Interviewee: ARTHUR MINTERS
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
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[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

MEH: [GIVES IDENTIFICATION] Arthur, how did you come to be at Black Mountain College?

AM: Well, I was very fortunate in that my dad was an outdoor decorator who had a studio in the Village, and I used to go down – this is before the Second World War, by the way – with him on the weekends. I worked with him in the morning, and then we'd stop off at Whitney Museum every, every weekend, practically, when the Whitney Museum was on Eighth Street. Or the Sculpture Garden, which was on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street. My father liked the Abstract Expressionists – and there was Pollock and Motherwell – and so we were into abstract art. Dad was from Russia and in the early 'twenties he worked in a Soviet lithograph studio, doing the posters for Trotsky's agit/prop trains that went through the front. Dad was one of the members of that Soviet lithograph studio in Zhitomir (city) that worked for the government doing these propaganda posters.

MEH: I'm not catching the word – agit/prop train?

AM: Yes. These were called agit-posters. These were the posters that were made and hung on trains and trams to try to gain support for the Red Army against

the Interventionists – the Whites, the bandits, Poles, the Germans. Everybody invaded Russia after the First World War. I mean, most of the Western countries. So he was pretty up-to-date with what was going on. When I was in high school, I had a student teacher in my junior year who was enrolled at NYU School of Ed, and he invited me down to meet Baziotes, who was the teacher, his teacher. He was on the faculty. So I was introduced to the group that was associated with the Kootz Gallery, and Motherwell was one of them. The year after, when I began my senior year, I had a part-time job in the bullpen in an advertising agency, because I was an art major. I met one of the people in the copyright department that was doing the collateral material for the ads that we were doing, and she also was very taken by the new movement. We went to see the Ninth Street Show, which you've probably heard of, and I was really impressed with it.

MEH: Now this was at the Ninth Street Gallery?

AM: This was – Yeah. This was a loft that the Abstract Expressionists had rented to show their work.

MEH: Right. Now, but they had several shows there. This was a particular one, or – ?

AM: Well, I just know it as – I think it was in '51, just before I went – or it was '50, I'm not sure about it – but I had – Franz Kline had shown and, of course, de Kooning and Motherwell and Tworkov and all the other ones. When I graduated from William Howard Taft in 1950, I was supposed to go to Brown to study art history and painting, but my father's finances took a dive, for some reason I never found out, so I went to City College for a year. It was then that I met Bob

Stone, who was a painter and a fellow student. I had gone there mostly to study history with the head of the department because I was very much interested in history, American and European mostly. In the second half of that semester, of all people, Hans Richter, the great Dadaist, taught a course in cinema at the Old Army Building, and the entire course was Eisenstein's, The Battleship Potemkin, divided into sixteen sessions. Montage. Pattern. Motion. Death. So forth. Also, I must say, in high school I had a very progressive design teacher – that was 1948-49 – who introduced me to a whole series of literature. At that time, the Documents of Modern Art came out. Wittenborn and Schultz started publishing. The teacher put me onto it. One of the required readings for this design course, aside from the Documents, was Pevsner's book on the Pioneers of Modern Design. The bibliography to that book mentioned the new Bauhaus – the one at Chicago and Black Mountain. After I finished my year (1950-51) at City College, I was really anxious to get away and to study with Bob Motherwell. So, all these forces came together. That's how I heard about Black Mountain – through either Baziotes, through the bibliography, and meeting some of the artists at the Ninth Street Show.

MEH: Do you recall – You were one year out of high school then, and you –

AM: I was one year out of high school, right.

MEH: Do you recall how you traveled physically?

AM: Yes. I remember exactly, because I loved it. I took the train to Washington at Penn Station, and then changed trains on the Southern Railroad for Black Mountain. It was a local, because the train left Washington at 6:30 p.m. and got

into Black Mountain the next morning at six o'clock a.m. I recall that my mother had bought some stuff for me, some clothes, and I said, "This isn't appropriate. I'm going to an art school. I want old clothes, you know, painting clothes, torn shirts, torn underwear, jeans, and so forth." So, reluctantly she agreed to let me to take my old clothes, which came in just perfect down there. Yeah.

MEH: Had you been in the South before?

AM: I had never been south of Washington. It was a new experience for me.

MEH: Did you have any expectations about what the college would look like physically?

AM: I had. I had seen pictures of it in one of the books that I had gotten. I had thought it would look something like the Bauhaus at Dessau or Weimar.

MEH: And – ?

AM: And it did! I was amazed – except the scenery was a little different. It wasn't as urban. I didn't real- – I called it "Magic Mountain," because it was so isolated in the fifties. I guess it was isolated, period – you know. But I just loved it. For one thing, the studio room – I never really slept in the dorm, because you had that bunkbed and you had showers and bathrooms in the studio building. So, for me it was like heaven on earth. This was exactly what I was looking for – because aside from studying history with Professor Cohn, meeting Bob Stone, and the experience with Hans Richter, talking to him about Dada and so forth, it was like a continuation of my high school. I really wanted to get out of the Bronx, get into an environment that was really what I thought would be a painting environment, and this just was – I mean, I was so happy.

MEH: What do you think was the effect of having your own little studio?

AM: Well, it was – I really grew up in a sense, artistically, there, because whoever was there before had left a lot of records. There was a record player, and I began listening to music. Now I always was interested in classical music, because my mother was a classical music buff, and she would take me to the Lewisohn Stadium concerts, which was at City College also, you probably remember. But I hadn't heard really twentieth-century music, and there I discovered Bartok. I remember his Concerto for Orchestra. Bruckner and the other Viennese composer, Mahler. So, that was wonderful. Then seeing the works of the other students. I was really taken by the what I called the regulars, because I was a summer person. The influence of Albers was very very strong.

MEH: We're going to [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING]

AM: I was impressed by the regular students who had been there before, in the fall and spring terms. The work was very sophisticated. I was a little taken aback by the fact that the Albers influence was so strong on the student population. After spending the two months there or whatever time it was, I could understand it because you are isolated, and this was one of the things that I felt Black Mountain suffered from – a small faculty and a small student body, and if you had a strong artistic personality, like Albers was, you could have that type of influence on students. But I still was impressed with the quality of the work. Of course, that summer Rauschenberg was there, and Twombly was there, and some other people. Dan Rice. So, when Ben Shahn came, in the beginning I thought it was very good because here was a completely different point of view.

I can remember one incident where I helped Rauschenberg and Twombly carry a large, rolled-up canvas to Ben Shahn's cottage and helped them unwind it. Shahn looked at it and looked at it and he couldn't – he didn't know what to make of it. Then he said, you know, something like "So what?" It was very disappointing, I mean, that he couldn't extend himself as a teacher to say, "This is very impressive," or whatever, and although I may not symp – you know, something. Then the first week studying with Ben Shahn, he had said something about Cézanne. I was working on a still life in a kind of semi-abstract manner. It was a little like Morandi, the Italian metaphysician. We were talking about Cézanne, and Shahn said, "If Cézanne had painted Madonnas instead of still lifes, his Madonnas would be better," something to that effect, and I said, "Cézanne's Madonnas were his still lifes," because he never used a model. He used his sister's fashion magazines to get his figures in position and so forth, because he painted so slowly. He used wax fruit for his still lifes, because real fruit became rotten with the length of time it took. It must have struck Ben Shahn in a very negative way, which I didn't intend. He said, "I don't think we see eye to eye." So, I left the class. That's when I went into photography. I had been interested in photography in high school. I was art editor of our yearbook and at P.S. 90, I belonged to the Photography Club. I had been taking photography, but never artistic photography. Never got the two together. So I started studying photography with Siskind and Callahan.

MEH: Did they actually hold a photography class?

AM: They had a photography class, yeah. Had a real photography class, and we had a darkroom which wasn't very good. It was small and it wasn't well airconditioned or ventilated. Every time I came out, I was dizzy from the chemicals and the poor ventilation – which was one of the reasons that I didn't want to continue though they had offered me a scholarship to go back to Chicago with them to IIT. I thanked them but I said I wanted to establish myself in New York. The one part of the photographic experience that I didn't like there was the darkroom experience.

MEH: Did you – You studied with them. Why don't we look at your photographs now? I mean one question I had is did you go out into the area and photograph with them? Or –

AM: Yeah, we had these field trips and again we had patterns – [INTERRUPTION]

MEH: So we were talking about the photography classes. You said you made field trips.

AM: We made field trips and we had certain assignments. For instance, these were rayograms that Aaron set us up to do photographs without a camera, with just exposing them to the enlarger and then to the photographic chemicals, but objects in without that. Then we had a whole syllabus of trying to do patterns, inanimate objects that we found, and this is where these things came from – doors and wheels. Here's another one.

MEH: Right. Now what –

AM: Patterns. This is a hose, firehose that was under the porch. They had a lot.

MEH: Okay. Why don't we – [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING] At the time, did you see the relationship between the work – especially of someone like Siskind – and Abstract Expressionist painting?

AM: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I did. Definitely. Because I really liked the works, the work of like, say, Motherwell was a favorite. Baziotes. Franz Kline, whom I later studied with in '52 and '53. '52, mostly. Yes, I could see the relationship of photography as an abstract form. Of course, in high school I had seen the work of Weston, and I had seen the work of other photographers – many of the German photographers. Moholy-Nagy, for instance, and the Bauhaus work that was done in Germany.

MEH: So, you were really steeped, familiar with photography as an abstract form and an art form.

AM: Right. Oh yeah.

MEH: Who were other students who were seriously photographing?

AM: I don't remember. There was a young student from Alfred who did the portrait of Motherwell here. I didn't do that. That was his. He gave me a copy. He was a part of that. I don't remember his name, but he was very interested in photography.

MEH: You mentioned Siskind and Callahan. Did you work with Arthur Siegel at all?

AM: No.

MEH: What about – Do you remember the photography teacher who was there –

AM: Yes, a woman –

MEH: Hazel Archer? Hazel Larsen.

AM: Larsen. Yeah. She was good.

MEH: Was she teaching that summer, or was she –

AM: I don't remember her teaching that summer. The two I remember are Callahan and Siskind. I took a course in literature with Olson, Charles Olson. Of course, I was waiting for Motherwell, and when Motherwell came, then I was really happy, because we saw eye to eye. I mean, I really appreciated his knowledge. He was the kind of painter that I had been used to, read about and so forth, in terms of the Renaissance, he was very literate. I had read his writings. He had a wonderful background, both in philosophy and in art history. So it was very easy. Francine du Plessix mentions in her book a student who used to do these free drawings, fifty of them a day – that was me. I would go into the studio, just to loosen up, which was one of his principles, just to get everything loose.

MEH: Who were other students in that class?

AM: There was Francine. There was Jonathan Williams. There was Jay Watt, who was a music student. Dan Rice was there.

MEH: This is the painting class?

AM: Oh, the painting class? I don't remember who else. There was a student from Detroit. There was a girl from Washington. They are the two I remember.

MEH: Tell me more about Motherwell. How did he conduct his class? What was he like then?

AM: Well, he was – he had – he came with his wife and a small, I think it was his daughter. She must have been one or two. She was young. I remember, because I babysat for them. His class was very casual, and what he wanted us,

I think, to do was not to become overly concerned about materials. I remember his saying, don't worry about Belgian linen and fine oils, because they only inhibit you, and if you don't make a masterpiece, then you become very disappointed. Learn to use, you know, crayons, crayolas, the telephone book, toweling, so that whatever you do with the ordinary materials that are available in a dime store will be effective. Then your expectations are not enlarged and you don't feel let down. I thought that was great. So we did collages which are the equivalent of what these rayograms. We did automatic drawings. I didn't spend much time talking. I went back to that great little studio that I had and worked there, put on Bartok or Schoenberg or the other Viennese twentieth-century composers all the time. I very rarely went back to my dorm, except to change clothes and so forth, because the studio had such a great – for me, a great atmosphere.

MEH: Do you have memories, recollections of particular students? You said you remembered Francine.

AM: Yeah. Yeah, I remember Jay Watt because he was chairman of the Alcohol Committee, and liked to drink. Why they ever made him chairman of the party committee. For some reason I was assigned to his committee, and every – I think it was either Friday or Saturday night, we had a party. Black Mountain was dry. So we used to go into Asheville to get the booze. Jay had been there in the spring, so he had contact with moonshine distributors, and we used to get jugs to put into the punch. We used to have a big punchbowl and they made a nice punch. I remember <u>one</u> time it was bad stuff, because the whole student body,

whoever indulged, and the faculty got sick and they were all lying all over the place. I suspect – I know this, because when I recuperated, I remember there was a concert that next night with John Cage, who was there also, and David Tudor, on a prepared piano. I felt so bad – I mean, with a terrible hangover – it was gin, moonshine gin – that I had to leave the concert because I would have gotten sick. I went back to the studio to just lie down. So, I remember that. I told him afterwards, "I want to get off this committee because" – It was cheap, and maybe he was even getting a cut of it. I don't know. But that I remember clearly. It was a lovely concert, and I was looking forward to hearing Cage and Tudor. But we were in no condition physically to appreciate it. It takes the best physical condition to listen to music like that, and with a terrible hangover it's quite a chore.

MEH: Do you remember particular parties they had that summer?

AM: Well, we had one every, almost every weekend. I remember there was a little inn that we used to go to, a little place – Motherwell and a few of the art students. It had great barbecue pork and barbecued beef, which was my first real introduction to Southern cooking. Very weak beer. We would go there and discuss the art scene and the arts and so forth. It was very nice. It was very nice to exchange that informal relationship with a teacher, because I hadn't had that. When I was invited down to NYU to paint with Baziotes, yes, but I mean I was a guest there and I was in high school, and all of the students were undergraduates at college. Of course City College was very structured, even the course that – Hans Richter, being, you know, German and seeing The

Battleship Potemkin, he had very rigid – so we didn't have much of a chance to converse afterwards. But this was really a nice kind of – It wasn't until afterwards that this thing began again, with the old Cedar Tavern.

[INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING]

MEH: Were you aware at Black Mountain – I think I'm correct in saying that Motherwell's edited book on Dada had just been published by Wittenborn.

AM: Wittenborn and Schultz [PH], right.

MEH: Were you aware of that at the time?

AM: Yeah, I had read it. I had read everything that was available, because I had my own library. It was something my father instilled in me. He had a library. I had a library. I was reading everything I could on Twentieth-Century design and Twentieth-Century movements, art movements.

MEH: What do you think was the difference betw- – you sort of touched on it, but in more detail – between studying, for example, with obviously very good people, you know, in a more traditional setting, and studying with also very good people in a setting such as Black Mountain?

AM: Well, it depended on your personality, I think. I think it's a great personality question. Some people need structure. Some students need structure. I could see where they would be under someone like Albers, who was a very structured person. Some people are more free, in their lifestyle and in their approach to art. I mean, the accident was important. That was one of Motherwell's greatness – and so were the Surrealists, and Dadaists, with the influence of the accident – spontaneity. I think to rely on intuition, spontaneity,

accident – the accidental – takes a certain personality, and that is me. I divide them into classicists and into the Baroque personality, and I happen to be the latter, you know, because my whole style – from the beginning I was always attracted to, for instance, starting with modern art, with the Venetian school as against the Roman school, and then going all through art history, up to the nineteenth and twentieth century, from Goya and Delacroix and Daumier and the French School, and then to van Gogh and to Chaim Soutine, and then Arshile Gorky. I mean I see a whole progression of expressionists, as against classicists. So I was one of those. That's why the structured approach would be have been very difficult for me. I probably could do it because when I studied art history under Professor Janson at NYU, afterwards, it was a more structured – But as far as painting was concerned, and photography, and sculpting – because I had studied later on with Ibram Lassaw, I was an intuitionist. I loved experimenting in drawing and so forth. Now to some people – To a person like Ben Shahn, I suppose it was wasted, it had no social message. I was prejudiced also. You see my father, being an outdoor decorator and a commercial artist, never thought Ben Shahn was that great a painter. He thought he was a very fine graphic artist.

MEH: You say your father was an "outdoor decorator."

AM: Right. He did silkscreen banners, and he did posters, and he did canopies and awnings, movie marquees. During World War II, when I was going to school, I worked with him on the weekends. I was a rack boy. It was silkscreen. You see,

when the silkscreen came off, I would pick up the placard and put it on a rack. It was like a baker's rack – to dry, you see. So, I had seen good commercial art.

MEH: Right. I think you were probably far more sophisticated in your knowledge of art history and the tradition of art than most Black Mountain students.

AM: Right. Yeah. I came with a lot of reading background. See, my father taught me how to paint in watercolors. We painted together. When I was six years old, we started painting – going out and painting together. Then he was telling me his stories of Russia prior to the Revolution. In order to graduate from the Russian gymnasium, you had to have passed art, and he was a tutor in the summers, him and his brother who was also a decorator, except his brother was an indoor decorator. So he had that entire experience. He would teach his fellow students, earn some good money, and then go out and buy English watercolors, like Windsor Newton – Windsor Newton watercolors and paints and blocks, you know. So I had that whole – plus his library. He had five hundred books. Most of them were on typography, because he was very interested in the styles. He was called upon to fit different styles or awnings and banners and so forth. But there was a lot of Russian art history. I had seen the Supremacists, I had seen Kandinsky, I had seen the Blaue Reiter. When I first entered high school, I didn't know who they were. That was my background. Plus stopping off at the Whitney almost every week, and the Museum of Modern Art and the Sculpture Garden. The Village at that time was wonderful.

MEH: Going back to Black Mountain, a couple of things. Did you ever leave the campus while you were there to go into the surrounding area besides [OVERTALK] going to Roy's? Oh, you used to go to Asheville?

AM: Asheville. To pick up the booze for the weekend. That was about it, because I didn't have a car and I didn't drive then, so I was stuck on campus except when we went to that local tavern for sandwiches, and the trips to get the liquor for the parties. No, I hadn't gone out.

MEH: Did you have any interest in any of the drama or dance things happening?

AM: Yeah, I did. I mean, I attended the performance. But to recreate the atmosphere, I was so involved in photography and in my work that I didn't – I did take a course, a literature course, with Olson. I sat in on that. Then there was another German historian there whose name I forget. That was very – I think he gave a course in Twentieth Century History, and I think I attended that when I could. But, as I say, this was like a kid in a candy factory.

MEH: What was Olson's class like?

AM: Well, it was a creative writing class, and he asked us, like, to keep a diary and then to read what we had written and to comment on it.

MEH: What was he like as a teacher?

AM: He was very good. I'm prejudiced in the sense that I like to have a pedagogical experience where the professor or the instructor brings in a lot of the cultural background. He was very good in Greek literature. He brought in a lot of the Greek plays, mentioned the Greek playwrights, Roman poets that influenced I think some of his writings. I liked that. Again Olson people came down for

dances, people came down for music. I came down for painting mostly. There were a few people that did photography like that student from Alfred, I remember, State University of New York at Alfred, that did the Motherwell portrait.

MEH: Did you do – that summer – did you do any – Now I've lost my question. It'll come back. Do you have any recollection of Katherine Litz, the dancer? She was teaching dance that summer.

AM: No. But what's his name, Merce Cunningham was there, I think, and I remember him. I think it was Cunningham, because there was a male dancer, We got off the train together, I remember. It was like the train pulled out of Black Mountain like six o'clock in the morning and there were three or four people. I'm sure we were all for Black Mountain, and finally a car or two cars or a taxi came for us and gathered us up. But I think he was the dancer that was there.

MEH: Do you have any particular memories of mealtime at the college?

AM: Yeah, I do.

MEH: Like –

AM: Like I remember Sundays – you had to take your supper meal early, because the kitchen closed down Sundays right after lunch. Being full from lunch, I always under packed my dinner on Sundays. The meals were good. They were simple, but good. What I remember most is apple butter. I hadn't had any apple butter in New York for some reason, and I fell in love with apple butter. I really discovered peanut butter, which was also not part of my upbringing. So those two things were like new experiences. Of course, as I say, the Southern

cooking at that little tavern, the barbecued beef and so forth were delicious. We ate cafeteria style, family style, on tables. We cleaned up, had to take the stuff in, and if I remember correctly they had a rotation. You had to either set the table or help clean up and so forth. Every student was assigned to a certain task.

MEH: Did you do anything that you remember particularly on the Work Program? Did you work on the farm or anything like that?

AM: No, I didn't. I didn't work on the farm. I know Dan Rice did and a couple of other people were doing a great deal. No, I don't know if they asked me, but I didn't. I saw them all working very hard, but I didn't do anything. The only thing I did was I was on the Alcohol Committee [LAUGHS]. That was the only thing – and I got off that after that hangover.

MEH: Do you have any other particular memories about the college? Any anecdotes or specific things that you remember?

AM: Not really. Except what I mentioned – the classes, Motherwell's class. The parties, where we all got a little too high because the alcohol was too powerful.

MEH: Did you do decorations for the parties, or wear costumes or anything like that?

AM: No, I was very, I was very focused. I wanted to get in as much painting, drawing as I could, and photography. To be part of the student body, to attend the different concerts, the parties, and so forth. But that somehow took up all my time – except evenings and Sundays. Since none of us really took enough to eat for the evening meal, Motherwell would go – he had a nice Chrysler convertible, I remember it and we'd all go and have barbecue sandwiches to

compensate for [LAUGHS] for our stingy allotments. [IRRELEVANT REMARKS ABOUT PET]

MEH: What was Rauschenberg like then?

AM: Rauschenberg was married to a lady who had been disfigured in a motorboat accident. He had different living facilities I think, so he kept pretty much to himself. He was always very pleasant. So was Cy Twombly and we would meet during the painting course. But he didn't socialize much with me. I just happened to go along that time because he needed an extra two hands and two feet to help unroll the canvas. We were on friendly terms. He liked my automatic drawings on paper. But that was it.

MEH: Any other memories. I'm asking you to remember things that happened fifty years ago.

AM: It will be fifty-one years. That's a long time. When I got down there, it was like I had gotten into Arcadia. Like the great eighteenth century landscapes that Poussin and Claude Lorrain painted, these idealized landscapes. Here I came from the Bronx and Greenwich Village. Very urban. Here was a pastoral scene, and in the middle of it, it was like Emerald City to me, you know. I just couldn't wait.

MEH: Did you consider staying?

AM: No. No. There was an isolationism that I felt was very – for me anyway, unsuitable. I wanted to get back to New York, move out of the Bronx, get a loft – which I did, with a friend who lived in the same building. When I got back in the summer of '51, that September, I had a loft with Armand Pierro and Howard

Kantowitz, the painter, on 29th Street. To me, New York at that time was a very, very vital environment, artistic environment. It always was because at that time, my father was no longer in the Village. He was where the U.N. is now. He was near Tudor City, on 43rd and First Avenue, because during the War he had to expand the operation. The loft that he had on University and Eleventh Street was too small. But I loved the Village and I never could understand why the hell he didn't live down there, but in those days my mother took care of the house, and you know how divided it was? She wanted to be in the Bronx with her sisters. But I could never figure it out, because the Village was such a great place to be.

MEH: It was an exciting time to be there.

AM: Ahh! It was still the Village. It still had the lofts and the paint shops on Eighth Street before it became commercial.

MEH: After you came back to New York, did you keep up a relationship with any of the students?

AM: Yeah, I did, with a couple of them, but then it faded out because there wasn't anybody from New York that had gone there. By then I had relationships. I started going to the Cedar, the old Cedar, the one that was between Eighth and Ninth, because of NYU and Motherwell. So I started going down there and becoming familiar and getting to know the painters. [IRRELEVANT REMARK ABOUT PET] I was really anxious to get back to New York and to establish myself, to get a studio and start working seriously.

MEH: And you did that. Did you continue in college?

AM: I continued at – Well, what happened was then I studied with Franz Kline, before he went to Black Mountain. He asked me a lot of questions about Black Mountain. I thought it would be a great experience for him to go down there. I had studied with Ibram Lassaw, metal sculpture, and then in '52-'53, I worked as his assistant. He had this Art of the Synagogue in Springfield, Mass. The synagogue was going to pay for a helper for him and he chose me, so I worked from December '52 through May of '53 in Springfield with him, doing the decoration. Motherwell was on that, and Adolph Gottlieb. I think Goodman was the architect.

MEH: In fact – Yeah, in fact Motherwell, the summer he was at Black Mountain, that summer, was working on motifs for that synagogue mural. But now you're an antiquarian book dealer.

AM: I was, yeah.

MEH: How long did you paint? How long did you – What did you do for a career?

AM: Well, what happened was I stopped painting fulltime in about 1954. When I came back from Springfield in '53, I had a very bad experience, because – Although I got along well with Lassaw and the gallery, but like I had put in – we had worked very hard in those six months, and I wasn't even invited to the ceremony, which I felt was very unfair because I had been part of it. Then I broke up with my girlfriend who lived in Boston, and so the last thing I did was, when I came back, was I got a job, a freelance job to do a metal sign for the Kootz Gallery in Provincetown. You know? So that was – Then I needed work. I needed money. So I filled an ad in the paper for a part-time packer with reading

knowledge of two foreign languages. Seventy-five cents an hour. So I applied and I got the job, and it was the best thing that happened in one way, because he was an extremely fine German Jewish antiquarian who was caught in the United States on a trip here in 1939 and remained here. I apprenticed with him, and he said to me, "You'd make a great antiquarian bookseller, especially in the arts, because you have everything going for you. You have a fine background in languages; you have a fine background in humanities, in the arts. Now I will teach you the antiquarian book business." We just hit it off. So, I stayed with him from '53. In '55 I worked myself up – the secretary left. It was a small firm, and I became his office manager and so forth.

MEH: What was his name?

AM: Paul Gottschalk. He was very famous in Berlin before the Nazis. He had established himself. He was a specialist in foreign publications – periodicals, society and academy publications, and so that's how I got into the antiquarian trade. Where he left off, I began, because I was really interested mostly in late 19th and 20th century European material. You see, because I had always had this curiosity about my parents, who were Russian, how they related. I was always interested in the transfiguration of materials. Of course, during the Second World War, you had all the Surrealists here. You had the French Surrealists here, a lot of the Abstract artists – Léger and Chagall. My father's brother's wife – my aunt – came from the same town as Chagall, so there were connections, artistic connections. It was always interesting. That's what I did.

MEH: You eventually started your own business?

AM: I started my own business with my first marriage in 1957.

MEH: And the name of that business was – ?

AM: Arthur H. Minters. Then I incorporated in '69, I think. I dealt in the arts and architecture, ephemeral materials, manifestos from the French Revolution to the mid-1950s. I continued painting, but I did it, you know, more as a hobby.

MEH: Do you think that Black Mountain had any real influence on, on you?

AM: Oh yeah.

MEH: In what way?

AM: Black Mountain realized something that my father had said about the Bohemian life in Europe, and the Village also was part of it. It was that of moving in with intellectuals – I should also say when I got back – In '53 I enrolled at the New School, studied with Lou Shanker [PH], woodcuts, and studied with Kurt Seligman, the other great Surrealist, and he gave a wonderful course on Surrealism and Magic at the New School at that time. I became friendly with him and visited him up in his farm – he had a farm in Sugarloaf, New York. I spent some time there. He had a fantastic collection, because he was one of the founding members in Paris of the “Abstraction Création,” and he had all these marvelous Dutch and German – Mondrians and other de Stijl artists, van Doesberg and so forth. So Black Mountain, I'll tell you what it did. It gave me the ability, which was very natural for me, having come from a European background, to associate with intellects and artists, poets, political people. It gave me that confidence. I knew I had it, but I never tested it. I knew I had it on the political scene in politics, because during the late '30s my father had a lot of

friends who fought in Spain. He never did, but he knew people that had fought for the Loyalist cause. Then when the Germans invaded Russia, he worked with the Russian War Relief, and he did the poster for Alexander Nevsky. I remember being the rack boy on those. During the War, they restituted the great Eisenstein film, Alexander Nevsky.

MEH: You were born in Russia, or – ?

AM: I was born in the Bronx.

MEH: Okay. [LAUGHS] Why did your father leave?

AM: My father left after the Revolution. He wanted to go to the polytechnic school to study architecture. My grandfather was an architect. At that time they wouldn't let him in because he wasn't a Communist. Prior to that, they wouldn't let him in because he was Jewish, you see. So he finally said "A plague on both your houses." He and his brother picked up, and they were going to go to Canada, where my grandfather wanted to buy into an architectural firm in Halifax. The Canadian was very close to the Russian. It was mostly wood construction, and in Russia to be a good architect you had to season your own wood. You had to select the woods and season them and then use them in your designs. They worked on the trans-Siberian railroad. So my father went ahead with his younger brother to Halifax, and he got a cable that my father had taken ill with cancer and couldn't make the trip. So the boys headed down to New York, where their aunt was living in Jamaica, Queens. That's how he came to the New World. What they wanted to do was to open up an architecture firm in Canada. But it didn't work out. That's why he left Russia. Besides, anybody who

had been a bourgeois prior to the Revolution was marked. The Soviets didn't trust you, no matter what your background was. If you were a member of the upper classes – and they were –, the new government was very suspicious, even though he had worked in a Soviet lithograph shop. But there wasn't going to be much promotion or recognition, so he felt the opportunities again were limited, so he left. [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING]

MEH: You were talking about a synopsis you wrote?

AM: Yeah, I wrote a – I answered this student, you had sent her name, she was doing research on Black Mountain, had a few questions, and I responded. One of the things I mentioned in that was that on Sundays, a lot of the locals would ride into the campus to look at us – as though we were some kind of freaks. It was like a circus. I don't know what they expected, but they came around with the cars and came out and down again. I always thought that was very, very interesting that we were being viewed like in a zoo. Bohemian Zoo, or whatever it was called. Something – what else you said was that there weren't many places in a rural environment where you could still behave like you were in Greenwich Village, and that was one of the nice things about Black Mountain. If you took Eighth Street away, and University Place, and Washington Square Park and so forth, you were back home. So that was always nice. People don't realize the extent that America benefited from the Nazi takeover of Europe. I mean we were so fortunate – they weren't – in getting so many artists.

MEH: If you look just about every artist that emerged in this country – American born artist – between 1940, no 1945 and 1970, had studied with a refugee artist. No,

I think that is something – It may have been documented clearly in some dissertations or whatever, but it has never really fully in a commercial publication been documented – the extent.

AM: I don't think so. You had the Archipenko school, you had Beckmann teaching, you had George Grosz teaching at the Brooklyn Museum, and Hans Hofmann on Eighth Street.

MEH: Ozenfant during the War.

AM: Ozenfant, right. So there was –

MEH: And then Albers at Black Mountain and Yale.

AM: Albers at Black Mountain.

MEH: All the Bauhaus –

AM: And his wife and then Moholy-Nagy at IIT, and Seligmann at the New School. Another person I had studied with, which I forgot to mention, in '53, was the husband of Hannah Arendt – Hans Blücher, who did a wonderful course on Ulysses, on the Greek experience, the twenty years that it took him to get back. So you had some marvelous teachers. Of course the Eighth Street – you had at the Eighth Street Club, the Art Club that met early Friday. Duchamp would show up, because he lived on 5th Avenue.

[END OF RECORDING ON TAPE 1]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]