

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

**Interview with Lester Pross**

**August 13, 2008**

**Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz**

WILLIHNGANZ: My name is Greg Willihnganz. And today, I'm going to be interviewing Lester Pross at the Bellando home in Berea, Kentucky, on August 13, 2008, for the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association. Tell me...uh...Les...uh...a little bit about...uh...what you've done in terms of...uh...the type of work that you've done. Uh, let me get more specific here. Uh, you're something of an artist, and you're something of an educator, and...uh...tell us about the work that you've done...what you see yourself as having accomplished.

PROSS: Well, there's a lot to look back on from this point, and I sometimes wonder what I have accomplished. I was telling Lila the other day, uh...got into a box under the bed the other day, and here was a great pile of water colors that I had done, oh, years ago. Uh...I was impressed by the amount of junk that was in there, but also by...uh...maybe a handful of things that looked pretty good. Uh...in my uh...earlier painting times...uh...it was primarily water color. And, I'm not quite sure why...uh...perhaps...uh...courses in high school and college, but they were portable. They were...uh, uh...handy, comfortable, and...uh...didn't need...uh...either space or equipment to deal with. But somehow, I...uh...sort of got weaned away from them with oils. I liked the smell. I liked the feel. I liked the stuff of the paint, and...uh...almost all of my work in the last oh, 20-30 years...uh...has been with oils. Uh...I promised myself that I'm going to get back into that box and look some more and perhaps even make some...uh, uh...connections. Some of the water colors might turn into oils, well, we'll see. But, all of this has been...uh...by the way, because primary energies, of course, have been with teaching. And...uh, uh...job at Berea College doesn't leave you much time for yourself. So, what I've been doing has been...uh...during the summers...uh...occasionally during the year, when I can steal some time. Used to think that...uh...I taught all year until...uh...June, and spent June catching up...uh...wrapping up the loose ends. Uh...in August...getting ready for the next year that was coming, and during July that wasn't much left of me anyway. So nothing, nothing much tended to get done. Uh...that's been the pattern pretty much...uh...during the teaching years. Uh, since I retired there's been much more time in the studio, of course, and all the other nice things that you can do when you retire. Uh, I think that traveling that we'd done has been a great impetus for the production of paintings. Uh...parts of the world that need to be remembered, and the...uh...comfort of living with these things, having them up in our own house as...uh...well, as things to remember good times with. That's, that's been important.

WILLIHNGANZ: How do you pick what you choose to record...uh...through your art?

PROSS: Hum, well the most recent one has been a section of Puerto Rican beach, where...uh...we stayed for a few days, oh; eight years ago. Uh...had this

in mind for a long time...and uh...this just seemed the time to...uh...go ahead and do it. I'm not sure that...uh...what's been done is...uh...is going to be it. There may, there may have to be...uh, uh...a few other versions, and the one that's in mind right now **[laughter]** is a view of Mt. Everest. We were flying from...uh...Bangkok to...uh...Katmandu...long time ago, and it was evening. And, way off in the distance was this tiny little point of orange light, and the speaker on the plane said, "That's Mt. Everest way over there." Course, it was in view only for a few minutes, probably the closest I'll ever get to Mt. Everest, but it was an impressive...uh...vision. And ever since that time, which was about 20 years ago or so, uh...the possibility of a painting has been running around in my head. And, I think that maybe, uh...now is the time to lay it out, so we'll see. But that's one of the...uh, uh...what's the plural of impetus? Impeti **[laughter]**? Impetuses? Uh, things like that...uh...have to...uh, uh...stew for a while, and it may be years before...uh, uh...they come.

WILLIHNGANZ: When you pick a picture to do, when you come up with the concept of it and what not, uh...what goes through your mind in terms of what makes this the right subject for you and what makes this valuable and worth recording?

PROSS: Uh, I think perhaps my excitement or pleasure in the experience. Now, that could be just...uh...a view of Berea's hills and fields...uh ...on a sunny day. Uh...those are always different. They're ever changing. Uh...I see, see the world often in terms of possible paintings. Uh...what would be essential to...uh...to deal with in terms of organization, composition, color, uh, mood, spirit. The...uh...common things are sometimes as exciting, I think, as the uh...spectacular, like Mt. Everest. Yesterday afternoon, for example, on the deck was a cup of coffee; I was looking out at the neighboring fields through...uh ...a willow tree to the nice puffy, white clouds behind it and the barns at the top of the hill across the way. So, here was a sort of ready-made...uh...situation and a composition. I wouldn't have had to do anything to it except take it as it was. It was ready-made. I'm not sure that will ever turn into a painting, but it...uh...it presented itself, that experience did, as a possibility.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, interesting. Tell me a little bit about your history in terms of how you got into art. Did you grow up doing a lot of art as a child? Were you born in Kentucky? Did you come from here?

PROSS: (laughter) No, I was born in Connecticut. We moved to upstate New York when I was two, and I grew up in Gloversville, which was a glove-making city (unintelligible). Uh...stayed there through high school, then I went off to Overland College in Ohio. Uh...did a bachelor's and master's there, came down to Berea to teach, and been here ever since. So, I'm a Yankee, I guess, a real Connecticut Yankee, but...

WILLIHNGANZ: What were your degrees in?

PROSS: In what they called then, Fine Arts, Art History and Painting...primarily. But, with all the other things that go along with that...uh...usual undergraduate and graduate degrees.

WILLIHNGANZ: So then, you came into Kentucky and started teaching at Berea.

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And you've pretty much been at Berea ever since?

PROSS: Yes. Uh, huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: Lot of years at Berea.

PROSS: **[Laughter]** Yes. Good ones.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, that's good.

PROSS: Good ones. Uh...just been getting together...uh...an exhibitions for the Art Department in September, of Middle Eastern Art. Uh...not fine arts kinds of things, but...uh...objects we lived with and have lived with ever since during our...uh...two times in Pakistan and Egypt, when I was teaching on sabbatical. The...uh...kinds of things you remember from adventures like those...uh...don't necessarily turn into works of art, but it was a time of, of...uh...taking in...uh...totally new civilizations and cultures, ways of living. So, there's been this...uh...this recollection that's been fun to do, even though it was over a half a century ago. Uh, we'll see how the show turns out. I'm not quite sure what they'll select, but there's plenty for them to select from the...uh...impetus...there is the college's emphasis this fall on the Middle East, so we'll see.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, in your travels you've encountered a lot of different cultures...uh...and a lot of different art, I'm sure. Have those had an effect on what you've been able to produce?

PROSS: Yes. Uh. We had...uh...a couple of years in Japan. Our one year as students with the University of Colorado overseas program, and another year teaching at Colby College. And during the first time, we had...uh...semi-painting experiences with a wonderful master of the art, this is ink painting. Uh, we came, my wife and I, as...uh, uh...innocents to this, but it was part of the program. And...uh...yes, that experience with the freedom of the brush and the ink did have an effect on my own work, for a number of years afterwards. Other things came into play later; of course. I sort of broke away from the looseness of ink. But...uh...yes that, that was an influence.

WILLIHNGANZ: What sort of effects did it have on your work?

PROSS: Uh, the immediacy of the medium and the necessity to think and to choose before doing. I remember one afternoon when I was dealing with

the...uh...the mountains around our, our apartment in Kyoto. Uh...the first half dozen or so were...uh...quite...uh...specific, well-defined, uh...what I saw rather than really what I was feeling. But gradually, these got themselves worked out, and the paintings became more and more simplified until finally, I remember the moment, there was just one single stroke which did it, and that...uh...that clarified the whole experience of the mountain, mountainess. So...uh...I think a lot of things had to be worked out first. But then, there came the essence of the vision, and the experience of it. And, I think that's probably one of the best paintings I've ever made. It took maybe 20 seconds to do, but hours of preparation.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Do you have that painting?

PROSS: Oh, yes. I tried to...uh...redo it in oil one time and that just didn't work. The...uh, uh...immediacy of the brush full of ink on the very fragile paper had to, had to be it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Hum. Wow.

PROSS: You can't really go from one medium to another very easily.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, huh. So, uh...tell me, have you sold a lot of your work? Have you marketed much?

PROSS: No. No. Uh...haven't tried to. I've been glad when people were willing to buy 'em. Well, maybe a dozen or so over time. Uh...but they're like my, my children. I'm not particularly interested in letting them go **[Laughter]**. Get 'em out every once in a while, and look 'em over, and think and remember. Uh, no. I've not marketed, and the problem now is, what do you do with all these?

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me a little bit about the, the career that you've had. After you got out of college, you got into Berea. What...uh...what you did there, and...uh...what you got involved with in terms of the community and arts organizations and all?

PROSS: The prime job, of course, was teaching particular classes in...uh...general art history, drawing and painting, design, and eventually...uh...calligraphy uh printing design, uh...the arts of Asia, because of experiences we had both traveling and teaching there. Uh, in 1950, after we'd been here four years, uh...there was a necessity in the Art Department for a change in administration. So, two of us decided to share the chairmanship, and for almost 30 years...much too long a time...uh...I was co-chair of the department. Then my colleague retired and I had it by myself for a while. Uh, then we went on a final sabbatical and...uh...I retired from all of that administration. But that involved...uh...you know, work with...uh...curriculum and advising and planning...uh...dealing with...uh...department's collection of works of art...which was substantial. The library, the equipment, a new building...uh...all the stuff that goes with...uh...being on a campus and dealing

with...uh...whatever came, and a lot came. Uh, that was pretty much it in a nutshell. Uh, I enjoyed the administrative part of it, got to confess that, but...uh...knowing...uh...the students and the colleagues who were...uh...just fabulous people has been one of the pleasures of being here. We never really seriously thought about going anywhere else, or doing anything else. This was satisfying and...uh...comfortable enough. We had a family, and that was very satisfying, even though uncomfortable sometimes like families are. But...uh...it's been good. We've been glad to be here and to be doing things in this place. Uh, one of the exciting parts of it all was in the early '60s, with the establishment of the Kentucky Guild of Artisans and Craftsmen, getting the train up and going...uh...the whole organization of the Guild.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about your role in getting that established and started and what not.

PROSS: I think...uh...a lot of it was just because I was where I was, when I was. Uh, Berea was...uh...how shall I say it...uh...sort of invited to be part of the idea of this Guild, and of...uh...of a train to exhibit and to demonstrate what was going on. And...uh...I think my job in the Art Department...uh...plus that of Rude Osolnik and Industrial Arts...uh...made us naturals for doing this thing. Uh, there were lots of ins and outs of the planning, of course, and...uh...when it finally got done...uh...for some reason, I got elected first president probably because of...uh...the job that I had. So, uh...for a couple of years, I didn't do much except...uh...Guild work...a variety of miscellaneous things, important things that had to be done in basic organization. A couple of years were enough. I needed to really get back to work that I was getting paid for. And, uh...for a number of years after that, I was...uh...I stayed on the board and was very much involved, but not with the responsibility that I had at first. Again, I have to admit I enjoyed it. I was glad to have this...uh, uh...spotlight for a little bit. It was heady stuff, but...uh...not much else in my life got done. And, it's been...uh...nice to sort of sit on the sidelines recently, and see things come and go. There've been ups and downs, of course, all the way through, but that's part of it. Glad to have been a part of it.

WILLIHNGANZ: You've been a part of the Guild's history all along, is that right?

PROSS: Yes, yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And are you still involved with their activities?

PROSS: No, not really. I, I still get copies of the...uh...of the...uh...bulletin or news, news sheet, but that's about it. Uh, when there's a fair nearby, I'll go, but not as a participant, really as a visitor.

WILLIHNGANZ: Were you one of the founding members of the Guild?

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And so you...uh...you went to, of course, the first...uh...the first Guild Fair?

PROSS: Yes *[Laughter]*. Whatever that was *[Laughter]*.

WILLIHNGANZ: Indian Fort Theater, I believe, which was basically way out in the woods.

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And you walked a long way on a path, and...uh...if you were lucky, you got a board and couple bricks *[Laughter]* to put your work on.

PROSS: Yeah *[Laughter]*. I was thinking really of...uh...of fairs that we had...uh...on the triangle here in Berea, along Main Street. Uh...it was probably the...uh...Berea Chapter of the Guild that was doing that. Uh...yeah. It was bricks and boards, no tents. My kids always wanted me to take a proper...uh...booth at the fairs, but...uh...there never seemed to be enough time or energy to...uh...to make that come off, and they happened at times when major things were happening at school I needed to be attending to. So, uh...I was a visitor rather than a participant in the fairs. But, they were...uh...wonderful events out there for a good many years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, huh. And uh, did you serve on a lot of committees for the Guild, and get involved with that?

PROSS: Uh, no, not really. Uh, when I retired from the board, it was...uh...I'll have to confess, sort of with the idea...well, let somebody else do it now for a while. I'll be available to be useful as I can be, and yes, there were some committees. I'm not going to remember which ones they were, uh. Judging, I think, was...uh...one of the prime jobs that I was helpful in. Uh, for membership and for participation in the fairs, but that was probably the extent of it.

WILLIHNGANZ: How do you feel about the process of judging art works? Does that contribute to quality or does it basically discourage a lot of people who might later develop quality?

PROSS: Our...uh...intention was to offer and to provide...uh...assistance with the...with people whose work didn't seem to be quite ready for Guild's status. Now I'm not sure much of that was ever taken, and I know that a lot of people were...uh...discouraged at that point, and...uh...were never heard from again. Uh, but we felt that it was very important that we get the best that was available, and the things were not up to whose standards, our standards I guess, because they would represent the Guild, and represent the state, and we were trying to...uh...overcome the...uh...great influx of stuff made everywhere for sale, which the...uh...the state outlets were flooded with. We needed to find the best that Kentucky could do, and...uh...wasn't easy. But, most of us were teachers on that judging committee, and we had a degree of experience, and...uh...we

had to exercise our judgment constantly in our classes. So it was an easy transfer but, uh...not...uh...easy to do. And for those who were and were not...uh...judged admissible, uh...there was a very thorough...uh...critique offered, which we hoped might be helpful.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, huh. Looking at the production of craftwork, I'm always...uh...kind of surprised because the...uh...years ago I used to think that there was basically manufactured goods and handcrafted goods. But, the truth is they're gradations that go from individual work, to a sort of semi-manufactured product, where you more mass produce it, using some hand techniques, of some machine techniques and other things. Do you feel like that...that discourages or limits the creative output of people?

PROSS: Craftsmen has to live, and sometimes that means the necessity to produce a lot of sellable things. And the machine has a, has a place. The handicraftsmen, of course, does his work with...uh...care and with love, and even if he lets the machine help him...uh...he's still the controller, the master of the product. Uh, a potter, for example, may need to make dozens or hundreds of plates, or whatever he's making, in order to survive. I was talking to...uh...a man just day before yesterday, who was one of our students, and is now a production potter...uh...has a good business...uh...but he was saying, "I really need now to do things for myself, take some of my time, some of my energy to do my own thing, to be the artist I know I am, aside from making what I make to support my family. I hope I can do it," he said. So there's that too. What he makes is beautiful...uh...it might be sometimes different, sometimes better. There's the sense of, well, this is identifiable as his, because there's so many of them. But, I'll be eager to see what happens when and if he really...uh...gets to do things for himself as well as for others.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, huh. I was interviewing a lady who does...uh...embroidery. Uh, she does shirts and fancy things, but her craft involves basically taking designs that she puts into her computer, and feeds into a machine, an embroidery machine, but then produces the product.

PROSS: Uh, huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, of course, the speed with which she can put out **[Laughter]** is substantial. And, you know, does that qualify as craft? Is that a hand craft?

PROSS: I wouldn't think so. I wouldn't think so. In this exhibition of Middle Eastern things that we've been getting ready...uh...there's a pair of shoes that was made for me in a village in Pakistan. Uh, it was a shoe making village, and my pair of shoes was made to measure. My feet, unfortunately...they were a quarter of an inch off, and I could never wear 'em. But they're beautiful red leather, and embroidered in gold colored...uh...thread...uh...almost all over. Uh, it took one lady over a month to make them. Uh, she was paid well, but...uh...these were objects, still are objects of beauty, and there's...uh...you

know, something in my heart that means something special. They told me about a westerner, a businessman who came to the village and admired shoes like this, and asked if...uh...they'd be willing to make some for him to sell in America. Well, yes they would. Uh, how many would he like? Two or three pairs? Four? Five. A hundred thousand he said **[Laughter]**. And, no way, they said. Uh, it would have been wonderful if they could, but the time and the skill and the satisfaction in a thing well done, and perhaps unique...uh...I wonder if that's still alive in that village.

WILLIHNGANZ: Real good question. How uh, how do you think we're doing in terms of the state of Kentucky, and...uh...our promotion and...uh...encouragement and support for craft work?

PROSS: I'm not sure I can really answer that, because of, I'm not that involved anymore. Uh, the fairs that I have been to, in recent years have been in many ways, disappointing. Uh, there seems to be, to choose my words carefully here but, really more stuff than there ought to be. Uh, more seemingly mass produced, I'm sure it's not. But uh, you know, there's aspects of the machines, I spoke of a few minutes ago, which...uh...come into it. Uh, I'm less than satisfied I think with the standards that seem to be at work now. Uh, **[Laughter]** I guess what I'm trying to say is that...uh...I wouldn't do it that way. But then, I'm not doing it. Uh, there haven't been many things that I would choose to buy if I were still accumulating, but uh, it's been good to see that there are still some fine things being produced as evidenced by the Guild fairs, which is all I've got to go on, uh...at this point. Uh...I...I've not been impressed.

WILLIHNGANZ: Hum. Now, have you been a member of the Southern Highland?

PROSS: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: Guild? Okay.

PROSS: I'm, I'm not a craftsperson, craftsman let's say. So that would not be...uh...an area where I'd be appropriate.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, huh. But, you have certainly been involved with promoting craftwork, and certainly your work with the Guild has contributed significantly to the craft environment here, and...uh...over the years that you've been involved with the Guild, really from the start there...have you seen a change in the...uh...the general acceptance or interest in craftwork in Kentucky?

PROSS: Oh, yes, it's...uh...it's grown immensely since...uh...those beginning days. You know, we were looking around way back in 1960 for craftsmen, if they existed, and things to market, if there were any, and it took a lot of looking...uh...to find either the people or the...uh...their works. Uh...as...uh...the schools, the colleges, and universities...uh...expanded their programs...uh...more, more came. And, there are...uh...I know, wonderful

people working to make wonderful things, but...uh...where and how they're marketable I, I can't say. Kentucky's crafts and its arts have...uh...have grown and developed...uh...amazingly in these years. But, whether they get...uh...to the public, probably...uh...the market is through galleries...uh...specializing in...uh...works like these, uh...rather than through the...uh...generally publicly available as with the state parks' shops, for example. And again, uh...I'd not been really involved enough either professionally or personally in recent years to judge. This is just a feeling.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, you've, I'm sure, uh...been keenly interested in the development of the Artisan's Center, and the opening of the Artisans Center here in Berea.

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And uh, were you involved in the development of that concept, and the political work to get it set up?

PROSS: No, no.

WILLIHNGANZ: There was apparently some controversy between the local artists and the state wanting to set up this center. Were you aware of that?

PROSS: Oh, yes. What's it going to do to us?

WILLIHNGANZ: What uh, what do you feel it has done?

PROSS: Well, I think that many local craftspeople are still uneasy that...uh...traffic has not come here...has stayed out there. There was...uh...from the beginning, the expectation that there would be...uh...closer association between what was at the highway and what was in town. There would be...uh...facilities, transportation, uh...publicity and so on. I don't think that's happened. And, from what I hear, number of local craftspeople...uh...have gone...uh...that the excitement in town that there used to be is no longer here. But again, I'd not...uh...involved myself with...uh...with this problem, but I'm aware that there is a problem.

WILLIHNGANZ: Seems to me that on a logical...uh...sort of perspective, the two should basically be very supportive of each other, and hopefully increase the whole draw on the area. If you're gonna go to the Artisans Center, why wouldn't you drive two miles into town and see individual artist's studios, because they're wonderful resources and similar things. You would think that would be a natural feeding...uh...for each other. But, that doesn't seem to be what's happening, am I right there?

PROSS: I think so. Uh, there are probably exceptions, but...uh...by and large I feel, uh...a dearth in town that we'd hoped would not be the case.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, that's, that's certainly too bad. Tell me, as an educator, uh...how you feel the whole...uh...development of art education has gone over the past let's say forty years? Uh, have we seen a lot more acceptance for art and craft programs, or are we seeing a diminishing interest in those in academic circles?

PROSS: That's hard to say, too. I think certainly until...uh...twenty years ago there was increase and, uh...enrichment in these. I think in Berea College's own emphasis, uh...there may be a diminution, diminution **[Laughter]** ...not as great as it used to be. Uh, the change in...uh...curriculum, both in the college as a whole and in the Art Department, uh...and in general education for all students...uh...the arts don't have the place they once had. I think, well, you know, times change, and...uh...interests and emphases change. The world changes and we need to as well. But, uh...there...there is not the...uh...sense here that the arts are important for everybody to know about, and to have an opportunity to participate in, or to enjoy that...uh...there once was. Other things have taken their place. Uh, this is probably the natural course of events. I hope not, but...uh...as I say, I've not been involved with this for almost 20 years and...uh...I better be careful what I say about it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I hear you being hesitant to be prescriptive. Uh, I appreciate...uh...that...uh...you don't necessarily want to tell people how to live. But take a moment, and tell people how they ought to live **[Laughter]**. Because, I think that at some point...make some sort of positive stand about what we value, and where we would like to see our culture go, and these are important cultural values. What do you think we should be doing?

PROSS: I think certainly we should be paying attention to the rest of the world, and what goes on there. And, I think that...uh...uh...well, Berea College particularly is doing very well in that respect. In terms of providing an experience in all of the arts, and not just the visual arts, but music and drama and literature...uh...dance...all the rest of...uh...I would think it could do differently, do more. Every once in a while...uh...something will come on a television program...uh, uh...famous thing...uh, uh...a building, uh...a painting, uh...whatever, and I think...I wonder if my old students are seeing this and remembering and enjoying what I tried to teach 'em about long years ago. I wonder if it still matters to them. A couple of weeks ago, Google's logo took off on some paintings by Mark Chegal, which for many years we taught in humanities course these very images, and I wondered how many people are recognizing on this one day...uh...Google's homage to it. If a few did, uh...that's good. But nowadays...uh...something like that would be nothing to people who have gone through this curriculum in the last 20 years. They don't do it anymore. Who's Mark Chegal? Why should Google bother with him?

WILLIHNGANZ: They've changed the curriculum that dramatically?

PROSS: Yes, yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: What's the new emphasis?

PROSS: Sometimes hard to tell...the changes frequently...uh...emphasis on the sciences, of course, which is good. Uh, and emphasis on...uh, uh...various social needs, which is good, too. And, when there's only so much time and energy...uh...choices have to be made. I think that...uh...the arts have not...uh...not been able to hold their own. If you're going to do this, you can't do that. It's sort of like the budget. There are new priorities.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. If I understand we have to make choices, but sometimes the choices just appall me, **[Laughter]**. And, I think what you were speaking about understanding that we're, we're not a community, or...uh...state, or culture, or a country that is in isolation. We are part of a world culture, and our lack of value for that sometimes shocks me. We went into Iraq, and the...marched our armies in, and then immediately seized the oil fields, and allowed the museums to be pillaged. And, it was shocking and, uh...very, very deeply, profoundly sad that we allowed that to happen. And, they lost major portions of their heritage. Two thousand year-old artifacts disappeared.

PROSS: Probably on the market.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sad, but also true.

PROSS: Yes, yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I just question our values sometimes, when we do these things, and...uh...while I appreciate...uh...the diversity that technology offers us, uh...I just question whether we're, we're doing things which assist us to look at ourselves and understand where we've come from. Uh...or whether we're really just doing whatever will get us a better cup of coffee.

PROSS: Hum. Yeah. Fortunately in hindsight we have, at least some of us have, acknowledged that what happened was...uh...pretty awful, and...uh...don't let it happen again. But, uh...how can, how can you tell?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

PROSS: At least there's the acknowledgement that mistakes were made.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Well, I look at two of the aesthetic choices that we're making in the future, and of course, they're being made by whoever has the resources to make decisions.

PROSS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you go to Dubai. These people, with enormous vast sums of money, are building the biggest building in the world, which is not necessarily the prettiest building, but it's going to be the biggest.

PROSS: The biggest, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And they build islands in the, in the bay, and the question, "Do we really need more islands for the rich, which is what they're building?"

**[Laughter]**

PROSS: Well, we must have seen the same KET program the other night.

**[Laughter]**

WILLIHNGANZ: Yes, I think we did **[Laughter]**. And, it's impressive. What they're doing is impressive, but I wish that, that we could balance that with some preservation of the culture that is inherent to that area, and I'm not sure they're actually concerning that as a prime determinant as they make the decisions regarding the aesthetics of what they're creating.

PROSS: I don't think so.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

PROSS: Uh, those, those immigrants were the fly specs a few years ago, and it's...uh...it's a big bubble. We think we've got bubbles, but **[Laughter]** ...

WILLIHNGANZ: So uh, what else can you tell us about the craft culture in...uh...in Kentucky, and...uh...what our future looks to be? What should we...what should we look for...what should we be doing?

PROSS: Hum. I'm not sure I can really...uh...and, I should confess that...uh...as I get older, I find in myself less interest and less concern. Now, this is an awful confession to make, but...uh...I feel often that...uh...I've done my thing, and it's time now for somebody else. Uh, my energies are not what they used to be, and I find sometimes that uh...you know, I don't even have the get up and go to...uh...go to a carillon concert that's free on Monday night...to stir my stumps to go to a play that's just right around the corner. I don't know, maybe I'm getting tired, and...uh...I don't want to hear myself saying these things. But, uh, I've got a birthday tomorrow, and I'm not gonna say which one it is, but it's well along there. Uh, I hope I've still got some good years ahead of me. But, uh...it's time for me to remember to be glad that I have done what I've done, and been involved with what I've been involved with. I truly have enjoyed what I've done, and...uh...now I'm just gonna, like Kandeed says, "Sit back and tend my garden." But I'll let my wife tend to the garden **[Laughter]**.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

PROSS: Sorry. I don't think I can answer that question **[Laughter]**.

WILLIHNGANZ: I have liked what you said. Okay. Well, thank you very much for your...uh...time and your patience. I appreciate your being willing to do this again.

PROSS: Well, it's been...uh...been fun to do it again, and to...uh...recollect, and to remind myself that I'd better be...uh...a little more...uh...alive **[Laughter]** than I sometimes feel like.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I suspect if we go back and look at these tapes, we're gonna find we have two completely different **[Unintelligible] [Laughter]**, but it was fun.

PROSS: When was it we did it before? Was it last fall?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I'm thinking, honestly it was...uh...I think it was back in the spring, and I need to check that. I'm not sure the date. No, it was further back than that.

PROSS: Yes, it was before winter.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, I think you're right. Yeah, I've done...

PROSS: Almost a year ago.

WILLIHNGANZ: I've done so many different interviews at different times; it's hard for me to keep it all straight.

PROSS: Hum.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, okay.

***[End of recording.]***