warren MacKenzie - WM
Nancy MacKenzie - NM
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: This is December 8, 1994. I'm out at the MacKenzie farm house near Stillwater, Minnesota. You heard Warren's voice, occasionally, not often, in the interview I was doing with Nancy. Now, he's here by himself, and Nancy may interrupt him, and I would invite her to do so.

Warren, as I do with everyone, say something about how early you recognized your talents, and what expression they took, and who encouraged you or who discouraged you, what your ambitions were, etcetera. Yours comes to be a very distinguished career and it's interesting how these things develop.

WM: I'm not sure that I would say I recognized my talents. I can remember back to fourth grade when I was very interested in drawing. As I commented to you, if I think back on them now, the drawings were terrible. [laughter] They were really bad; but, I was convinced that I was going to be a painter or an artist of some sort.

CAC: They were probably better than your classmates' drawings.

WM: I'm not sure about that—but in my mind they were. [laughter] I went through what we now call junior high school and was encouraged by a couple of very good instructors; and then, went on to high school, where I was extremely fortunate because . . .

CAC: What high school was this?

WM: This was New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois.

CAC: Oh, New Trier! That's the greatest high school in the country!

NM: It was then, yes.

WM: I'm not sure what it is now.

CAC: No, no. I'm talking historically. That was a remarkable school system. All right!

WM: I'll intersperse a bit of personal history here. My dad worked for the Crane Corporation, plumbing and heating, and during the Depression got transferred around quite often. Eventually, he got transferred to Chicago. My parents always wanted to live beyond their means, which helped us children; although, we sometimes got embarrassed by it at the time. They wouldn't live in Chicago. They could have lived in the next suburb out which would be Evanston, Illinois, but, instead, they found a house in Wilmette, Illinois. The children from Wilmette, Illinois, when they went to high school, went to New Trier, which was two more towns away.

CAC: Yes.

WM: It was luck. It was dead luck that my parents were so aggressive in that way; although, at the time, as I say, we thought it was a little bit foolish. But, it wasn't foolish; it was very important.

CAC: What years were you in high school there?

WM: I graduated in 1941. At New Trier, there were two very good art instructors, one of whom I became very friendly with. It was a couple who were both teaching in the art department, Frank and Marie Holland. Frank was a most unusual person in that he taught Art History and was himself a painter. He encouraged me and his wife did as well, to pursue art. Meanwhile, my parents were convinced that art was not a viable way to earn a living and I was . . .

CAC: That was a sound perception.

WM: Well, it was. I was fairly good in mathematics; so, they wanted me to pursue mathematics in college and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to go to art school. Frank Holland, who was this instructor who became very good friends with my family, one day said to my parents, "Just give up. He's going to starve to death anyway. He's going to do something in art. Stop worrying about it."

CAC: [laughter]

WM: They took him at his word and allowed me to go on to art school. As I said, I thought I was going to be a painter and I elected to go to the Chicago Art Institute, which was very strong in painting.

CAC: Ahhh.

WM: I was there about a year and one half and, then, got drafted into the army and served three years. When I came back to finish . . .

CAC: Did you have combat service?

WM: No. My eyes were too bad . . . I was, eventually, sent overseas after the war was over and was sent to Japan, which was interesting . . . except that at the time, I didn't know anything about ceramics and wasn't interested in it. I thought I was going to be a painter. I met Japanese artists there after the war, which was, I thought, a very interesting [unclear].

CAC: Oh, my.

WM: No one knew exactly what was going to happen, as you can imagine. The Japanese were nervous. The Americans were nervous.

CAC: Ohhh. What service were you in?

WM: In the army.

CAC: What access did you have to artists? How did you find out where they were and who they were?

WM: When I was in the states, I was put into a print shop where we printed training charts and posters. We went on this way down in Texas. Then, the Battle of the Bulge came along and everyone who was considered to be unnecessary in whatever job they were was immediately sent for retraining as a combat soldier to go over to Europe. I went through that retraining, had turned in my gear, and was told to go home for three days, and report to the port of embarkation. Suddenly, I got called into the office and they said, "Draw your gear again. You can't be a combat soldier because your eyes are not good enough." I could have been a combat soldier, I guess, but they said they had rules. I was stuck back in another print shop and continued with that until the war was over. The minute the war was over, the army's idea was to bring all the combat troops home as rapidly as possibly.

CAC: Sure, I was one of them out there in Japan.

WM: They sent me to Japan to replace somebody. The peculiar thing was, in Japan, they could have said, "Here's a gun. March up and down here. You're going to guard this building," or do something like that or be an MP [military police]. Instead, they had the peculiar idea that every person who came should be put into the category that they had been in in the states. In the states, I was an artist. They had no use for artists in Japan; so, I knocked around for awhile while they were trying to find a slot for me. One day, I was standing in this office waiting to

ask them if they'd found anything. I heard a voice behind me which was a very distinctive voice and it was one of my instructors from the Chicago Art Institute . . .

CAC: Heavens.

WM: . . . who happened to be the first sergeant at a map making outfit stationed right next door. He came in to use the telephone. He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I'm waiting for them to try to find a place for me." He said, "I've got a whole bunch of artists on my map making outfit, and they've been in the war, and they want to go home. I'll requisition you." So, he did and I was stuck there. This outfit was running a printing plant in the back part of the grandstand of the Yokohama race track. It was a big printing outfit that they'd built in there. We were ostensibly in charge of it but the Japanese technicians knew more than any of us did . . .

CAC: I'll bet.

WM: . . . so, they were running it and we were sitting around twiddling our thumbs. One day, the captain in charge of [unclear] came in and he said, "If an inspector ever comes in here and sees you, it's going to be really embarrassing. Find something to do." We said, "Why don't we just go out and draw the Japanese countryside?"

CAC: [gasp]

WM: He said, Fine! Great." We took equipment and we went out and drew everyday . . . painted. What we would do is we'd draw for half a day and, then, we'd go sightseeing. [laughter] That was my life in the army.

NM: Tell him what happened to those drawings and paintings.

WM: They matted them all up and gave them to some commanding general. He was pleased with these and had them printed into a couple of booklets.

CAC: [laughter] So, you were published at a very tender age.

WM: Yes. [laughter] That was my life in Japan at that time. I came back to Chicago and went back to school; but, of course, everyone had come back to school . . .

CAC: Yes.

WM: . . . under the GI Bill. I suddenly found I couldn't get into painting classes; so, I looked at the catalog and said, "Here's a ceramic class. Is that empty?" They said that it wasn't empty but there was room in it; so, I took a ceramic class. There were a number of other people who

were in roughly the same situation. The drawing and painting was very crowded and popular; whereas, the other peripheral classes were not so.

CAC: The peripheral were denigrated because they were craft rather than art?

WM: No, even sculpture, which is a fine art categorized as such, was not a crowded class. Everybody thinks you can draw and paint because you've done it since you were a child. All these kids who came back from the army went into those classes. I got into ceramics and went through their program. It was not a good program. In fact, it was a terrible program really; but, we didn't know it.

CAC: Ah. Looking back upon it, you're making this judgment.

WM: I have said often that in two and one half years of taking ceramics classes there, we never once discussed the aesthetics of pottery. It never entered the classroom situation at all.

CAC: It was all technical?

WM: Technical . . . not even throwing. The person who taught the class could not throw on the wheel. She was an elderly woman; so, she would delegate the teaching of throwing to her assistant, who couldn't throw because that person had learned from another assistant. It was all pretty bad. Fortunately, someone at that time in the class discovered a book by Bernard Leach called *A Potter's Book*. They brought it in and we all went out and bought it and read it. We said, "Wow! this is a much better way to approach this field than what we're doing." We would sneak into school when the instructor was away—she only taught alternate days—and we'd go in the studio and we'd try to do what Leach told us we should be able to do. Of course, we couldn't. We tried and we made a mess but we made a lot of pots. That didn't sit well with the instructor. This was, incidentally, where I met my first wife who happened to be the assistant who was supposed to teach us how to throw but Alex couldn't throw either.

CAC: [laughter]

WM: During the time while we were finishing school, we got married much to my parents' horror . . . getting married while you were in school. We went to live in Chicago with Alex's folks. When we finally finished school completely, we decided what we wanted to do was to start teaching pottery based upon what Leach had written in his book. We wrote to three different places that we had had some contact with and asked them about our prospects to do that. One of the places we wrote to was the Walker Art Center. The Walker Art Center now doesn't show any craft work, isn't interested, and that's a big change that's taken place. But, in 1946, 1947, they were internationally known for what they called their Everyday Art Gallery . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

WM: . . . and a publication which they put out called the *Everyday Art Quarterly*. We wrote to them and we got a favorable response. They said, "We like what you say. Come up and visit." We took the night bus, and came up, and visited. The woman who was in charge of this Everyday art section was named Hilda Rice. She was a graduate of the Bauhaus in Germany. Her orientation was, in a sense, toward industry; but still, she was interested in craft work of any nature. She said, "We have just closed our school and don't have a job for you; but, we'll find a job somewhere." They, eventually, wrote to us and said, "The St. Paul Gallery and School of Art is looking to start up after the war." They had closed down during the war and they were going to start up with craft orientation; so, they hired my wife and myself to come up here and establish a ceramic program. In the course of that, I had to teach other courses. I had to teach a painting course. I had to teach a sculpture course, which I knew nothing about, of course. It didn't take us long to find out that we were not really equipped to teach or to run our own studio.

The first summer we had off, we went to Europe. We'd saved enough money out of a very small salary and we had enough money to go to Europe. The first place we went was to England to the Leach Pottery. We'd written to Leach and said we were interested in coming to study with him. We took examples of our work along. The first thing he said when he looked at our work was, "I'm terribly sorry but we have no room for you." [laughter] That was not true, of course. There was room; but, he was not convinced by our work. We stayed around this small town of St. Ives for two weeks because we had a reservation at a bed and breakfast place. We asked if we could come up to the Pottery everyday and at least learn as much as we could. So, we did. At the end of the second week, they were firing a kiln and Leach was still what we call sitting a kiln watch. His watch from 1:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. to attend the burners on the kiln and make sure that the temperature rose correctly and so on. He said, "Do you want to come talk?" We said, "Of course, we'd love to come talk. It's our last opportunity." We went up the hill, and spent the night with Bernard, and we didn't talk about pottery. We talked about all sorts of other things: politics, the state of the world, economics, and so on. At the end of the evening, 8:00 in the morning I guess, Bernard said, "I've changed my mind. You can come back."

CAC: [laughter]

WM: So, that was how we ended up at the Leach Pottery. We did go back there.

CAC: You'd passed the pre-lims, oral exam.

WM: [laughter] Yes, in spite of the quality of our work. We worked there for two years and a bit.

CAC: Oh, you mean you stayed there? You didn't come back?

WM: No, we came back because we were flat broke at the end of the summer and we had to go back and earn a little money.

CAC: And then you went back?

WM: Yes. An apprentice at the Leach Pottery, at the time when we first went there, earned ten shillings a week. Ten shillings was \$1.40. [laughter] Now, I trust that the government's never going to come after me about this but through Bernard, we worked a bit of a fiddle with the GI Bill because I still had some time coming to me on the GI Bill. There was a terrible provincial art school in the town of Penzance just across the peninsula, which was approved for taking students; so, I registered at that school with the understanding that I would not go there but would work at the Leach Pottery. [laughter]

CAC: They're noted for being pirates, their only [unclear]. [unclear].

WM: [laughter] So, we got some support from the government, which supplemented our apprenticeship wages. Better than working at the Pottery though was the fact that we lived with Bernard Leach. He had just separated from his second wife and we arrived in Southampton on the same boat as he did—he had been in America for a lecture tour—and he said, "Do you have a place to stay?" We said, No, we don't." He said, "Would you want to live with me?" We said, "Of course." So, we lived with him for two years and that was far better than the training in the Pottery. The training in the Pottery taught us technical know-how; but, living with Leach was just a fantastic experience and very important to us.

CAC: The aesthetics of the guild as well as the . . .

WM: Not only the aesthetics but just a whole way of looking at life. I think Bernard thought about pots twenty-four hours a day. He'd get up, and we'd have breakfast, and he'd push back his cereal bowl, and he'd pull out an old envelope, and he'd start to draw pots on the back of this envelope. He was always just thinking about pottery. It was why his marriages failed, I guess. [laughter] He couldn't devote time to a wife and family.

NM: He associated with other people who were artists who weren't potters.

WM: That's correct. That was another thing that through Leach, we got to know Ben Nicholson, and Barbara Hepworth, and Peter Langion, and Terry Frost, all artists that lived in St. Ives or near St. Ives. It's a real artist's colony. These people would come to dinner and we would be privilege to . . .

CAC: Talk shop.

WM: . . . sit in on these conversations. Yes. People came from all over the world to visit Leach.

CAC: Was he singularly outstanding in his field at that time?

WM: He was probably the best known Western artist who had turned to ceramics and, certainly, one who had written about it and made it a visible form of expression in the art world in the West. In Japan, it was always very important and that was where he had trained; so, he just couldn't see any reason that you don't take this Japanese approach and bring it to Europe, or England, or wherever. It was interesting, except that it didn't work out. We're getting very digressive here.

CAC: That's fine. Our lives are digressive.

WM: Living with Bernard, we finally got over our awe of this man who was so important and we began to talk about the way we found the Pottery. The way we found the Pottery working was not what Bernard had written about in his book. What he'd written about was the time when he and Shoji Hamada, and Michael Cardew and Norah Braden had established the Pottery, and they were all experimenting, and things were in a ferment, and it was just a wonderful situation. As the Pottery developed and grew, it attracted workers, and it attracted apprentices, and that required more organization. Bernard turned this over to his son, David, who was a very good craftsman but not an artist. David's measurement of the work done was based on the bottom line, saleable items that come out, and the way to do that is you narrow the viewpoint to a series of set pieces. When we began to argue with Bernard about this, in extremes, he would admit that this was not as good as it could be; but, he had—I have to admire Bernard for this—given the Pottery over to his son and he wouldn't take it back. He wouldn't say, "You've failed and I'm going to run it." To a certain extent, it was perhaps selfish of him because he was allowed to work on his own work while the Pottery went on. It was an interesting situation. We also had a bookkeeper at the Pottery, Frank Vibert, who was an avowed communist. In England, that was not so shocking as it was in America. We found out later—Janet Leach did, Bernard's third wife who he married after we left the Pottery—that Vibert had been fiddling the books to make it look like the workers had been supporting Leach in the manner to which he had become accustomed; whereas, in fact, when Janet Leach went back over the sales records, she found out that the workers had been supported by the sale of Bernard's individual pots, which were much more expensive.

CAC: [laughter] The politics of fine arts.

WM: These are the things that went on. The politics of fine arts, yes . . . pretty bad. [laughter] We returned home in 1952. I went back to the St. Paul Gallery and School of Art. Alex was pregnant; so, she didn't teach. We had our first child in January of 1953. By that time, I was pretty well disgusted with the political infighting and excuses that seemed to prevail at the Gallery for not doing things; so, I began to look for another job. I contacted Harvey Arneson and asked if there was a job at the university. I did begin to teach in night school.

CAC: Harvey, at that time, was chair of a combined . . .

WM: Combined department, yes, Art and Art History. It was just the Art Department, that's correct. This was a time, which Nancy alluded to earlier, that the chair of a department could, in fact, hire who he wanted.

CAC: At this time, was he also director . . . ?

WM: That came later . . . when he became director of the Walker.

CAC: Okay.

WM: Harvey said, "I have a person who is teaching ceramics and I'm not very pleased with her." She was trained at the School of Design in Chicago, which was strictly an industrial design school based upon the Bauhaus in Germany but sort of a bastardization of it. It was a very good school; but, it was a ceramic program in which all they did was design things to be produced in industry. The woman who was teaching there was not herself a potter. As Harvey said, "She has managed to take one of the viable sections of our department . . ." which meant that she was a full time teacher with an overcrowded classroom and she diminished it down until she had one class of four students. She just drove the students away. Harvey said, "I'll give you a chance but understand if there are any budget cuts, ceramics is the one that goes." I said, "Anything is better than what I'm doing." That's how I was hired at the university. He brought me in as a lecturer, which is kind of a half-baked position.

CAC: It's kind of like being a warrant officer.

WM: Yes. [laughter] Right. Fortunately, the ceramic program did develop and it was a success.

CAC: By yourself . . . I mean you were kept on but you were the only ceramicist on the staff?

WM: That is correct. It was a very small department at that time. I don't know the numbers; but, I'd guess there weren't ten of us in the combined department . . . four or five art historians and, maybe, half a dozen studio artists.

CAC: What studio artists were there then at that time?

WM: Kyle Morris was the assistant to Harvey. There are more than I thought of. Malcolm Myers taught print making. Bernard Arness taught designed programma and painting. There was another fellow who taught sculpture; I cannot remember his name. Phil Morton taught jewelry and the woman whom I mentioned before but now whose name I have lost taught weaving and I taught ceramics. That was about it.

CAC: Rollins was not on staff then?

WM: Oh, Jo Rollins, yes that's right. She taught water colors. Suddenly, I can remember. There was a man named Ed Young who taught drawing classes. I remember Ed was a calligrapher also; so, in the evenings, he would teach a calligraphy class. He also was an avid fisherman and tied his own flies. He persuaded Harvey to offer a fly-tying class in the evening under the auspices of the Art Department. I think it's the only time that fly-tying has been taught at the university. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

WM: At Christmas time, Ed Young would give all the faculty a marvelous little jar of canned trout or salmon with the most beautiful label that you've ever seen in your life . . . hand done.

CAC: Ahhh.

WM: It was just marvelous. So, there were more people.

CAC: But not a large [unclear]. You've given seven or eight.

WM: We were all squeezed into Jones Hall.

CAC: Your studios were there also?

WM: Our studios were there. The studios were kind of in the basement and in the attic and the middle floor was Art History classes and some studios.

[break in the interview]

CAC: We did, indeed, break for a lovely sandwich and watched the light snow falling outside. Why don't we pick up, Warren, with the department . . . how it was managed and directed, and something, perhaps about Harvey Arneson, and then, the division between Art and Studio Art, and then, I want to come back to your career.

WM: As I understand it, Harvey was hired by the university to unite a group of art offerings that had been spread around in various colleges of the university and to put them together into a viable Art Department. He was given a great deal of authority and a pretty good budget, which allowed him to hire faculty and consolidate these separate groups. He had Kyle Morris, who was a painter, as his assistant chair and there were a number of Art History faculty. I'm afraid I can't remember all of them now; but, the names are probably a matter of record anyway.

CAC: Sure.

WM: Harvey, as an art historian . . . his instructions to me were when I was hired, "I want you to run this area the way you see fit and you'll never hear from me unless you screw up." And

he said, "Then, I'll be all over you. [laughter] Harvey said to me words to the effect that if you screw up I'm going to be all over you and he operated that way. He said, "I'm not a studio person; but, I can tell whether the classes are being taught correctly." He never told us what to teach, or how to approach it, or anything like that; that was up to us and it worked very well. He had a great deal of trust.

CAC: He attracted some good people in studio art at that time?

WM: He did, yes. I think it was a topnotch department back there in the early 1950s. I thought it was wonderful.

CAC: The model of administration was . . .

WM: Hands-off.

CAC: Hands-off but not very participatory?

WM: Yes.

CAC: Harvey was a head, in that sense, rather than a chair, right?

WM: That is correct, yes.

CAC: When it worked, it worked very well.

WM: It did. Somewhere along in there, Dan Deffenbacher left the Walker Art Center. I believe there was an interim director . . . Norm Geske, maybe; but eventually, Harvey, who had been the treasurer of the Walker was asked if he would step in as director. He got approval to split his time between the Walker and the university. I don't think it worked too well for the university. I'm afraid we suffered in that time because he wasn't on top of things, and he was faced with problems at the Walker, and he concentrated on that. It was a more critical issue, perhaps.

CAC: It was a larger challenge for him.

WM: A bigger challenge, yes, that's right. He thought he had the university running all right so he could let it coast; but, it didn't work too well. He left, eventually, and went off to New York for the Guggenheim Foundation. We had a number of different chairs. We always had the opinion . . .

CAC: Were the chairs usually chosen from the History side?

WM: I was just going to get to this. We always had the opinion that really as administrators, a person with the discipline of Art History would be a better person than someone who was off

on their own in a creative field. We did select a number of different people from Art History and various tenures. It didn't work because most of these people, I would have to say, didn't have the broad vision that Harvey had. It began to become more and more factional. The studio people felt they were being cut out in terms of budget and in terms of hiring. With this problem arising, the growing conflict between the studio personnel and the Art History, we began to discuss the possibility of separating the budgets and separating the administration. I can't even remember the year that that occurred . . . 1963, perhaps; but, it could have been before that. We did, in effect, split. We cut the budget right down the middle. From then on, the studio art people were faced with running their own show and managing their own budgets. Malcolm Myers was selected as chair when we separated. That worked all right, except that Malcolm was still in that era where he ran things out of his back pocket. Sometimes, he'd simply appear, having gone off to New York, and he'd say, "I've hired a new painter," or something like that. There was no discussion with the faculty. There was no review of this person's work or anything. He happened to meet him at an opening of an exhibition, perhaps, and he'd say, "If you're looking for a job, we need a new painter." So, he'd offer him a job. It did create some havoc in the budgetary problems because, suddenly, you had another faculty member when there was no provision of this person in the departmental budget. There was a tendency, also, to promise positions at certain ranks, which may or may not have been the appropriate thing to do in the opinion of the rest of the faculty. But Malcolm did, I think, a wonderful job in a very critical time for the department. Eventually, there was some dissatisfaction. We had a yearly vote on the department chair and Allen Downs was elected as chair of the department.

CAC: He was in photography and movies?

WM: Photography and movies, yes; although, I never knew it at the time, Allen was also a painter.

CAC: I didn't know that.

WM: No. In fact, when he retired from the university, I don't think he did anymore photography or movies. He moved to Mexico with his wife and he just did nothing but paint until his death, which was kind of remarkable. Allen served for a few years and, then, there was another change. It worked out and the department began to grow again, having gone through a rapid and rather bad decline in numbers. We also got into a lot of factionalism within our department, which resulted, at one time, in the department being placed in receivership. The dean felt that we were not able to run our own affairs. There was so much arguing.

CAC: Were the factions around media, or around style, or around personality?

WM: It was around personality, I'm afraid. Yes.

CAC: So, there weren't schools that were warring?

WM: No.

CAC: Aesthetics schools . . .

WM: It ended up that the students were not being well served and the dean knew this. It was at that time that Roger Page, as an associate dean, was put in charge of our department; and he did it, I think, remarkably well. He had a very light hand but his presence assured at least some decorum in faculty meetings. [laughter] Things quieted down then and, finally, it was turned back to the department to run itself. It probably showed the department, at that time, that you can't just run this chaotic thing where everyone is screaming and hollering at everyone else and have it work in a university situation. It just won't go.

CAC: This was, after all, the 1960s when doing one's own thing was . . .

WM: True, yes. It was at that period of time, too, that we had a lot of those public scandals with one man who was hired. It turned out, he was quite mad. He broke into Peter Busa's studio and urinated on his paintings and that sort of thing, which was just a personal thing. He was just absolutely mad and resented Busa's power in the department or seniority, I guess you would say . . . it wasn't power; it was just seniority. He didn't last long, fortunately. [laughter] We had several situations like that.

CAC: Say something about the student body, undergraduate. Did you have a graduate program at that time or did that come later?

WM: The graduate program was started in the 1960s, exactly when, I can't remember. It was, first of all, started only in drawing and painting. Eventually, it progressed into sculpture, and photography, and print making, and ceramics was, I think, the last one that started a graduate program. We felt that in order to have a viable graduate program, first of all, you have to have a critical mass of students. You have to have, at least, a faculty where you don't have a single faculty member that everyone is going to be forced to work with.

CAC: Of course.

WM: That was what controlled, to a certain extent, the development of this.

CAC: A lay person's memory of the 1960s is that a certain number of people who were in the counter culture found the studio arts was a kind of undisciplined place to be.

WM: Yes.

CAC: Is that a fair perception?

WM: That was a very fair perception and many of the faculty, who were with the university for a relatively short period of time, came in with that same attitude. They really allowed the students to go hog wild; but, in some instances . . . I found, for instance, the 1960s a very exciting time in the clay area because we had a concentration of interest and intensity in the students which I had not seen before and have not seen since then. It lasted for about eight or ten years.

CAC: You use the word *clay*.

WM: Yes, as opposed to ceramics or pottery. I'm a potter and in the beginning, when I first taught at the university, I taught pottery . . . period. If the student wanted to be a sculptor, they worked with the sculptor instructor. If they wanted to be a metal smith, they worked with Phil Morton who taught metal smithing and jewelry . . . and so on. I didn't feel that I was qualified to be a sculpture instructor. When we added a second person to the faculty in the ceramic area, I sought a person who was not working in my idiom, who was as far removed as we could get and still have what I felt was a good instructor. We were very fortunate in getting Curt Hoard who is still there. Curt is not really interested in pots. He's interested in making objects. I won't even call them sculpture because I guess my own definition of sculpture is somewhat more restrictive than what might be applicable in the art field general. He makes things out of clay, which are meant to be looked at. They're not meant to be used. That's fine. That hit at a time when the students were very excited about this, also; so, we had a great deal of experimental work going on with clay and it was verging on sculpture. I always felt it never quite made the bridge. I would justify this by saying, it's amazing that all these people who say, "Oh, no, I'm a sculptor," never submit their work to sculpture exhibitions. They always submit their work to craft exhibitions, where they say, "I'm a sculptor; but, I'm a ceramic sculptor." I say, if you're going to be a sculptor, you've got to come up against the best sculptors there are working in your period of time. You don't qualify it by saying, "But I'm working in clay, so that requires a little bit different look." That's my personal opinion on this.

CAC: What ever the shape, or the form, or the aesthetic, clay has to be fired?

WM: Not always.

CAC: Okay.

WM: Not always because you then get into these conceptual pieces. I remember a piece that was on the cover of one of our magazines. It was a series of unfired clay objects, fabricated with clay and asphalt and they were made and dried; and then, they were placed in the surf off the coast of California. The object of this whole thing was to . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: . . . connection in the 1960s and the attraction of clay—that was the word clay that put it in mind—with earth and with a counter cultural aesthetic and value.

WM: For many people, this was true, yes. They had this sort of mystical attitude that they were going to go back and dig in the earth and, in fact, many of them did. They'd dig a hole in the clay, in the earth, and put a fence around it, and this was a work of art. [laughter] It got very far out at some times.

CAC: A lot of young people were attracted to work with clay, weren't they, as opposed to painting or fabrics or what have you?

WM: It's a direct hands-on medium. You get your hands dirty. Everything you do on that clay remains in the finished product. It's all going to be solidified and kept forever. That is true that it's very attractive for that reason. Unfortunately, I think there's always a situation wherein people say, "Ah! I'm working in a craft field and it's not fine art." They get this kind of inferiority complex which reflects in their work and often drives them out of the field into trying something else.

I was just thinking earlier on about changes that took place in my early days in the department where Phil Morton was teaching jewelry. Phil Morton was an incredible jeweler, just wonderful. He set up a whole area within the department which was really nationally known. Then, along at a certain period, Phil said, "Oh, gosh, I'm only a craftsman." He wanted to be a fine artist and he tried to be a sculptor. His sculpture was terrible; but, in the process of his trying to be a sculptor and teaching sculpture, he abandoned the whole jewelry setup. The students stole the tools and . . .

CAC: [gasp]

WM: . . . it all disintegrated. By the time the university might have wanted to salvage it, there was nothing there. Hilma Berglund, an old woman who was teaching weaving when I first came to the department in 1953, was a good weaver. She did very nice things. She didn't push her students very hard; but, when she retired Ginny Nagle was hired. Ginny Nagle pushed her students like mad and they never worked so hard in their life as under her; but, she got wonderful results out of them. Then, when Ginny quit for personal reasons, took a leave of absence, they hired another woman who came in and had the students weaving little borders on dish towels. When Harvey Arneson saw this, he said, "No way is that part of the studio art department." He simply closed out the weaving area, gave all the looms to the Home Economic Department, and there was no possibility of . . .

CAC: Which really continued that tradition on the St. Paul campus?

WM: Yes. We lost the weaving area. We lost the silver smithing area in that same manner. It was unfortunate. Ceramics, because I was pigheaded and stuck in there, remained. It is now the one area which we call the crafts which remains in the Studio Arts Department.

CAC: How many ceramicists were there before you retired, working at the same time?

WM: We had three faculty. We hired a third person, Tom Lane. It's interesting also—we were always trying to expand our department—when I hired Curt Hoard . . . when we hired him but I was certainly instrumental in selecting him . . . another thing we wanted to do was move into glass blowing, which was a coming field related to ceramics. Curt could do glass so that was another point in his favor. Then, after he set up the glass studio—he was teaching glass and ceramics and I was teaching ceramics—Curt lost interest in glass. Along came a time for a third person to be hired so Curt insisted, "We need somebody who will take over the glass studio." [laughter] Tom Lane was hired because, again, he had the glass experience . . . another thing was a different approach to clay than either Curt or myself; so, we had three faculty members each one of which had a slightly differing approach. We tried to schedule our classes so that students couldn't isolate themselves with one instructor. We made it so they had to experience all three of us at some time in their career.

CAC: Good. Say something more about the development of your own aesthetic. I think you're the only person from the Studio Arts that was ever a Regent's professor [unclear] like [Dominick] Argento in Composition. These regentships tend to go to persons with more traditional scholarship . . . great scholars. Say something about the development of your own aesthetic and craft.

WM: I'd have to go back to a time when Alex, my first wife, and I were in school in Chicago. We were looking at the work in the museums. The things that we saw that interested us as we began to analyze them were mostly works that had been part of people's everyday life: the bowls they ate of, the things they cooked in, the storage pots that they used, and so on.

CAC: This would be true of Ancient Greek . . .

WM: But, it was true in every culture, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, all those cultures. And I'm not saying these were the best works . . .

CAC: I understand.

WM: . . . but I'm saying the ones that interested us. We literally did discuss this amongst ourselves, Alex and I, and we said, "If the things that we're attracted are all those utilitarian objects, the things that we find most exciting, why should we expect that it's going to be any different in 1950 in middle America? It's probably going to be exactly the same. So, we decided when we were looking around and trying to set up our pottery that that's what we wanted to do and that's something which I've stuck with. I still find that the pots that I love to see are pots

which people have used, pots which have been made so that they can be touched with the hand, used on a table or on a floor, washed up and used again.

CAC: Although, you have produced non-utilitarian larger pieces?

WM: When you say non-utilitarian . . . I do make a lot of these forms; I consider these still to be utilitarian pots.

CAC: Okay.

WM: I know that some people buy them and simply look at them; but, I'm not in approval of that. My pots are really made to come to life when they have something in them. Therefore, when you see them alone, they're sometimes very quiet, very subdued, because they depend on this use to activate them.

CAC: Does that change, if it's a flower vase, depending on what kind of flower arrangement you want to make?

WM: Yes. We had a very excellent incidence of this in our own showroom. There's a potter whom we show in our showroom, Tim Crane. Tim makes pots which are very subdued. Mine are flamboyant compared to his. [laughter] They are usually slab built and two-sided, pinched together on the sides, and very subtly marked on the surface. Tim leaves pots here and they'll sit here for years and not sell. We have this fall sale in October every year and a friend of Tim's, who knows him well, said, "I'm going to bring flowers and put them in Tim's vases." She came and she arranged flowers in his vases. It was amazing . . .

CAC: [[laughter]

WM: . . . the way people saw them suddenly as a vehicle to hold something else and that the something else completed the pot. His pots sold much better in that fall sale if used flowers in them.

CAC: You must have basic aesthetic principles but this was the most fundamental?

WM: Yes, that's true.

CAC: Pottery itself, ceramics, took different directions these twenty-five, thirty years in different places?

WM: Oh, yes, yes. Back in the early 1950s, American ceramics particularly got a shot in the arm from a man named Peter Volkess who had taught at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana, and moved to California. Volkess had met Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach in 1952 when they were traveling across America giving a series of workshops. Volkess showed

Hamada his work. Hamada looked at his work and he said to him, "Why don't you allow the clay to participate more in what you're doing?" Pete was a very good thrower; but, they were stereotyped pots which were repeated again and again and without too much life. Hamada envisions Volkess, taking in this statement, and just making his pots a little more lively.

CAC: I'm going to interrupt just a second. What does it say to a ceramicist . . . *let the clay participate?* That sounds almost mystical to a lay person.

WM: I've always said when talking to students that I think they're are two kinds of potters. There are people who *on* the clay and there are people who work *with* the clay. The people who work *on* the clay don't interest me at all. They can do . . .

CAC: How can you spot that?

WM: Because they're imposing their will on the clay, and it gets very tight, and very controlled and there's, what I would say, no humanity to it. We recently saw an example of this in Japan when we were there. We saw an exhibition of a group of crafts people: fabric, clay, metal, glass, basketry, and so forth. When you looked at any one of those pieces, you were just staggered at the skill, at the control that these people had. They could make clay, or basketry, or fiber do anything they wanted; but, there wasn't a single piece in this entire exhibition—they had something like 650 pieces—that we felt, oh, I would give my eye teeth to own that pot, or that fabric, or whatever . . . that I have to have it in my life. It was just all dead, cold, cold stuff. These people were all, what I would call, working *on* the material and they could make the material do anything they wanted it to do; but, the material never participated in the process. The pots that I respond to are pots in which there are accidents, there are interactions between the raw material and the person who is controlling it.

CAC: Give an example . . . you're working with a lump of clay and how does that work? How do you know what the clay wants done?

WM: You don't know. You may feel it intuitively. The best times for me are when I'm not—quote—making a particular pot. I'm letting things happen a little bit more. Sometimes, you don't even know that it's happened. That's the other interesting . . . I've got a pot in the basement which goes back to the early 1950s when we first established our pottery here. Alex was taking care of the kids and I was down in the pottery working. I had this wonderful idea . . . I was going to do something to the clay that was going to make it look like it came out of a wood-fired kiln; so, I threw some wood ash on the surface of the pot. I envisioned what was going to happen to this. It was going to melt and run down the sides of the pot and it was going to be just like a wood-fired pot. When I fired the pot, I took it out of the kiln, where I'd thrown this wood ash, instead of melting and running down the sides of the pot, it looked a little bit like dry concrete. It hadn't melted at all. I was disappointed. I thought, that's not what I wanted. I failed; so, I decided if I put it back in the kiln, I'll fire it to a higher temperature, I can melt it. So, I put it up on the shelf to be refired. Alex came down from the house to see the results of

this firing, which had been unpacked and she said, "Why is that pot up there for refiring?" I said, "It didn't melt and didn't do this." She looked at it for a moment and she said, "I don't think you should refired it. I think you should take that pot up to the house, and live with it awhile, and try to understand it." Subsequently, to make a long story short, I did take it to the house. We lived with it for awhile and now I realize that that pot is far better in the way it came out than it could ever have been if it came out the way I anticipated it, if it had come out and run and melted just the way I thought it was going to come. So, here's a material which, in a sense, overrides my concept. What I saw when it came out of the kiln was what hadn't occurred. What my wife saw was what had occurred.

CAC: One hears artists talking about accidents, particularly artists working with clay, and this is what you're talking about. That is a good illustration of the clay cooperating and doing its own thing, so to speak.

WM: Yes. I sometimes say, "You get a pot out of the kiln which is better than the pot you put in and that's the exciting thing. [laughter]

CAC: There are a lot of accidents with the glaze . . . ?

WM: There are accidents. Some of them are semi-predictable; but, there's always a little bit of unpredictability and that's the excitement to it to me.

CAC: I'm not asking you, Warren, to brag or to boast but you are a Regents' professor and there must have been a quality in the work that you were doing here that was really outstanding. You don't have to agree with me but . . .

WM: Clarke, I'm not sure about that. If you do the same thing all of your life . . .

CAC: Oh, but a lot of people do the same thing all their life!

WM: That's true. I have had some fortunate circumstances where I've been in the right place at the right time and contacted the right people. Bernard Leach is a case in point.

CAC: Yes. Chance plays a part in all careers, sure.

WM: Yes.

CAC: But what contribution did you make to potting that would be recognized in this way? I don't mean only with Regents' professor on your forehead . . .

WM: I have a one-tracked mind.

CAC: I went into a friend's house and I said, "God! that's a beautiful piece!" She said, "It's an early MacKenzie."

WM: I like to think that I have some abilities in artistic concepts that I try to bring to the work that I do. I guess what I would like to say—if I could simply it—there are a lot of potters who make utilitarian pots and they're not very exciting. These are potters who are not excited about it themselves. They see it as a way to earn a living. I see it as a way to earn a living, too, and that's very nice; but, nothing gives me greater pleasure than to go down to the studio and just sit down and make bowls, simple fruit bowls. Out of two or three dozen that you might make, maybe, only one of them really has that time where everything comes together, and it has a quality, and it has a life that is going to excite someone else. But, that's what you're always looking for.

CAC: External observers can spot that pot? They won't always agree with your judgment but they can spot the quality?

WM: Not everyone but a person with a skilled eye, with a trained eye, yes, I think could spot that pot. I believe that that has always remained uppermost in my mind. When I was teaching, I was trying to talk to students about that quality in their work. It's very easy to teach technique. If you're given a student for a couple of years, you can teach them to be a potter; but, you can't teach them to be artist. That was happened when I said in the 1960s, we had that group of people who went through the ceramic area. They were very exciting and most of them have remained doing something in the field to this day.

CAC: If they're good, they don't reproduce you?

WM: No, absolutely not. That was one of the exciting things when they put together that retrospective show at the time I retired. They had the work of a dozen students and the nice thing was that none of it was like mine. It was all individual and different . . . some of it much more different than others but all different.

CAC: I'm enough of a lay person, although an admirer, not to know what next question to ask about this. I'm trying to push you to say more about that art and that craft, and how the principles work, and how the aesthetic works itself out. Did you change your technique and your aesthetic as you went over thirty, forty years.

WM: Oh, yes.

CAC: The [unclear] of what sort?

WM: The interesting thing is that given as short a space of time as six months or a year . . . When I look back on the work that I have been doing a year ago, it doesn't excite me as much as what I'm doing now because I've changed. I've moved forward . . . I've moved; I'm not sure

it's forward but I've moved anyway. I'm interested in very slightly different things and trying to express these in the work. Yet, through it all, there is some sort of a core which runs so that, as you say, people can recognize, yes, that's a MacKenzie pot. That's a MacKenzie pot. But, the important thing is that it has to come not because you're trying to do it. Bernard Leach said it very well in a commentary on a film which he made. He talked about the fact that you have to have it within yourself and he said, "Sometimes you hit the bull's eye by not aiming at the bull's eye." This is a very Zen sort of approach. And he said, "If you try to be good, you look like somebody who is trying to be good and nobody believes in that." It's certainly true that to me the most exciting thing from historical works are those which were generally done by anonymous craft people. They were doing the best they knew how to do; but, they weren't trying to say, "Look at me. Look at how important I am. Look at how clever I am." We've got a small bowl here which I've talked about again and again in public and private. It's a bowl which came to us just by chance. This friend had it and he, in a sense, said, "You really need this bowl more than I do because you appreciate it." He was not a potter. He was a sculptor. He sent it to us many, many years ago. When it came, I liked it. I thought it was a nice pot; but, over the years, I realized that this pot, which was made by an anonymous potter in Korea probably back in about 1700, was made as one of maybe 300 or 400 that he might have thrown in one day's work. He didn't look at it and say, "Oh, I'm going to make this the best pot ever" or "Now, I'm going to make this a pot which expresses my inner self." He just made the best pot that he knew how to make and he made another, and another, and another, and another. Yet, when I look at that pot . . . if I think I've made a pot that's reasonably good, all I've got to do is put it alongside that pot and it fades into insignificance. This pot was not made by a person who called himself an artist. It was just made by a person who felt things very naturally and they came out in the work that he did. I know it was he because all the potters in Korea at that time were men; so, this is not a sexist remark. [laughter] Today, it could very well be woman, too. Part of what's on that pot is a sort of patina of age. When you look at the surface of the pot, it's mottled and marked by use. This is like looking at a person who is ninety years old and their face and their hands have grown to be much more interesting because of the effects of time on them and character as well.

CAC: It's because they're featured . . .

WM: Beautifully. [laughter]

CAC: The last three minutes, you said, "Zen" and then the example you use is Korea. Can you say something about the influence of Asian potting on your own work? I know you've come back from Japan recently and have taught there before?

WM: No. I've visited there but never taught there and never studied there. I guess the pots that interest me most are pots from Korea. This is because the Koreans had a looseness of approach which I admire and would like to emulate, not to copy but to work in the manner of. There is a wonderful tale. There is a man who was the head of the folk art museum in Japan. In fact, he's the man who started this museum. His name is was Soetsu Yanagi. Yanagi appreciated

these things which *happen* in a natural way. He really extolled them. The things that he collected for his museum all exemplify these qualities. He really admired Korean crafts people. He told a wonderful story and this is maybe a thing to end this tape on . . . I don't know.

He was going to a village in Korea which was noted for its wood turnery. So before going, since he was not himself a craftsman, he read about wood turning. He read how you cut the wood down, and then you age it very carefully so it won't crack as it dries, and then, the process of turning, and finishing, and so on until he thought he knew about wood turning. He went to this village, and the first man he came across in the village was seated on the ground at a lathe, and he had alongside of him a pile of logs which were, obviously, freshly cut in the forest that morning. He said he chucked one of these on the lathe and began to turn it. He was enveloped in a shower of moisture and pine sap. Yanagi thought, that's not what I read. This wood is green. So, he finally said to the man, "That wood is green, isn't it?" The man went on turning, and nodded his head, and said, "Yes, it's green." Yanagi thought for awhile and he said, "If it's green, it's going to crack, isn't it?" The man went on turning, and nodded his head, and said, "Yes, it's going to crack." Yanagi finally said, "But, if it cracks, how can you use it?" The man looked at him as though he were a fool and he said, "You mend it." [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

WM: Then, Yanagi realized that the way in which the Koreans mended the cracks that developed in these bowls was part of the beauty of the bowl. We've got an African bowl—it's down in the basement but I'll get it after we finish this—and it's a wooden bowl and it's been cracked with time. When it cracked, the Africans took a piece of an aluminum tin can and they riveted over the crack. There are, I think, three patches, in this bowl of worn aluminum and they are so beautiful; they're just like a painting. It's much nicer than it would be if there were no cracks and no patches because the patches have become part of the pot.

CAC: This comes back to what you were talking about earlier . . . working with the material and letting it take its own . . .

WM: Yes.

CAC: As part of your teaching, did you ever teach . . . there are art appreciation courses and music appreciation courses. Is there such a thing as a pot appreciation course or do you have to work with the materials to appreciate?

WM: You do have to; but, I what I used to do when I started to teach beginning students particularly . . . There's a great deal of physical problem to learn to control clay. Often I would have students in a class and they would not take a second class. They'd take one class. They'd take it for distribution requirements or all sorts of reasons. In an attempt to get them to understand more about pottery without struggling so much with the control of the medium, I would take pots into the university and I'd say, "Today, nobody works. Bring a drawing pad and

a pencil." We would sit and we would draw these pots. I would pick pots purposely which looked deceptively simple and then try to encourage them to see the subtleties that were there and reflect this in the way that they drew. There's one up there, that white bottle in the center, that I would take in often. The students would look at it first of all and they'd draw a straight cylinder down like that, a neck, and another little cylinder up on top. If you look at it and if you touch it, you realize it's not a straight cylinder at all. There's no straight line in that. It's a series of interactions of lines, and rhythms, and movements which the eye and the hand follow and which make up the total pot, which looks deceptively like a straight cylinder but it isn't. That was a way of getting at it. They still had to make pots in the class; it was a ceramic class, you know. Everyone is able to make a simple pot; but sometimes, they'd get confused by their struggle with the technique. They wouldn't concentrate on what they were trying to do with it. They would just concentrate on how they were doing it and they were failing miserably in those first classes—they always do.

CAC: I'm pressing you on some other point. Say a little bit more about the student body, the student you had as they changed over the time. We talked about the students who came in in the 1960s. Can you say something about more recent generations and whether there is a difference in the incentive for graduate students working in ceramics from undergraduates, etcetera?

WM: I have to say that as I stayed on at the university more and more, I felt that very few of the graduate students who came in were interested in the kind of thing that I was interested in. For that reason, I was often more interested in teaching the beginning and intermediate classes; although, we all dealt with the graduate students. We all had group critiques together . . . the technique which we employ in the department general. Very few of them were interested in making pots, containers, for use in the home. Unfortunately, Graduate School has become a way to move into a teaching job and in order to teach, you have to have some degree of recognition. In order to be recognized in the art field, you have to be in exhibitions or to be in exhibitions, you have to be moving in the current mode and pass the jurors. I was dead lucky. When I was hired at the university, an MFA [Master of Fine Arts] degree was not required in order to be hired and you were judged on what you did.

CAC: We were lucky, too.

WM: [laughter] I always point out that, today, I couldn't be hired in most universities because I don't have a degree, not even a . . .

CAC: The students you've had and you would claim as your students primarily, many of them are practicing artists rather than academic? Is that correct?

WM: Yes.

CAC: So, you really have created a cadre of persons who are producing artists?

WM: Yes. Unfortunately, I would also say—I have to admit this; this is terrible—the better they are, the harder they find it to sell their work.

CAC: Tell me.

WM: The good work of art really demands participation from both sides of the work, from the maker and from the user or the observer and most people are lazy and . . .

CAC: You mean consumers.

WM: Yes . . . they don't want to work at understanding or getting in touch with this object; so, they'll select something which doesn't demand that attention over a piece which might be a better piece that does demand it. We see it in our showroom. Everyday, people come in there and they buy things for all the wrong reasons. They buy them because they need a pitcher, or a soup bowl, or something like that, or they buy it because they like the color, or they buy it because Aunt Millie needs a birthday present. The worst thing of all that I run into in our showroom—because we do have other people's work in there—is they buy it because it has my stamp on it. There's nothing we can do about this at all.

CAC: It's for the marketplace.

WM: Yes.

CAC: Do you have students still who come to you even though you haven't been on faculty for three or four years?

WM: No.

CAC: You aren't training students? They don't come here and seek you out for . . .

NM: They come here and seek him out. They come here and seek him out for [unclear].

CAC: I don't mean that you're asking tuition. I'm just saying that young potters come to you?

WM: They do. They do and we talk about their work. They often bring work and ask me to talk about it but that's very difficult. Particularly, I get people who come that I don't even know. They're not former students or they have no connection with me at all. They bring their work and say, "What do you think of it?" I don't know them. Not knowing them, I can't just look at this and say . . . It's not an abstract thing; it's a relationship to the person who made it. If it's a reflection of the person who made it, if that person has a strong and decent character and it comes out in the work, that's fine; but, you can't look at something and come to grips with it in

two minutes, it just doesn't happen. Another example, which I can point to here—unfortunately, this is not going to be an illustrated lecture— . . .

CAC: Oh, I wish we were on video tape.

WM: . . . the pot second from the left up there—reach that down—is a pot by the Japanese potter Shoji Hamada who was a national treasure in Japan. We bought that in 1952 out of an exhibition that he sent to the United States to this gallery where Alex and I worked. There were so few pots and so many people who wanted to buy them that we set up a lottery system as to what order you could have to choose a pot. My wife got number two in the lottery and with her number, we selected a small set of dessert plates which are very handsome and we still use them. I had number ninety-six which was very near the end of the exhibition. We had kept looking at these pots in there and we'd say, "If nobody takes that one, we'll take that one."

CAC: [unclear] It's like choosing basketball players. [laughter]

WM: It is. Ninety-six was called, and we went in with my number, and we looked around and we had seen this pot, and we were attracted to it. There were several people making selections; so, we picked this pot up and tucked it under our arm while we went and looked at the other things. Finally, we said, "This one we can afford"—which was a problem—"we like it." We went to the secretary to record our choice. Only after we had said, "We will buy this pot," Dr. Soetsu Yanagi, the head of the Folk Craft Museum who I mentioned earlier—he had been traveling with Hamada and Leach—had been watching this whole thing. He came up to us and said, "You just bought the best pot in the whole exhibition." We thought he was being kind. We'd gotten to know him over the weeks that they'd been here and we thought he was kind of saying, "Don't feel sad that you got number ninety-six." But, over the years . . . that's a pot that any competent third-year student could make and, yet, they couldn't make it. There are things in that pot which are so subtle and so strong. I can't even put my finger on it, excepting to say that I have tried to make pots similar to that and they're nowhere near as rich in configuration, in the quality of fabrication, in the relationship of decoration to form and the surface of the glaze, the exposed clay at the bottom of the pot, all these things . . . It's a complete unit and it's a fantastic piece. I used to take that pot to the university and show my students. It was funny because never ever in all the time I took that to the "U" did any student respond to it when they first saw it. I'd usually bring these pots to first year beginning classes.

CAC: Sure.

WM: Then, you get a student who goes on to the second year and they're hanging around the studio. They'd say, "When are you going to bring those pots in?" That's the one they'd want to see. That's the one that stuck in their mind.

CAC: It's clear, Warren, that you're a master teacher as well as a master potter.

WM: [laughter] It took them years to understand that.

CAC: Is it all right, for example, to look inside of pots?

WM: Oh, you have to.

CAC: I catch colors in here that are not on the outside at all.

WM: Yes, of course. With certain pots, you have to put your hand or a spoon inside the pot, too, to understand the inside of it. It's a wonderful piece.

CAC: It's a lovely piece. My wife, Florence, will witness to this that I have a hard time going into collections if we're going to buy something because I can't help but hold them. I have a very tactile sense.

WM: Yes, yes.

CAC: You're always scared . . . oh, hell, are you going to drop it or the owners don't like you to be handling the wares.

WM: That's one of the wonderful things about pottery, it demands to be handled.

CAC: Is it with your fiber work, too, or really you can't touch it without changing it?

NM: I think you can appreciate better if you can handle it.

CAC: But it's a real risk.

NM: Lots of time you're not allowed to in museums situations.

CAC: There is more of a risk than with a pot.

NM: It's much more vulnerable.

WM: We had this wonderful experience in Japan through the good offices of Joan Mondale.

CAC: Ahhh.

WM: We were taken to some museums and one museum in particular, which is a privately owned museum that is open to the public. Joan had made arrangements, and we went there and met the director, and he took us into a private room about this big, and he put down a padded cloth on a table. She had asked to see this one particular pot. I knew this pot. I'd known this pot for years from photographs and, all of a sudden, there it was in front of us.

CAC: [laughter]

WM: Not only was it in front of us without a glass barrier between it and us but we could pick it up, and handle it, and turn it over, and really experience it. [whispered] It was a marvelous experience. And it was nothing like what I imagined it to be from photographs alone. First of all, it was bigger, heavier . . .

CAC: It's hard to reproduce a scale but also the three-dimensional.

WM: Yes . . . but also the way it was finished on the bottom.

CAC: Your own work has been influenced by the Japanese and Korean?

WM: Yes. People keep saying, "Why are you so influenced by the Japanese?"

CAC: How early did that influence come?

WM: It was always there; but, it hit us most strongly after we had worked with Bernard because he had trained in Japan and had a lot of Japanese, and Korean, and Chinese pots.

CAC: That was early in your career though?

WM: Yes. He had a lot of these pots around the house that we used. We used them everyday. We ate out of them. It was a wonderful experience. There was a set of beautiful little porcelain dishes with blue painting on them. We just loved these dishes to eat dessert of. We'd bring them out of the closet at the slightest provocation. [laughter] Finally, Bernard said, "I wish you wouldn't use those porcelain pieces quite so often. They're very rare country Ming dynasty . . ."

CAC: Oh, god!

WM: ". . . and they're not replaceable."

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

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