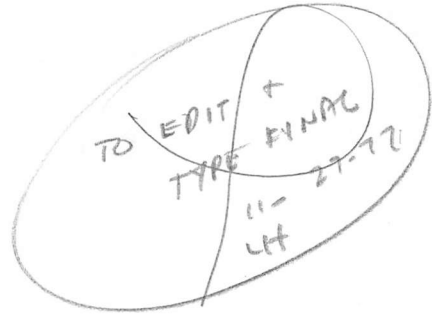


VF 935



MICHAEL DAILEY

Interviewed by Sally Swenson

Seattle, Washington

November 19, 1974

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INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL DAILEY

November 19, 1974

SWENSON: Perhaps a good way to start is to ask when you became interested in art.

DAILEY: Well, way back as a kid, really. My dad drew for me always. I think it's pretty hard for a kid not to be interested in art. The art teacher in our school was just the most horrible teacher in the whole school, but still kids liked art. Or at least if you were interested, you stayed interested. Kids are interested on a kid's level, and it just seemed to stick with me. I just kept on drawing, ~~you know~~, and later on I'd draw, oh, ~~stuff for the you know~~, cartoons, ~~and just right on~~. I always figured I'd probably study art, mainly because my dad was interested in it when I was a kid and drew things for us.

SWENSON: I understand that you're from the Midwest, from Iowa. Since your painting has to do with space a great deal, has this affected your work, do you think?

DAILEY: Do you mean coming out here?

SWENSON: Yeah, or living there.

DAILEY: Oh, yeah. The paintings I go back to or see from that period are very much space kind^s of paintings, and when I was in the Midwest they were often ~~the~~ Iowa landscapes with fields ~~kind of~~ stretching off to the horizon and the sort of thing you see there, and yet it was still this exercise ~~of kind~~ of going back into deep space. The thing that hit me most moving out here was the ~~kind of~~ verticality of the landscape. You get views of ~~like~~ ravines or mountainsides or tall trees or evergreen trees that just go up and up and up ~~and~~ ~~up~~, and you get a kind of closed-in space here, whereas...

SWENSON: You don't there.

DAILEY: Right, right. In the Midwest or even the East there's an expansive-ness. You see vistas out, whereas... The first thing that hit me

here was definitely this, oh, like, "Look out the window there!"

You know, all this push.....this wall of a landscape.

SWENSON: I think your work shows a great deal of big space, big skies. Maybe you brought that with you.

DAILEY: Well, it has probably always been there, just a kind of tension now. It's also very vertical and very....The thing that fascinates me most is a tension between the kind of vertical space and deep space of the landscape, ~~which most~~. Most of my art history background was in Oriental art. And of course that's the sort of structural basis of Chinese painting, this kind of simultaneous space--vertical and deep space and ~~that's~~ that's really run through my work ever since I first started painting seriously, whether they were cornfields in the Midwest or ocean beaches out here.

SWENSON: Has the Northwest climate affected your colors a great deal, do you suppose?

DAILEY: Somewhat, although ~~it's really~~ it was really ~~kind of~~ almost like I'd come home, because my color was always very muted and very soft. In fact, a painter from the Midwest visited me about a year after I'd been out here--he was a landscape painter, too--he was very stunned by the beauty of the Northwest, and he said, "You couldn't have landed in a better spot. It's like walking inside one of your paintings to come out here." He was thinking of paintings I had done in the Midwest, so in a way I used to paint--oh, fantasies, sort of seascapes and soft cloudsapes of cornfields and skies and things like that. I like the color out here. Usually you find the people who come out here have two reactions. ^{There's an awful} lot of bright color^{ed} paintings out here, particularly from people ~~who come from~~ like... ^{who} A friend of mine came from Rhode Island, and his painting has always been just the most jazzed-up, ^{CHEERY} ~~loopy~~ kind of color, because... I said, "Why this

design - like

color?" It seemed very ~~designy~~ to me. He said, "Well, ~~look~~ look around. There's all this gray. You gotta do something." Somebody like Alden Mason has always painted in tremendously bright colors as a reaction against it, and he grew up out here with all this grayness. He had a reaction, I suppose, against the kind of Northwest school of Graves and Tobey and Callahan--kind of grungy, dark browns. I think people go either one of two ways, and it just seemed ~~like~~ fine for me. I like rainy days better than sunny days.

SWENSON:

DAILEY: Right, right. I've always painted with very little value contrast-- more color rather than value, and you get that kind of landscape around here. It's not the harsh, strident kind of black and white you get in southern California. It's all muted and integrated. I feel very comfortable with it.

SWENSON: Has the impressionist school affected your colors, like Monet?

DAILEY: ^{yes} ~~Yeah~~, Monet, right, right. Partly in a kind of emotional way. I mean *I like...* Students tease me, I like pretty painting. I should probably say I like beautiful painting, and if it's pretty also like Bonard^N or Monet are pretty and beautiful and, I think, profound, too, on top of all that--that doesn't bother me. You know, in our time there's a big cult against painting pretty paintings, although that changes like everything does. (Laughter)

SWENSON: Yes, that's true. It has to be meaningful and depressing. (Laughter)

DAILEY: Yeah, yeah. I like the Impressionists, though. I think for most of us our age that's kind of the first "modern" painting, ~~you really~~, you know, when you're an adolescent, you see an Impressionist painting, you have an immediate affection for it, and I suppose that's the way I came into painting/ out of affection rather than any intellectual understanding of it,

it, because I really never knew that much about painting intellectually for a long, long time. I still approach painting very romantically and very affectionately rather than intellectually. My students are sometimes intrigued by this. They can't quite figure out what I'm trying to teach them.

SWENSON: To paint from your gut.

DAILEY: Right. (Laughter)

SWENSON: What about natural light and time of day? Do you like to work with natural light? Do you like to paint in the day as opposed to the evening?

DAILEY: Well, there again, until I came out here I ^{HAD} always painted in natural light and quit when the sun went down, and I'd always have a studio with north light. People laughed when I came out here, and I had to... ^{IF YOU WAIT FOR NATURAL LIGHT} and they said, "Jesus, you'll never paint ~~(laughter) if you're out~~ out here." So I had to...

SWENSON: Where's the light?

DAILEY: (laughter) Yeah, where's the light? So I've had to learn to paint with artificial light, ~~and~~ I think painting is tied to your kind of bodily rhythms or something. When I was younger I would wake up ~~at~~ ^{early} ~~I still wake up very early. I'm raring to go in the early morning.~~ But I used to get up and I'd be painting by six o'clock in the morning. My wife would still be in bed. I wouldn't even have had breakfast. I'd be out working, and I would quit by ~~two~~ I was all through by two or three in the afternoon, and I'd just read or whatever then. But now as I get older it takes me longer to get going, and I don't have the stamina, but I still paint in the days rather than at night.

SWENSON: Do you paint in a long block of time...

DAILEY: Yes, ~~yes~~

SWENSON: ...rather than short periods?

DAILEY: Definitely, right. In fact, teaching I always try^{to} arrange the schedule so that I have whole days off. ~~In fact,~~ if I get home at one or two in the afternoon and I'm tired or shot or emotionally drained from teaching, I'll take a nap or maybe try to do a little something in the studio, but it's mostly like framing or some just work. I can't do much creative then. I usually have to start at the beginning of a day and follow it through. I hate ^{to have} / anything hanging over me to do in the afternoon or the evening. You know, if I know I have to stop painting at five o'clock to clean up and go out to dinner at seven, that just bugs me, ~~like mad~~. I try to avoid social things for that reason.

SWENSON: Maybe people should ask you for 10:00 p.m.

DAILEY: (Laughter) Or not ask me. (Laughter). That's the best way!

SWENSON: Okay. (Laughter) What about the idea of teaching? Has it affected your work at all? Do you find it creatively draining?

DAILEY: A lot of people do. I really don't, for a lot of reasons. But it comes down to the fact that when I've had long blocks of time, ~~like~~ to paint every day, I find that a lot of things get in the way. I'm ^{or I'm} drained from the day before, / too close to the work, or I make little fiddly changes the day after I've worked on something, or the paint's too wet to really work with but I go in and work anyway. If you're working one day and then you go to school the next day and you come back with a day in between, it seems to me that there's a kind of healthy distance it gives you. You come back that second day and look at what you did the day before--I mean, there's been an intervening day of teaching--it gets you away from it, and you come back and you look at it very coldly, and you think, "Okay, that was dumb.

I'm prepared now to go completely back and revise and change and get it done differently, whereas if you'd come in the next day you would have just made little fiddly changes probably. But I don't think about my own work at all when I teach. ~~and~~ This is something the students never quite ^{understand} ~~know or realize~~. ^{They always} ~~They always assume that~~ ~~someone is teaching~~ oh, students will come and they'll say, "I want to study with you because you paint a certain way." I usually say, ^{work} "I want you to study with me because you know I relate to ^{thinking} ~~your work~~ ^{I really} in a certain way." I mean, I don't relate to the students in terms of ~~the kind of work they're doing~~ but the kind of thinking they do, the kind of reactions they have, the way they move, the way they think, the way they draw, or whatever. Someone should study with me, not because my work is a certain way but because my approach to teaching and interacting with the students is a ~~certain~~ way that makes sense to them.

SWENSON: Yes.

DAILEY: The things I teach are things they need, not because I paint in a way they would like. I think universities are filled with this kind of "follow the master" sort of thing, and guys are teaching something that they happen to be interested in. I think that's a copout. It's too easy to start teaching just what you happen to be doing at the moment, and there's much too much of that in all schools. That's a whole can of worms. (Laughter)

SWENSON: Do you think it's important or absolutely necessary for students to learn to draw nude figures and apples and, you know, still life sorts of things? Do you think that's the only approach?

DAILEY: Oh, no. But I think drawing is ~~probably~~ a tremendous way for a student to learn, but it should be a learning process, like learning

how they think, learning to think critically, to look at a drawing they did and say, "Why did I do that?" or to realize that in their drawings they can learn what their problems as students are or as painters are, ^{FOR INSTANCE} ~~like~~ if they're completely scattered and scribbly and confused and broken up in their drawings, that's probably their problem, but ~~in learning~~ *Too erratic, too confused, etc.*

SWENSON: We were talking about drawing.

DAILEY: (Laughter) Where were we? (Laughter)

SWENSON: You were talking about students and the importance of drawing.

DAILEY: Oh, yeah, yeah. Just what you mentioned, like the need to draw an apple or the need to draw a figure, this sort of thing. The reason students don't learn from drawings is that they're so concerned with the end product. You know, they're thinking, "I ought to learn to draw," which ^{usually} means to draw ^{IN} a certain way, ~~or draw an apple or a human being~~

SWENSON: --that looks like an apple.

DAILEY: ~~Right, right.~~ But if you try to get students to loosen up and draw and then react to what they've drawn, either by changing it, ~~or erasing~~ it or adding to it or manipulating it or critically operating ^{on it} saying, ~~you know~~, "That's too dark a stroke there. I think I'll lighten it." Or, "This arm doesn't look right with the rest of the body; I'll change it." ~~I think, you know, that's what you as a painter do, you know.~~ That's the sort of thing people need training in. Nobody needs to master the art of drawing an apple or master the art of drawing a nude as far as I'm concerned. I just hate that kind of academic crap that has sort of poisoned education for years. But ^{using drawing as} ~~drawing and using it as~~ a critical thinking device is very important. I suppose of my generation I'm right in the middle. I don't like ^{The} ~~that kind of~~ academic approach, and

I detest the kind of put-down-any-old-thing-and-love-it-because-it's-your-creation. That's asinine.)

SWENSON: (Laughter)

DAILEY: ~~That's the contemporary, you know~~ If you can put down any old thing and then react to it, and say, "How could this any old thing be made better, stronger, better composed, more powerful, whatever," I think any time you stop doing that with your work you're dead. And so many students are dead right from the beginning. They have no interest in changing anything or manipulating. All they want to know is tricks to make it approach this final product they have in mind, ~~and that's just, you know--~~

SWENSON: Maybe have a slick, finished look--

DAILEY: Slick, finished look, right. And they've got that look in mind before they start drawing. And all they want to learn is stuff that will help them get to that point. Those are people who are truly unteachable except on a technical level where you say, "Okay, shade this a little more." And that's not teaching. ~~That's just~~

SWENSON: ~~fifteen more minutes to go. (Laughter)~~

DAILEY: But there's a ~~helluva~~ lot of teaching that's done that way, and it bothers me ^{very much} just burns me up. And it's done largely because that's what the students want. ^{Many students} ~~They~~ don't want to be made to think. They just want to be told little tricks and secrets of manufacturing something. And that's not art; that's craft.

SWENSON: One thing I wanted to ask you about, too, as long as we're talking about teaching and all that--what about women in art, and women students perhaps? Do you think they have a fair chance now with men, or are they still taken not so seriously?

DAILEY: Oh, no. I think they have always been taken seriously, at least by

people I know who teach. Your most responsive students, your most sensitive students, I think, in the past have ^{USUALLY} ~~always~~ been women.

The worst classes you get--maybe I'm saying this as a male or a male chauvinist--the worst classes I've ever had have been like nineteen boys, mostly architecture students, and one girl in interior design. Nineteen-to-one odds. Still inevitably the most sensitive, the most responsive, the most poetic of the students is that one girl, even though she's an interior design student. ~~No, I think~~

~~this thing of women students or not--~~ ^{Too often} women students have not gone on with their art, but I think they've been many, many times among the best students. The problem is, you know, they find better things to do than to keep on making art, ~~you know?~~ ^g Whatever, they become mothers-- I still think that's a kind of important thing to be, you know. I'm getting completely out of date on this.

SWENSON: No, I don't think that, but that doesn't mean that they can't paint, too.

DAILEY: Oh, no.

SWENSON: Because you teach and paint and--

DAILEY: The weirdest thing, though, is--this is probably a cultural bias--no man ever painting thinks, "Well, here I am a man painter." But all the women get themselves psyched up to think, "Well, of course, I'm a woman painter." Well, nonsense. ~~I've got~~

~~SWENSON: You're a painter.~~

~~DAILEY:~~ ~~Right.~~ ^{Type} I've got a drawer full of drawings, and I've got these little ~~old lady~~, picky, stupid drawings done by these great big football player/guys; and I've got these lusty, powerful, fantastic drawings that are done by some little slip of a girl. There's nothing that says a woman painter has to be a Woman Painter, as we've ~~come~~ ^{to} learn that term.

~~SWENSON: Oh, I have a good question about that. How many of the TA's~~

blank

SWENSON: In talking about the teaching there, what is your philosophy about whole the/idea of giving degrees for art, BFA's and MFA's? Do you think that that's important or necessary? I know it's not too old. They've only been doing it for about twenty years, I think.

DAILEY: Hmm. You've got me there. I never (laughter)? I don't think anybody needs to go to school to learn art. And it's certainly gotten out of hand. Christ, we have ^{almost} ~~like~~ twelve hundred art majors. Probably three hundred, realistically, are good enough and committed enough to go on *IN ART.* ~~and do something significant, and~~ the other nine hundred are just being jollied along because they're members of the University population, and we have to teach 'em, ~~and they're--~~ No, I don't-- It's kind of a fact of life. Everybody wants to get pedigreed today, but I know an awful lot of good painters who have never been near a university. I don't think it's necessary at all. Not by any means. In fact, if they've got something they want to really paint and really say, they ought to stay away from the university. Well, ~~I don't want to say that.~~

~~SWENSON: (Laughter) Well, let's see now. What else am I going to ask you?~~

DAILEY: (If you need a university to tell you you're a painter, you're probably not much of a painter. That doesn't mean one can't learn in a university. I think mostly what you learn is a much broader approach to art. You should take philosophy. You should take literature. You should take probably even languages or something like that.

SWENSON: History of Art. Don't you think that's important?

DAILEY: History of Art is tremendously important.

SWENSON: You need that, I think. Very much. Well, to get back to talking about your own work, do you consciously limit your palette? I know you use a wide range of colors, but do you consciously limit the value and choice of colors?

DAILEY: I suppose what you're painting ~~kind of~~ limits it. My work is very much involved in landscape, so ~~I--you know,~~ landscape color is ~~kind of~~ associative color. ~~It isn't--~~ You don't come right up against one color and then another. You've got this ~~kind of~~ much more impressionistic sort of color that kind of floats around. ~~and~~. My paintings usually start out very wildly, loudly colored and end up being very muted tonalities of grays and greens and yellows, ~~and~~ ~~maybe sort of sunset colors--reds and oranges and things like that.~~ But, ~~there's a~~ Yeah, I probably do limit it, but it's mostly a limiting just by the subject matter, the landscape.

SWENSON: Yeah. Then you consider yourself really a landscape painter, I suppose. ~~-- the fields -- the color field.~~ (laughter)

DAILEY: Oh, yes, yes. And this is always amusing, because-- I just had a show in San Francisco, and so many of the people who came to the opening were all a-twitter about the show as a marvelous color field painting, and I thought, "How absurd!" And the gallery didn't have titles. ~~They just had, this is Painting Number One and Number Two.~~ They had a list of titles, but the titles weren't right there. Now I think very specifically in terms of titling of paintings. It's quite often a specific place, even if it's an imaginary place. It's very often a time of day or a time of year. It's a specific mood, you see, evening or morning or autumn or spring. Anyway, these people were all talking about these in terms of very formalistic solutions

to space. And I kept thinking, "What nonsense!" ^{If} these were ~~color~~ paintings, color field paintings or abstractions, color abstractions not particularly related to landscape, they would be totally different." There would be no reason to have them take the form they were. They're a landscape experience to me. This has always fascinated me. Painters --friends of mine who are very abstract painters--see my work as very particular and kind of specific places and ~~kind of~~ corny landscape paintings, although they may like them. Uninitiated people, or people with less abstract tendencies, tend to look at my paintings, and they think they're incredibly far out. They say, "What the hell's going on? This is just a swath of color that means nothing." ~~So~~ ^{This} this fascinates me, this ambiguity, where they are. I see them as definitely landscape painting. Not everyone does.

SWENSON: I felt that way the first time I saw your work, which wasn't long ago.

DAILEY: Which way?

SWENSON: Landscape.

DAILEY: Okay, good, beautiful, beautiful. Well, you can imagine, feeling that way, you can imagine my reaction when somebody says, "Oh, is there a definite top and a bottom?" (Laughter) I thought, "Hells bells!" ~~you~~ ~~know (Laughter)~~

~~SWENSON: No, it's best on its side! (Laughter)~~

~~DAILEY: Could you hang it on its side? (Laughter)~~

SWENSON: How do you feel about openings? Do you like to go to your own openings?

DAILEY: No, but you have to. I can talk to people, and I find very nice people at openings. But I'm essentially very shy, and I hate being the center of the thing. I'd rather go to someone else's opening to see my friends and his friends or her friends there but not my own, *opening*

because then you can't get away from it. You're the focus--

SWENSON: You're on display. I think a lot of artists feel that way.

DAILEY: Right. I don't like to go out to social gatherings at all. Maybe that's because teaching is such a social activity. You relate ~~kind of~~ ^{almost} conversationally and/intimately. You talk about significant things with maybe sixty people a day, and then ~~all of a sudden~~ ^{want to} that isn't what you do for recreation. For recreation you stay home and ^{can} read, or you stay home and talk to your family, or you/watch television, even, if necessary. You don't ^{WANT TO} go out and talk about significant things with strangers, because you do that all day anyway.

SWENSON: Teaching takes care of your social side.

DAILEY: It does for me. I love it. I find the people fascinating and interesting. The students and their problems are important to me, but that's because when I'm home I'm home, and sometimes I find that over a weekend--from say Thursday to Tuesday--I won't have left my yard. I've been in the studio and painting, and the idea that you would seek outside stimulation by going out to dinner with "interesting people" --I see them at school all the time. And also you have relationships with colleagues and with other artists that you know. It's a nice solution for me, because I've had a whole social side of me fulfilled with school and a private side/^{of me} that's in the painting.

SWENSON: That points up an interesting question. Do you feel that artists, in order to be artists, serious artists, have to be ~~partially~~ isolationist at least?

DAILEY: Yeah, ~~yeah~~ Right, ~~right~~ I don't know about some of the other people you've talked to.

SWENSON: Otherwise you wouldn't be-- You have to like to play by yourself to be a thinker. You have to like to work by yourself.

DAILEY: You have to like yourself and be comfortable in your own company. Like I'm seeing you now, you know; we're just chatting, but the significant you I'm not seeing at all. It's whatever you're doing in your studio or ^{WITH} your family or your friends. ~~No, I'm totally alone.~~ The social world that kind of laps into art can be very nice. You meet very beautiful people, but painting's a lonely--. I tell students, "If you don't like being alone and just going scritch, scritch, scritch in private with nobody much to look at it or care how it comes out but yourself, you're in the wrong business. You ought to study something else."

SWENSON: That's interesting. Do you like to work large or small or both, medium sized? Do you have a favorite size?

DAILEY: Yeah, I ~~don't like~~ ^{as a rule.} medium-sized paintings. I like to work either large or small. Small paintings have a kind of intimacy to them that's very nice, but the worst size is the medium size. Large sizes are a challenge, and they're really overpowering, really magnificent. Small sizes are very intimate, very perfect, very private, very self-contained. That intermediate size is really hard to do, really hard to relate to. I think you ought to either ~~sort of totally~~ ⁹ be able to encompass a painting or you ought to be just overwhelmed by it, to be limitless. Either hot or cold. Medium-sized paintings tends to be kind of lukewarm. (Laughter) That's probably a dumb thing ^{to say.}

SWENSON: No, no. That's probably true. Do you like to work in a close series, ~~and in your work~~ -- I mean, do you like to do like twelve paintings, work on them all at once and have them be very similar? ~~Do you like to do that,~~ or do you like to ~~not do that,~~ work on ~~one at a time?~~

DAILEY: I work on a number of paintings at a time -- partly physical. It

takes a while for paint to dry, and you can't quite come back to it, but I also think rebounding one painting against another--if you've got five or six paintings loosely based on the same idea--you kind of rebound back and forth. You solve something in one painting that feeds over into another. And ~~you~~ ^{you} also don't get too uptight about one. You don't think, "I've got to do it on this one." You think, "Well, what the hell, ^{if this one fails} I've got these other four." And ~~you can't resolve it in one~~ you can work out problems you have in the others. ~~And~~ ^I they kind of mutually support one another and feed back into it. I always work on a lot, and I always tell my students to try to work on lots of paintings. Don't get-- It keeps you from thinking of them as things that you're ~~kind of~~ making. It's much more of a dialogue if you have several paintings. You have to shift gears. Even if you're just working on one, and you have several others where you can see them during the day, ~~so that you know--~~

(END OF SIDE ONE)

SWENSON: ~~Talking more about your work,~~ what do you think is the hardest thing in painting? Do you think it's hardest to begin a painting, or is it in the middle, or when you ^{finish} it? Is it hard to tell it's really finished?

DAILEY: ~~Yeah, well, I'm like-- I suppose I really-- I've always felt I paint--~~ I like to paint in a way so that the painting at any minute could be resolved. I probably find most boring beginnings of painting, where you're just laying in the kind of rough ideas. I sometimes work at cross-purposes to myself. ^{WITH A SORT OF} ~~I mean I realize I just-- I'm sort of--~~ a kind of you know the abstract expressionist, aesthetic, /precipitating a crisis at every moment and ~~kind of~~ having everything up in the air and everything a ~~kind of~~ chancey, exciting--really exciting,

I mean like you've kind of got a knot in your stomach while you're painting, ~~because it's so sort of~~ ^Q ~~sort of~~ breathtaking. You could ruin a painting with the last stroke. I'm still very much influenced by that. I really like painting best when it's at that kind of fever pitch. Even after I've worked on a painting--well, the one you saw, which I actually started, and I wrote a date on the damn thing, which I usually don't do, but I realized it was last January, and I've re-worked it and re-worked it and re-worked it.

SWENSON: The one with the yellow?

DAILEY: That yellow one, right. I went out there to make a few changes in it, and I ended up spending about eight hours on it and re-painting it from absolute top to bottom. Everything was re-painted. And I like this kind of idea of fever ~~sort of~~ ⁹ pitch, ~~everything~~ like some gambler who's double or nothing, just rolling everything on that turn of the card or that dice. I guess I really like finishing things up, forcing them. ~~In fact, I've ruined so many paintings because it comes down to a place where this thing has got to be--~~ ^{them} I don't want ~~it~~ to work halfway. I just want to precipitate it toward a crisis, ~~and lose it rather than--~~ I'd rather lose a painting ^{have} ~~than win it halfway~~ ^{and have} painting that almost works or works in such a way that I know, "Yes, I just proceeded from here to here to here and finished it." ~~Those~~ Those are just horrible paintings, and I always end up re-working them and thinking, "All right, damn you. I'm either going to win big or lose it." I'd just as soon lose the painting as have ^{ALMOST} one that ~~kind of~~ works. Especially when I didn't understand as much about painting, the only ^{things} / I kept were the ones that I couldn't quite figure out how I had painted them. I think, ~~And~~ I still use that as a criterion. / "Wow! that painting is gorgeous.

I don't quite know how I did that." And I think when a painter begins to do the kind of painting he knows he can do, then it's like flat gingerale. It's just kind of like watching ^{when} sometimes you're in a bar or something and you watch a performer turn in a performance that is just a workaday performance. Other times you're present at a concert or something ^{where} the guy is really going beyond himself. It's really a kind of magic in the air. I guess I believe in really magical painting. It confuses my students. (Laughter) You try to talk about, "You ought to risk it," and that's hard to communicate, or talk about. That's the kind of painting that excites me, the kind of painting where you ~~kind of~~ get a catch-- kind of take in your breath and you ^{think} go, "Wow! how did that happen?" I think truly great art really affects you that way. The really grand (DeKoonings), *for instance*, you kind of take in your breath and think, "Wow! how risky! That shouldn't work, but it does," or the kind of ² Bonard or Cezanne often reach that. ~~I mean, like take Cezanne. He's got a lot of-- tons of paintings. You're always seeing new prints, new reproductions you've never seen before of Cezanne. There are some Cezanne's that are absolutely unfathomable. They're just--~~ You think, "Why the hell does that painting work?" And it just does. It's just gorgeous. I think that ought to be the criterion for a painter. If you can figure out why the painting works, it probably isn't that great. It's probably a pedantic kind of exercise. A painting ought to just astound its creator. (Laughter) ~~That's kind of a dumb criterion.~~

SWENSON: ~~No. That's interesting.~~

DATLEY: ~~I really believe in that.~~ Some friends of mine would say, "Oh, Christ, you're-- that's a hopelessly romantic outlook." But I really believe

in that.

SWENSON: I think I do, too.

DAILEY: Good.

SWENSON: And I think that's why a lot of artists--especially artists who are good--don't like to talk about their work, because they don't know what to say. In a way, when you say, "Explain this painting," what can they say?

DAILEY: Yes, like we're talking about things involving equally exciting concepts like teaching, other people's lives, shaping and helping them, giving them some kind of ideas. A lot of this whole tape has been about teaching and things like that.

SWENSON: And your work, too.

DAILEY: And my work, too.

SWENSON: I think we can talk about your work in tangible ways -- what kind of paint you're going to use, and stuff like that.

DAILEY: Oh, yeah.

SWENSON: But I think for theory, there's just--

DAILEY: Theory gets off into the wild blue yonder.

SWENSON: That's true, probably.

DAILEY: As far as how they're painted, most of my friends and I get kind of crusty and fuddy. A friend of mine says, "Well, there are a couple of things you and I agree on. One of them has something to do with linseed oil." ~~(Laughter) Like we're oil painters and~~
~~gotta believe in oil paint rather than, say, acrylics.~~ I suddenly realized, just thinking about it, that ~~most of the guys~~ most of
 the people I know ~~and~~ ^{and painters} as friends, ~~and think of their paintings~~
 are oil painters. Okay. That's kind of a nice, simple thing to come

back from all that fantasy.

SWENSON: Conceptual .

DAILEY: (Laughter) Right.

SWENSON: What do you think of conceptual art? That'll be a good question.

DAILEY: Oh, a guy asked me that just recently. In fact, a conceptual artist asked me that recently. I said, "Fine. I don't think much about it." It's not a matter of being for it or against it. It's just very different from what I do. I don't deny its validity. It's a very exciting concept. Particularly intellectually, I can think, "Oh, wild, far out. That's great, yeah." But closer to home my reaction is kind of a big yawn. There's a lot of things out there in the world that are exciting, valid, challenging, whatever. But they don't touch me. ~~What do I think of, you know, President Ford's trip to Japan? Well, he's going over and meeting a bunch of guys--so what? What do I think of me having to figure out and plan a trip to San Francisco?~~ (Laughter) ~~Conceptual art is-- One thing I don't like about it is that it's--~~ No, I shouldn't say "don't like about it." If this were another time, you'd be saying, "What do you think about abstract expressionism? or pop art?" I don't like the kind of media approach to it where you get ² it's given a lot of play just because it's the now thing. You know, five or ten years from now, nobody'll ^{be that interested in it.}

SWENSON: ~~Wonder~~. I thought of that especially because you talked about theory. That came out.

DAILEY: Right. It's much too theoretical for me.

SWENSON: It's not something tangible.

DAILEY: You and I can sit here and ~~(get high?)~~ start talking about, "Wow! wouldn't that be far out? Let's dig a trench from the Rocky Mountains to Des Moines, Iowa." (Laughter)

SWENSON: And fill it full of horse manure. (Laughter)

DAILEY: Right. And add burners under it to cook it so that it makes a nice-- (Laughter). You could go on and on.

SWENSON: Right. One of my friends had a really great idea ~~the~~ ^{to take} ~~would like it--~~ something that looked like chocolate sauce and pour it all over Mount Rainier and then got something that looked like a great big cherry (laughter).

DAILEY: Oh, yeah! But it's the kind of 'why not'?

SWENSON: It's fun to think of, anyway. So much for that.

DAILEY: Think of all the writers that might sit around thinking, "Hey, a great novel would be..." Okay, but it doesn't count for anything until somebody writes that great novel.

SWENSON: Or it's on the wall. -- Okay. Do you do small studies for your paintings? Do you do little-- I know you do oil on paper. Are those in general studies for your larger works?

DAILEY: Sort of, ~~but it's kind of like~~ I never go out and make a sketch on a site, really, or very seldom. The paintings are all ~~kind of~~ composites. I'll be thinking along a certain line or a certain vein or a certain idea, and it will be in the smaller stuff, ~~but~~ Sometimes I wish I could do that, but I can never just sort of-- I'm so dumb I usually just kind of stumble along, and the painting takes shape as I go. ~~I~~ ~~don't usually-- I'll start~~ ~~if I have a sketch or an idea.~~ Sometimes ~~a quick pastel or charcoal sketch.~~ Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the painting ends up being different from the way it started out. I suppose the answer would be "No" in a narrow sense.

SWENSON: Ever do any print making?

DAILEY: No.

SWENSON: What do you think of the Northwest ~~ANNUAL~~? That would be ~~kind~~
 of another area to get into. Do you think it's a good competitive
 show and that it's representative of the area?

DAILEY: Oh, yeah. This is another thing that causes a big stir in the art
 community. I don't know. If you're going to have a regional show
 that shows what's going on-- I've never minded. People have all
 kinds of complaints about it. Sometimes you get in. Sometimes you
~~get out.~~ ^{DON'T} Sometimes it's kind of weighted one way and sometimes
 another. But I never minded it one way or another. It's always
 seemed about the same, a ~~kind of~~ representative sampling of what's
 going on. I ~~kind of~~ like the idea of regional art myself. I don't
 know if you want to get into all that.

SWENSON: Surely, That's another question. It's on the next page.

DAILEY: The Northwest is very self-conscious about having been a regional
 center, and maybe there were a lot of sins connected with that, and
 there's a kind of funky, hokey quality about regional art. Everybody
 wants to be like New York, but somebody said, "New York is ^{to} painting
 what McDonald's is to eating." ~~And in a way~~ I'm thirty-six years
 old, and I can remember traveling when I was twenty in different parts
 of the country, and you could be in the South, and you got very
 different food than you got in the North. You'd ask for mustard, say,
 and the waitress would say, "Oh, y'all mean yeller mustard," because
 they were giving you some damn horseradish...

SWENSON: (Laughter)

DAILEY: ...in Louisiana that had nothing to do with mustard as we know it,
 which is French's yellow mustard. And you could go to New England,
 and you got breakfasts that weren't at all like what you got in
 southern Arkansas, say. Well, now it's possible to stop at Howard

Johnson's all across the country, and you get the same plastic food. Nobody likes that. Everybody says, "My God, a Howard Johnson's is the same ^{all over the country}." Nobody who really cares about food likes the idea that you get the same plastic hamburger coast to coast. Why would you want the same art? A kid growing up in Maine or a kid growing up out on Whidbey Island, why would he paint the same way a kid would who grew up on Long Island, with the New York ~~of~~ cultural sort of thing? I really like the idea that isolated parts of the country would have a ~~kind of~~ unique, ~~funky kind of~~ feeling, and I resent very much the idea that art is validated out of New York or Paris or some place like that. ~~What I really hate to see, once I became aware of art and once I have some standards-- talking about the Northwest Annual--~~ I really hate to see third-rate copies of whatever is current being given recognition over really first-rate local, corny, provincial stuff. As I say, my ideas are not-- You wouldn't find a lot of people in the School of Art agreeing with me on that.

SWENSON: Well, that's what makes it interesting, though. And lots of times in the past-- Like Cezanne was a regional painter. He didn't live in Paris. Some of the best people are out in the boonies.

DAILEY: And he was a real bastard, too! He was crabbed, and narrow, and he stayed home, and he thought things, and he was sort of anti-semitic, and he was bigoted, and-- If we were living in ~~the~~ Provence, and knew him, we'd think, "There's that old son of a bitch." We'd hate him, probably. ~~That's partly his--~~ You know, Van Gogh was a crackpot, wandering around bothering the citizenry. That's kind of nice.

(Laughter) The educated artist ^{today} ends up being a kind of nice, tamed, local version of whatever is going down [?] nationally in the "art world."

SWENSON: Do you think a lot of artists, younger artists, have a tendency-- especially in art schools and coming out of there, like people just graduating from school--do they have a tendency to copy New York?

DAILEY: Yes, if they know anything about it, if they see examples. If you can grow up kind of naive--which is increasingly hard to do--

SWENSON: There's always Art News, I mean--

DAILEY: Right, right. But worse than Art News--here's my biases hanging out-- students who go to a high school or a college where they have "really good teachers"--really good teachers usually translates into some jerk showing them who's / ~~the~~ the latest thing rather than trying to develop their unique personality as a gauche seventeen-year-old kid-- I'd rather work with that seventeen-year-old's gaucheries rather than just expose him to ~~some~~ ^{The} sophistication of some forty-five-year-old New York artist and say, "Hey, you seventeen-year-old kid from Whidbey Island should paint like this forty-five-year-old New Yorker." It just doesn't make sense, and I think the schools are terribly remiss in this. They don't do a ^{good} job of educating. They simply show you examples of what's current or what's fashionable. Then they say, "Hey, you, too, can do this." I see a lot of older people painting today who have a very poor opinion of their own work because it isn't contemporary or doesn't relate to what New York is doing. And that's very, very sad. If you're going to paint like New York, you ought to go to New York and do it.

SWENSON: And live there, and be part of it.

DAILEY: Go to a big urban center and really take your knocks and see how you ~~like~~ ^{like it}. We constantly have people from the provinces who go to New York, then they come back and they're kind of expatriates from New York ~~kind of~~ ^{hungry} ~~giving~~ ^{back} the word, ~~from here~~, although when you really dig in you find

they couldn't make it in New York because there are better people, people who are better at being New York than they were. These people then drift out to the provinces and say, "Hey, New York ^{this.} says/ ~~I think~~ ^{Lord,} ~~once the kind of provinces--and, good Lord,~~ Seattle is pretty far from Washington or New York--

SWENSON: Or L.A.

DAILEY: Or L.A. Right. We ought to just glory in it and say, "This is what we are. It rains here a lot. We stay home." Portland is a very different environment for painters ~~than~~ Seattle. In Portland there's a tremendous interaction socially among painters. They go to one another's studios. They have parties together. They talk. They cross-fertilize each other, and they have ~~kind of~~ their common monuments and anecdotes. Seattle is very different. Portland people come up here and say, "Do you all stay in your studios and nobody knows anybody else and everybody's kind of a semi-hermit and there's no excitement, no antagonism, no ferment?"/ Beautiful. Great. Seattle is Seattle and Portland is Portland. ~~If you want to just really,~~ ^I say, "Let's intensify the hermitic life up here and let's intensify the kind of social stimulation you have down there." Let 'em go on two separate paths, not homogenize the two into some bastard ~~hybrid~~ ^{hybrid of both.}

SWENSON: What did you think of the Smithsonian show? Did you see it? Do you think the choices were good? ^{the whole show?}

~~DAILEY: It was a funny show. It was a kind of--I kept thinking that a whole lot of people should have been in that weren't.~~

~~SWENSON: I guess that's always true, though.~~

~~DAILEY: Exactly. That was my feeling. It was a reasonably representative show.~~

DAILEY: One could have been in or out of that, either way. ~~You could almost~~

~~whatever they had in there--twenty people or whatever, I don't know--~~

~~SWENSON: Something like that.~~

DAILEY: You could have probably come up with another twenty that would have been equally representative or you could have--there were some good people who were left out and some bad people who were put in, and--

SWENSON: Who were those? (Laughter) I'm only kidding.

DAILEY: No, I'm trying to think of that show-- I'm the wrong person to ask, because I'm not very critical on things like that.

~~SWENSON: It's just an interesting subject. I didn't mean to--~~

~~DAILEY: No, no. Any show like that--the Northwest Annual is the same way on a smaller scale--everybody thinks, "Gee, I should have been in" or "So-and-so should have been in" or whatever, but--~~

SWENSON: I think very often that art historians and people perhaps who will use this tape are interested in just finding out what different artists feel about things like that, what they feel about museums in general. Like do you think a museum is doing something it's not doing for artists?

DAILEY: Well, I feel kind of dumb answering that because--

SWENSON: You don't have to answer it.

DAILEY: I have friends who are tremendously-- They think about that sort of thing. They have opinions on it-- (Telephone rings)

SWENSON: Is there another one to pick up?

DAILEY: ...unless it's for you.

SWENSON: I doubt it. Do you want me to answer it?

DAILEY: Yes. Say I'm not here.

SWENSON: I think we're too late. They gave up.

~~DAILEY: It's probably Gloria--~~

~~SWENSON: I left my number, but I'm sure--~~

DAILEY: Oh. Hey, we should go back and erase all this crap.

SWENSON: Oh, no. This is fine. Makes it a little interesting. It's fine.
Okay.

DAILEY: You were asking about . . .

SWENSON: Right. About museums.

DAILEY: The museum. I say I feel dumb saying this but in a way-- ~~Paul Jenkins~~
~~always used to talk this way. He and I felt very similar about this.~~
~~Well, no, I don't want to say him, because he had other ideas, too, but~~
painting for me is--this sounds dumb--very simply, that's what I do.
And it has a certain significance for me, and anything else that
happens, anybody else that thinks what I do is important or wonderful
or whatever, that's all fine, but it's gravy. It's kind of extra.
If I bring a painting in, and my wife and ^{my} kids say, "Gee, that's
great! I like that one, Daddy. It's got a lot of red in it." Or
orange or whatever they-- That's kind of real, and beyond that,
what the museum does or what the museum doesn't do, I just don't
relate to that very much. But I would assume that a museum person
is doing the damned best he can, and I really don't think they have
malevolent attitudes like, "We're going to get together and screw the
artists or this artist," or ~~"We're going to put out."~~ I think they
have their biases. Museum people are terribly addicted to doing
whatever is trendy or current or will get them attention at the
museum. But I have a certain amount of good faith. And beyond that,
painting is so hard and so exciting and so challenging that I guess
I just don't have the time to give to worrying about what museums
are or aren't doing or what this or that collector is or isn't buying,
or who gets included or not included in the show. And I say this with

some passion, because I have an awful lot of friends who seem to me to spend an awful lot of time worrying about what the museums--the Seattle Art Museum or whatever museum--is or isn't doing, and I just think that emotional energy is much better directed toward your painting, not whatever. ² Because I don't, I guess I don't feel comfortable with the kind of art world. What it does or doesn't seems to make sense sometimes and not make sense much of the time, so it just seems to be debilitating to spend a lot of time worrying about the art world, whether it's the local art scene or the New York art scene, or L.A. or San Francisco art scene. It just seems to me that you just paint the best you possibly can. And if you feel/^{very} good about a painting, and something good happens to it, that's fine but if you feel very good about a painting and nothing happens to it--no one is interested in, nobody buys it, nobody looks at it--it's still a good painting. That's got to be its own excitement or justification. Otherwise you go whoring after this or that or everything. There's so many things you could worry about in this world. If you had to worry about things other than painting, you ought to worry about starving people in Biafra, not what the Art Museum is doing. ~~There's just a whole~~ I'd worry about changing the government to be more humane and socialistic before I would worry about changing the art world. ~~that's~~ . Really, that's true.

SWENSON: Yeah. What do you think, too, about the number of art galleries that have boomed in the area? There are a lot of new ones. Do you think that Seattle can support that many, or--?

DAILEY: Well, no, because they always fold. They start and they fold, and there ^{has} been such a turnover. ² The only bad thing is that whatever is in a gallery gains a certain authority and has a certain power to

intimidate young painters or young people. "Oh, I saw that at such-and-such-a-gallery." Now this may **just** be a furniture store that displays art, but it has a certain power to intimidate young artists. That would be my only complaint that there are so many.

SWENSON: They're not all serious. Some of them are furniture stores.

DAILEY: Yeah. The range of stuff-- I don't know. It gets into a kind of elitism, too, like-- everybody in the art world knows that there are good galleries and there are not so good galleries. Then there are pure rip-off joints. The stories you hear about certain galleries are ghastly. (Laughter) Like someone tells some horrible story about they were robbed by such and such a person, whatever. ~~But--~~ I hate to be put in the position of an elitist saying there only ought to be good galleries, but bad galleries showing bad art really don't do anybody any good. In fact, there's a law in economics called Gresham's Law that bad money will drive out good money, and this happens for instance when ~~they started~~ they no longer made silver quarters. They started putting copper or something in. Well, overnight all the silver quarters disappeared, and the copper quarters took over. People hoarded the good quarters, and the bad money displaced the good money, silver being innately of value and these whatever they are--copper or aluminum or whatever the quarters are made of now--aren't innately of any value. I think that's true in art. You'll find if you take people off the street and you offer them good art or bad art, they'll take the bad art every time. The success of people like Walter Keene or--

SWENSON: The big eyes--

DAILEY: (Laughter) Pick your own favorite artist-- The public will take Norman Rockwell over Edward Hopper every time.

SWENSON: ~~Oh, sure, because they--~~ I think there is such a thing as-- you know we talk about an eye. It's an educated eye, not something you were born with.

DAILEY: Exactly. And to ^{the} / degree the galleries should educate and screen art and present only the best, then I think it's wrong to have, oh, six hundred galleries in a city of 600,000. You'd be much better off with twenty galleries instead of sixty or six hundred.

~~Oh, yeah, yeah, I'm thinking~~ ^{As} in writing. ~~Well, in no other field--~~ With the millions of people who write a lot of ~~bad~~ bad work, 99 per cent of it never gets published because publishing houses, ^{by} ~~for~~ whatever criteria they use--whether it's saleability or whatever--screen a tremendous amount of the output of American writers. And it used to be the galleries more or less served that same screening process as publishing houses. They would see on a given day maybe ten or twenty outrageously bad artists, but they would only show a small percentage of the work being done. Now if you increase the number of galleries, ~~you get--~~ ^g you dilute that screening process. Gallery people in town here--Francine Seders has had marvelous anecdotes-- A woman brought in a painting, and she asked Francine to look at it and appraise it and asked her would she consider giving her a show and showing this in her gallery. And Francine, the dealer, was being very, very politic and saying, "I'd like to see some more, and perhaps if you could show me some drawings and some more paintings, I might be able to make a decision." The lady said, "What do you mean, more? This is the first painting I've done. I don't have any more. This is the first painting I've painted." Well, something was terribly wrong. The woman had painted her first painting, and instead of seeing it as you might your first squawk

on a violin when you start to play-- In no other field, whether it's gymnastics or playing the violin, would your first year's production, the first year of time spent sawing at a violin or doing headstands or whatever--would you go out and line up a ~~show at Carnegie Hall or whatever~~ ^{concert}. You just wouldn't think of it. You'd think, "Oh, my God, all I'm doing is playing the scales or doing warmup exercises or building up my muscles." But in art, the first thing somebody does-- he makes a painting, a copy of a photograph of ^{their} Aunt Emily or whatever-- they did it and it looks halfway decent, so they take it out and they enter it in an art show or ask a gallery to show it. It's this kind of screening process that gets hurt. The real function a gallery can serve, ~~one of the best~~, is simply this editorial function--screening out from the public most of the crap, just like the publishing houses do. ~~That just doesn't happen when you have a gallery-- It's possible now to take almost any kind of art you can conceive of to create right now, if we sat down and /~~ ^{did it,} ~~you could take it out and find someplace that would show it. You would have a clientele. Maybe that's healthy, but I think it's-- Oh, I don't know, it's a hard question to resolve. But~~ I guess I believe in this kind of-- Just like the artist who's any good ~~selects terribly what he--~~ he might do hundreds of works, and he'll show twenty out of all his year or two years' production. He'd show twenty paintings. It would be nice if galleries ~~or whatever~~ could also exert this feeling, so that only the best reached the public's eye. ~~I think these galleries have to be pretty altruistic. They have to pick good work like fine old galleries used to do, not just what will sell, what's going down right now.~~

SWENSON: I can appreciate their side of it, too. They have to stay in business in order to keep going. That's hard, too. I think, too, that one thing

that people who are not artists do not realize is that artists discard a lot of bad work, ~~and things like that.~~ I have friends who say, "Oh, don't throw it away. Give it to me." (Laughter) And I say, "No, it's going to be burned right now."

DAILEY: And they don't understand your horror at the idea that this Sally Swenson thing would be out as something you wouldn't let out of your studio, nonetheless picked up and cherished by someone. It's like a writer ~~signs a check or something or~~ writes a note to his milkman, and somebody thinks it's worthy of being published in the New Yorker.

SWENSON: That's right.

DAILEY: That's true, you know. Nobody would think if Hemingway wrote a note to his cleaning lady, saying, "Pick up the debris from that party we had last night," nobody would think of publishing it as one of his pithy little short stories. But the kind of crap that an artist might do as a think piece is picked up and framed and hung on somebody's wall.

SWENSON: I love Mark Tobey's work, but I think there are an awful lot of rotten Mark Tobey's. They look like he's had four beers or something when he did them.

DAILEY: In the Midwest we saw only the best of the Tobey's, and when I was in school I would think, "~~Gee~~" "This Mark Tobey is a tremendous artist," someone I was really fascinated by. I was very excited to come out here, I got a job out here, and I thought, "Gee, that's where Mark Tobey comes from, the Northwest, and Morris Graves." Well, when I came out here and I kept seeing only bad examples, I must say he ~~kind of~~ shrunk from that godlike position ^{when I saw} ~~by seeing~~ all the bad work that has been kept--little sketches he gave away as-- in return for a meal or something, and now they're framed and presented as a ~~major~~ Tobey--

SWENSON: In somebody's collection.

DAILEY: Yeah.

~~SWENSON: Did you see his most recent show at the Museum?~~

~~DAILEY: I didn't. Part of the time we were gone.~~

~~SWENSON: It's still on, I think.~~

~~DAILEY: Oh, it's still on?~~

~~SWENSON: I think so. I think until November 20th. I think today's the last day. I'm not sure, but you might-- I don't know. It's very good, I think. And some of his new things are quite exciting. Some of them are nice, a little looser.~~

~~DAILEY: Ahh.~~

~~SWENSON: A little bigger.~~

✓ We were talking a little while ago about regional art as opposed to New York and so on. Do you think that it's dying out, or do you think that it will--?

DAILEY: Oh, yeah. I think it is. ^{Mass} The communication ^{assures that} ~~makes~~ Everything that New York is doing, no matter how preposterous, immediately gets transmitted out to the provinces. Anything that is familiar seems less preposterous. ~~And my~~ ^{FOLKS} ~~books~~ ^{now} ~~live~~ in Arkansas, in a very rural, remote part of the state, up in the mountains, and some of these very rural mountaineers have television, and it's really strange to go into these literally tin-roofed shacks and see a TV set on and watch a man who's never been more than twenty-two miles from where he was born watching network TV, the kind of discussions with--maybe-- William Buckley interviewing (laughter) someone and this Arkansan watching all that. Or some guy in rural Arkansas watching Kojak.

~~That's for out.~~

SWENSON: How do they react to it?

DAILEY: Well, they just kind of sit there, and pretty soon it becomes very familiar. That's what they watch on TV. And they discuss it with their neighbors. So, all of a sudden, something that you would imagine ~~to be~~ ^{for instance the} incomprehensible, ~~and~~ / complex, layered, neurotic, dangerous society of New York, ^{becomes} ~~is at least~~ familiar to some isolated, rural mountaineer in Arkansas. That's kind of what happens in art. Someone in the boondocks is now looking at some far out work of art. He says, "Oh, I know that. That's a Jasper ^{JOHN'S} Jones." There comes a certain amount of familiarity.

SWENSON: What do you think of the whole idea of reproduction? Do you think that familiarity-- Some people have felt-- I remember I read an article a long time ago by John ^{CANADAY} ~~Kennedy~~ of the New York Times. Well, he thought Van Gogh had been ruined because too many reproductions had been made, bad reproductions of his work. Do you think that this has a danger in that it--well, it makes everybody, all the young students and all have a pressure to paint a certain way, or think a certain way?

DAILEY: Hmmm. Reproduction has one bad aspect. I'm not sure if it's that. You know Van Gogh, for instance. There's a magic in Van Gogh. He's astounding. He's like Raphael. They used to say you'd go into any peasant hovel, and there'd be a Raphael madonna on the wall in South America. Van Gogh has kind of replaced him for our culture. The most benighted place will have a Van Gogh on the wall. The only bad thing about it is that again it's sort of like, "Oh, yeah, that's Van Gogh. My grandma had him on the wall," or "My dentist has him in the waiting room." You see Van Gogh literally everywhere, and you go to

the dentist and there's Van Gogh. You go to a house, there's a cheap Van Gogh print on the wall. You go to a museum, and there's a museum store selling fancy Van Gogh reproductions. He becomes kind of like George Washington on the dollar bill. He becomes ~~kind of~~ a thing we've grown up with. A truly revolutionary painting like, say, "The Sunflower" or a statement of torment like those wheatfield paintings becomes just kind of, "Oh, yeah, there's Van Gogh's wheatfields." Well, he leaves the wheatfields and commits suicide in anguish over his life and his painting, but the wheatfields is just this charming painting that that guy Van Gogh did.

SWENSON: Do you ~~feel it's charming~~ ? *e*

DAILEY: ~~Well, but it's always presented--~~ *e*

SWENSON: ~~That's right. In a gold frame and--~~ *e*

DAILEY: Or a curiosity. One of the most moving things is that painting of him smoking his pipe, all bundled up with his ear bandaged. Well, I don't know many people who would cut off their ear in anguish over their difficulties in life with painting. But this just becomes old Van Gogh, who cut off his ear, and someone puts that painting up on their wall, not as a hideous, frightening, desperate self-mutilation, but as a pleasant picture of a guy puffin' his pipe, and "Oh, yeah, that bandage is simply because he's the guy that cut off his ear." That kind of cheapens a lot of rich experiences.

SWENSON: Although it does help students, I think, to see ^{works} / they could never have seen maybe otherwise. Not everybody can afford to go to Europe or New York.

DAILEY: Sure, sure. I like that. I think that still is a very, very good thing. But the thing I think happens is overexposure. It's impossible for anyone in our culture to look at the Mona Lisa and see it for what

it is. It has become so much a symbol. The Mona Lisa, when it came to New York on that cultural exchange, there were several very sick things about that. One was that it crossed the ocean in an ocean liner to protect it from a crash or something. The crate that it was specially put in had special flotation gear attached to it, and a radio direction finder sending radio signals, so that if anything happened to that ship, that crate with the Mona Lisa in it could be found by searching aircraft and ships. They didn't issue ~~the passengers--~~ the human beings didn't get issued a life jacket with a beeper that would guide the rescue parties to them, but the damn Mona Lisa did. (Laughter).

SWENSON: Yeah.

DAILEY: Then when it got to New York, and there were crowds lined up like four blocks or so and four abreast to go see it, they were selling T-shirts with the Mona Lisa silkscreened on them. Anything that has that much exposure is not any longer seen as a-- Somebody said when actually the New Yorkers got to look at it, they found a slightly greenish lady (laughter), and the comments that were made in the lines of people going to look at the Mona Lisa were just totally asinine. Like "Hey, she's green!" "Is that all?" "It's kind of small, kind of ratty." It was this ~~kind of~~ total confusion between a mass culture image and what the thing actually was.

SWENSON: I think when Michelangelo's Pieta came they had a conveyor belt--

DAILEY: Yeah, so they couldn't ^{DAWDL} ~~waddle~~. (Laughter). It's kind of sick.

SWENSON: Kind of funny, yeah. Well, what about the whole idea, too, that--I don't like to say high art-- but, serious art. There just isn't going to be that much of an audience. How many people are going to be that seriously involved in anything, like -- I was going to say football.

A lot of people like to watch it but maybe casually.

DAILEY: Yes, yes.

SWENSON: There aren't that many serious devotees.

DAILEY: This is where art in our time, I think, has kind of gone wrong. Part of this is art education and the cultural tendency to-- one is supposed to like art. If I weren't an artist, if I weren't a painter I think I'd figure, "Well, hell with art! It's a bunch of stuff I don't understand. I'm interested in writing poems or doing geological surveys" or whatever I was doing. ~~This is the way~~ I used to teach humanities (laughter), and a statistic that used to bother me and ~~frost me~~, and I used to tell my students, "On any given Sunday ~~there~~ ^{go to a} in America--far more people attend art museums than ~~watch~~ ^{game.} baseball game."

SWENSON: Really?

DAILEY: People go to art museums in the millions compared to the people who go out to the ballpark and watch a baseball game. Now museum directors and people in the art world generally tend to think, "Wonderful! That's improving society." Most painters I know, including myself, think, "Incredibly awful! How terrible!" ~~Because what this does is take~~ ^{something that can be--} ~~it's sort of like everyone~~ ^{if millions} ~~and thousands~~ of people went out and studied brain surgery. It's a very significant thing, but it isn't necessarily a mass thing that people should ~~sort of~~ ^{the} be dragooned into. There was / Maggie and Jiggs cartoon, "Bringing up Father," where Maggie was always hauling Jiggs off to listen to grand opera, and he'd much rather be down at Dinty's or whatever this bar was, eating corned beef and drinking. I resent that kind of dragooning of the middle class slob out of his environment and his normal interests and saying, "You should go out and look at art. It's good for you." I think art in the past

has always gotten along by having ~~the~~ people who were interested in it, ^{who} worked and kind of dug into it and worked to understand it. But if you take art out and circulate it and kind of proselytize it, it seems to me it's like the Mona Lisa, it would kind of dilute and cheapen it. That's not a very fashionable opinion.

SWENSON: Oh, I don't know. Maybe it is. It depends on who you're asking. I think I would agree with that mostly.

DAILEY: The government now sends artmobiles. The state will send an artmobile around.

SWENSON: Yeah, like a bookmobile.

DAILEY: I'd rather send two bookmobiles and no artmobile.

SWENSON: Do you like to collect other artists' work?

DAILEY: Oh, I-- I feel kind of dumb answering that. ~~I'm very perverse--~~ I sometimes have works of my close friends. But the reason I don't is that I've never felt much of a desire to own anything. The idea of having things--fine things, fine rugs, or fine paintings, or fine draperies-- I don't know. I love the idea, say, of a guy named Joe Smith, whom I know, out painting. And I think of him as an ongoing fellow, but to feel that I ~~kind of~~ have to garner in and have a little of piece of Joe Smith, artist, hanging on my wall, I usually don't.

SWENSON: That's interesting.

DAILEY: I feel kind of subversive saying that.

SWENSON: Oh, no, everybody has different--

DAILEY: ~~I feel that the further removed from my own experience the art is--~~ I'd rather have the art of Joe Smith, local slob artist whom I know and respect, than I would a prize example of Inca carving or Mexican-- You go to so many artists' houses, and they have a-- I'm a slob. Let's

face it. My furniture is from St. Vincent's.

SWENSON: No. You can sit on it. The chairs don't break.

DAILEY: I don't care about furniture as long as it's comfortable. *AND LOOKS OK.* ~~I like the~~
~~idea of--~~ I love the idea that there's someone named Mike Spafford out There
 painting gorgeous paintings, but I don't feel the need to buy one and
 put it in my dining room. The phenomenon of him as an ongoing,
 creating person whose work I knew ten years ago and will hopefully
 know ten, fifteen, twenty years from now--that experience is very
 meaningful to me, watching the progression and growth. But to have
 a moment of that work kind of frozen in time and preserved for me,
 I just don't think that way, I guess.

SWENSON: Hmm. That's interesting.

DAILEY: But when I've been given something-- I'm sitting here looking at a
 couple of pots that are from a couple of dear friends of mine-- but I
 think of those as--"That's a Harry Myers over there. Good old Harry.
 I wonder what he's doing." I'm not thinking, "There's a great state-
 ment."

SWENSON: (Laughter)

DAILEY: That kind of phoney art world thing. All the people who have my
 paintings, I hope they think of them that way, not "Here's this
 beautiful thing." I hope they think in terms of a continuum of
 growth and development, not an object.

SWENSON: I think we're running out of questions.

DAILEY: Oh, good. We must be boring the hell out of the listeners. (Laughter)

SWENSON: ~~for every moment.~~ I think it's been fun. Can you think
 of anything you'd like to say in closing?

DAILEY: No. It's probably seemed kind of pedantic, all this talk about the
 art world.

SWENSON: Oh, no. I think people like to know what the artist thinks. I think in some ways that artists think differently from museum directors, who think differently from collectors, ~~or-- So I think it's kind of interesting to--~~ And then artists think differently from each other. So it's kind of interesting to find out--

DAILEY: It always bothers me--and I say I feel kind of subversive of this-- I think on the scale of human experience or human values, let's take maybe a less controversial subject-- let's take literature. Think of great literature. What do you look for? You don't look for the well-turned phrase or the narrow interpretation. You look for a definitive statement about kind of a condition of man or human relationship or man's experience or man's suffering, or something kind of grand. Yet when you talk to artists or museum people or collectors or something, it always comes down to--too often, I think--to kind of trivial things like, "Isn't this a fine example of--?" or "I just love the coloration here."

SWENSON: Doesn't it remind you of so-and-so's work? (Laughter)
nitpicking.

DAILEY: Yeah. We become so kind of specific and / I'm very general in my approach to everything. ~~I'll look at a student's work or an art work, and I'll think-- Or I'll say something.~~ I'll say, "Gee, I really like Bonard^N as an artist." Someone will say, "Oh, Bonard^N's terrible. Look at these-- look at this. This part is bad in the painting." I know all that, but I still-- I don't see that. It's very much. like a--something you live with or you love You don't see the wart on the cheek or something. Bonard^N paints his wife maybe over a period of sixty years, and you can date his paintings-- like his wife in a painting where she must have been fifty-five or sixty

years old--she looks like a teenager, the way she did when he first was painting her, ~~in the~~ ². He didn't see the change, or at least he didn't paint the change. It seems to me that art gets so bogged down with petty details of technique. And the art world is so wrapped up in who's doing what, ^{this year} and where is someone in relation to someone else, and a lot of nonsense like that. The kind of overview is much more preferable. Art, in a way, tends to make a great deal out of very minor phenomena, techniques. "Isn't it marvelous, the brush stroke through here?" someone will say. Well, I'd say, "Okay, yeah, great brush stroke. But what's the statement the guy's making?" Matisse is a genius of the twentieth century, an absolute genius. Not because of the neat way he designs something or some color relationship that one can isolate and teach to high school sophomores like Art Education does. But Matisse is a genius because he's an obsessive person who ~~kind of~~ returns to the basic themes and mines them and changes them, and they change with him. And when he's sixty years old, he's dealing with the same ideas he was as a thirty-year-old, but he shows thirty years of intervening time. It just seems to me those large sort of things ought to be kept to the forefront. So often in art it's little, trivial things like "Who's in this show?" or "What's this relationship of this man's work to some passing fad?" or something. (Laughter) That's kind of rambling, *though*,

SWENSON: ~~Not at all. It's really about the same~~

DAILEY: ~~Well,~~ this has been very nice. Sitting here chatting.

SWENSON: I've run out of tape, so--.

DAILEY: Good. Turn it off. (Laughter)

SWENSON: Okay. Thank you very much.

DAILEY: That's really great.