

JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: HENRY SALKAUSKAS

Circa 1979

JAMES GLEESON: Henry, right at the beginning. When were you born, where, that sort of thing?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I was born 6 May 1925 in Kaunas, Lithuania.

JAMES GLEESON: Could you spell that for us?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Kaunas?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: K-A-U-N-A-S.

JAMES GLEESON: Was that the capital of Lithuania?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That was the temporary capital those days. I'm a city man.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. How did you come to art? Was there any background in your family?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Maybe is a little bit there because my father's brother, my uncle, he was very good in watercolours. He studied at—Baron Stieglitz had an old art school in Leningrad, St Petersburg. They were the days of the Tsars time. He was very good in those things but he was high public servant and never used. But I remember seeing them. I couldn't believe. Here was a huge watercolour. A lot of soft pencil and (inaudible) washes. I always ask him, 'Why don't you rub the pencil after?', you know. From my days, at that time he was very good but they kept him in the museum (inaudible) his work.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: But he never did much. He only sold occasionally some. But as I remember now—would love to see him now—I think he was pretty good for those days. You know, I'm nearly sure. But he never practiced as an artist because he was a high official in the public service so never had the time, I imagine.

JAMES GLEESON: When did you know you wanted to be an artist?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's a very hard question. A little bit earlier, I remember I went to high school. My mother wanted—because she is doctor of medicine— she said I have to study medicine.

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JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I simply said, 'I can't cut people', I remember. The second part, it came, I thought, 'No, not medicine'. I was interested a little bit; later came in logic, you know. I wanted to do little bit maybe law. But art was one thing what my secret thought was always. I want to do something, to create something.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I remember somebody asked when I was maybe, oh, 14 or 15 in Europe, in Lithuania— still we are very young—'You should know what you're going to do'. All of a sudden I said, 'I want to be an artist'. I remember that time.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: At high school was nothing particular very special. My art teacher was a bit old fashioned and now I had to do some sort of still-lives and they talk about art. I just had my classes; that's all what I had, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: You went to high school. Did you then decide to go to an art school?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: No, it happened then the war came. Another political upheaval in Europe, particularly Lithuania, a little country.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Anybody marches in, nobody asks your opinion and then somebody else comes, pushes you out. Then I had to leave—because of the war times in '44—Lithuania with my mother. My father was taken away because of the war. The Russians took him away.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: So I went to Germany and war finished I started to study art over there.

JAMES GLEESON: Whereabouts in Germany?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: In Frieberg in the Black Forrest.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I studied at Frieberg University paralleled with art school. The French grade at L'Ecole des Arts et Metiers in Frieberg.

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JAMES GLEESON: What did you study, what subjects?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I studied graphic art in the art school, and in parallel I studied in the arts department in the university. But I liked to study at the university. I studied logic, I studied art history, I studied a little bit law. I studied things I liked, not what they prescribe. That's the reason I had to go for one year to the law department because I liked something a bit different.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Then parallel I had to go to the art school. So I had to switch, I was always running.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: What interests me more that time.

JAMES GLEESON: What year was that?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That was straight after the war, about end of '45 till I came to Australia '49.

JAMES GLEESON: What made you come to Australia? How did you decide that?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's a very interesting question, Jimmy, because you will laugh when I tell you. We had a lot of relatives in United States.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: From my mother's side more. They sent food parcels because the life after war in Germany was not so easy, as you imagine. Suddenly one day—I think beginning of '49—arrives complete documents to travel, to migrate to United States. I thought at my age—those days I was bit of a rebel even—I thought, 'America now'. I mean, I'm no good as a cowboy. I would be too slow anyhow, and I said to my mother, 'No good, I don't want to go there'. But, you know, I mean, you had to go through medical check-up and the consulate ask her to fill forms. Then I remember the last time they called in to sign something. (inaudible) Australian Immigration Mission was just written on the door. I sort of stopped a while. I said, 'Australia. Australia, where is that?' and what they know about it. I said to my mother, 'Let's go make some inquiries', and six weeks after we're on the ship to Australia. Simple as that, you know. Of course, the relatives were very cranky and so on. I didn't realise it cost them that to give a guarantee. I'd imagine the flat was ready in Cleveland, Ohio, for us.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

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HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I couldn't believe it. Cousins of my mother have a big tailoring business over there. So I thought, 'God', you know. Okay, so it happened I came to Australia.

JAMES GLEESON: (inaudible).

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Not now. First year I was a bit, you know, not accustomed to the country here. But after second year I thought it's great, and now I wouldn't change it. They could offer me, you know, a lot of things. I don't think I would go.

JAMES GLEESON: So Henry, you had your training in Frieberg.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: In Germany, yes, in Frieberg.

JAMES GLEESON: When you came out here what did you do?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I came '49, middle of '49. I was under contract, as you know, two years as displaced person—had to sign a contract. They send me to work in Canberra, the Department of Works and Housing. Very soon I met—because they had an exhibition of Society of Artists in Canberra, those days they had. Hector Gilliland was the vice-president there.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I met Hector in '49. He was a public servant. I used to go to see how he used to make those (inaudible) water colours. (inaudible) I showed him some prints I used to do there. He nominated me and I became a member of the Society of Artists in Canberra. I showed in their first show in 1950—beginning of 1950, I think, they were there in the exhibition—and my first print was sold those years.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Then I had to participate in the New Australian's Arts Festival in Canberra at that big exhibition. I had to arrange a part only doing a section, had to show some pictures. Who came to select the show? Laurie Thomas from Melbourne. He was education officer those days.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I met Laurie for the first time in 1950. So they come to move slowly things there.

JAMES GLEESON: Where you studied, were you mainly interested in graphic art or painting?

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HENRY SALKAUSKAS: We had a very liberal arts school, what I thought now, but still had that background a bit of academic training. It was divided into main sections, the arts school. It had a painting class, graphic art class, sculpture class, weaving class, pottery class, and I can't remember something else maybe. All combined. Had one day a week a drawing class. All of them. If you don't pass in drawing, don't pass the new subject that year.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: They had to make so many studies, so many quick sketches. Oh, and that meant plus all the rest, art history and that (inaudible), even French language and the rest of it was there.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: But if you don't pass at drawing, you don't pass it in your subject, you have to repeat the year. Because they said very bluntly, 'And you want to be an artist and you can't draw'. But you have to draw. I mean, you have to learn (inaudible). You have to be able to draw it, and able to do a quick sketch as the model changes every six minutes or something like that.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: The year passes, you have to produce so many quick sketches and so many studies. And studies occasionally you sit at the study it might be three days.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: A charcoal study and double (inaudible). The professor has to sign in the corner. If he doesn't sign it's no good. That was the handicap.

JAMES GLEESON: So you had a proper formal—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I had to do it. But otherwise in graphic art, I mean, the graphic art was very broad sense. Everything was included, posters, even what you call commercial art. We had to do illustrations or, say, prepare illustrations. We have to just form have a sketches how would you present a book. How, say, we had the school exhibitions. Okay. All class had to do a poster for the school exhibition. You can use anything. I used to do the wax pastels, I remember. They all loved them. There were still hanging there in the schools there. So, I mean, have to do all sorts of things, but that was part, you know, a very broad sense. Everything, you know, to give you the direction. In that sense was good, but the drawing was very strict. That was a bit of old fashion, I imagine. I don't know. Let's leave it there.

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JAMES GLEESON: What about the graphic department? What techniques did they (inaudible)?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Techniques (inaudible). They were because school was created by the French Government after the war.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see. It was part of the French—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Specially created, French idea, to give a bit of culture. I remember the general of the French occupation (inaudible) used to look after us. Used to come always. They didn't have many presses those days. It was hard to get it after the war. I mean, the French had difficulty in France, their home. But had to do a lot of block printings. That's the reason I was specialist more in block printing, as I realise, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: The lino was one of those easier mediums to do it.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: So I did a lot of linocuts. But I had to do drawings and all those (inaudible) things, you know. But the linocut was important.

JAMES GLEESON: I didn't realise. Of course, the difficulty of obtaining presses in those days would have been—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, those days just started. I remember that chap they got from the French factory or something. Huge buildings (inaudible) there were arts classes, but they prepared. It was quite good.

JAMES GLEESON: So, Henry, you came to Australia in 1949.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Forty-nine. End of May, beginning of June, '49. So I went to Canberra for two years, and I told what happened in Canberra roughly. Then I decided. My mother was in Sydney and I always thought let's go to the— I've been to the capital, I started with the capital. I met people like Dr Evatt. He wanted to buy a one print of mine so I called in his home. I've met Ben Chifley, Arthur Calwell. All just moved because when they shout exhibitions, they all came in Canberra.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Canberra was nineteen thousand people in my days, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I know, a small town.

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HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Very tiny.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Then I thought before two years finished. So I talked to an employment officer. Said, 'My mother lives in Sydney, I want to come to Sydney'. I used to come on the short trips. I want to live in big city. I came from the city. So they let me go in the beginning of '51. So I came to Sydney. In '51, in March, in the old Blaxland Gallery, I walked in and it was the Contemporary Arts Society Autumn Show. First time I looked at it, and maybe I spend a bit longer time and one of the organisers approached me. 'Interested in art?'. I said, 'Matter of fact, yes'. That was Nancy Borlase. She was already on the committee those days.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: So she said, 'Why don't you join the Society?', so I joined the CS in '51 in those days. I still remember the pictures and I thought, well, it's quite interesting so I become part of it there.

JAMES GLEESON: Henry, well, you were going to give me this catalogue with a lot of factual information of events.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I will give you some more because I went to the commandant. Fifty-seven they elected me to the CS committee.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I was there until '71. Fifteen years there. Do you want any particular—

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, why don't you just summarise the important things.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Summarise. Well, my work in those days, what I did because maybe was little bit—I looked around the art scene those days here and print making, as probably you know, was secondary art, or something of the past. They had Australian (inaudible) society late twenties. It was very popular, then suddenly it stopped. With a few exceptions somebody was doing some prints. But, I mean, it was not accepted as anything, you know. Painting, and secondly was sculpture, that was all those days. So I taught myself. Was a little bit of rebel when I was little bit younger, let's put it that way. I was even the president of the student's union in Germany, in Frieburg, I remember. I always questioned their ideas of the senate, or ideas of the direction of art school. I said, 'We can do it differently'.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

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HENRY SALKAUSKAS: So maybe that was in my blood when I came here. I looked around and I sat down and I said, 'All arts are equal'. Any media, as I believed those days, I mean, a work of art is a work of art. You can't grade it if somebody paints on canvas that's a number one. If somebody does tiny little sketch, say, even in those days I was joking, I said if you see small (inaudible) would be rejected because small is not important. That's a certain logic maybe there. So I started to do prints. I started to press a bit more, started to show prints. Then when I was on the committee of the CS I started just to figure out, I said, 'I have to do something'. I had my little bit of position in beginning, but then someone convinced the committee let's organise graphic exhibition. Slowly, slowly, the committee decided, 'Let's do it'. Of course, on my shoulders. Like the committee said, 'Do it, but Henry you do it'. So around we go to David Jones Gallery in 1960 in June, I think, we called that first Australia wide graphic exhibition, with some prizes. I thought because the graphics would be not enough prints alone, so I thought include the drawings. They were divided, if you remember the show, one wall had the drawings, one wall had the prints. We thought to have a bit interest more, because some more artists did drawings like Len Hessing those days, (inaudible) drawings, a lot of people those days started. Suddenly attention came on drawings as well.

So (inaudible) need some prizes now and it was so difficult. Nobody will give prize. I wrote letters, CS wrote letters. So I run back to Lithuanian community, one Dr Spricer, you give 50 guineas—or 100 guineas—and the community gave 50 guineas. Those were the prizes then. But that's okay. But after that, it was quite successful. I remember all the critics said and I think yourself said it's the exhibition of the year. I still have the cuttings, I think, those days. Then I thought, 'Let's do something else'. Let's organise something. I talked with Laurie. Occasionally we used to meet and have few beers with Laurie Thomas was here in Sydney after Perth, before Brisbane. Laurie said, 'Let's organise this'. He was very enthusiastic about prints, Laurie. So I decided to talk to Eva Kubos, Vaclovas Ratas and Laurie and myself, four of us.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Said, 'Let's form a group'. Maybe don't call it a society. We decided to call it (inaudible). Let's form a group, have shows. Laurie, he ordered a huge whole page about graphic arts. Those days he was a sub-editor. We formed the group in '61, in February. Formed '61 and still going. After a few shows and that and then I switched over. I thought, 'Well, now the prints are set'. I looked around and I was always a bit keen to do something else, binding and that. Maybe my instinct that, 'Let's do gouaches or water colours' which are a little bit, not only neglected but a bit secondary art again, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes, I know.

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HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Everybody says, see. I looked at some water colours. I said, 'Got technical interesting but, you know, they don't march with the time'. That element somewhere is, you know, they're behind.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: See. I thought, 'Why can't you approach that media in today's terms? Let's do it', you know. So I started to try, see what happened. I started to do it. So my interest for about early sixties has become in the water colour sense there, gouache water colour. I think they stopped the prints during about '65. I think that was the last one (inaudible) in your gallery collection. Even the prints in a sense, from the more complicated ones in the beginning, which they become more simplified, you know, more simplified, ones that finish with very simplification.

JAMES GLEESON: Very simple rectangle (inaudible).

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's a certain order it comes, you know, simplified, become very, very broad sense. Then I decided that's it for while. I concentrated on different media. Which, well, I'm still doing for a time, you know. That was the other approach with prints. And then what? Well, I participated in exhibitions as possible. I'll give you the particular details from that.

JAMES GLEESON: They're all in—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: First Biennale, second Biennale in Tokyo in '60, Third Biennale in Tokyo in '62. I showed even a drawing and prints in Sao Paulo Biennale '61.

JAMES GLEESON: That was the first time—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: First time the Australians participated. Canberra refused to cover any costs. We have to put ourselves.

JAMES GLEESON: Really?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Oh, yes. We wrote to Prime Minister Menzies because his Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department used to deal with us, and they refused to give any help. So we did through CS, we part our way, what to arrange with the groups and even in—you can't participate in Biennale unless it's state level. So the organisation made exception for us to participate without Canberra's permission, us Australians. They made exception.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I participated there. They said, 'Oh, the Foreign Affairs Department, our Embassy in Rio will help you'. Even they supplied with a box of

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catalogues which didn't arrive till today. They said, 'Embassy will send over'. It didn't arrive till today even. I saw one copy was sent by airmail, I saw it, that's all.

JAMES GLEESON: Goodness.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That was the help we got from Canberra in those days. But in '63 Biennale suddenly they decided to send somebody. They sent two artists—not sent them but sent their work—and they paid their costs only. But the start is always very hard, as you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes, very difficult.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: You have to do it yourself.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, now of course they opted out of Sao Paulo.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, they opted out now.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. They did it from '61 to '73, I think.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, those three artists participated quite nicely occasionally. John Armstrong, David Aspden, (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: They built up to something (inaudible).

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Built up, yes. That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: So that was the beginning?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That was the first ever serious show, '61. Only to private connections and how it started in '60 was Brazilian dance company here on tour.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: One of the officials was very closely connected with Sao Paulo Biennale. Or made contacts or started talks or made arrangements and he helped us over there.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's the reason how it came.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, Henry, (inaudible).

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: What else important? I mean, there's some. I participated in graphic art exhibitions there and then the Merz Collection, you know, that part Australian prints, where they have most of my prints. They were

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shot in Washington (inaudible) travelling exhibition '66. You've got most in the gallery there. Then came maybe '69, the international painters exhibition in Tokyo in which I won a prize. I won a prize there. In the catalogue you see it. They had to send limited size pictures from Australia because of the transport. They were limited to three by four or something like that.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: But they were all Pacific countries participated in that Tokyo Biennale. Japanese always love my work. I don't know why. Because of a lot of black I used that time. My black period made a lot of broad washes or something and they always loved, you know, Japanese.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, I know printmaking in Japan is one of the great interests, isn't it?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Oh, yes. That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, Henry, now let's have a look at the works we have of yours in the collection. The problem area are the three paintings for which we have photographs of. We only seem to have one card and that's very vague. So there's a possibility that we don't actually own these. But I would say—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I remember Tas Drysdale brought from my Hungry Horse show in '64 one water colour from the Commonwealth collection that is the same.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, that could be one of these?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Not one of these. It was different again.

JAMES GLEESON: Different again?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Different again. I can see it. He bought one in '64 from Hungry Horse. No, that's a print.

JAMES GLEESON: Is that a print?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's a print.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, it's a print.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: One is another one there. That one.

JAMES GLEESON: That one.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I mean, how you get hold of those two I can't give you the details. I couldn't remember now.

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JAMES GLEESON: No, and since we've got no cards for that—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: You could check it maybe in Canberra about those. But definitely Tas Drysdale bought one of my water colours '64 in Hungry Horse for the Commonwealth Collection. I know that.

JAMES GLEESON: So it will be one of the ones similar to these.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: A different one. Little bit different looking, maybe more washes, because I remember correctly.

JAMES GLEESON: All right.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Now those prints, you've got a quite large one. I am surprised.

JAMES GLEESON: It's quite a good collection of your prints, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Because it happens that the earliest one is the harbour series. Yellow and black, that's the colour print. That is '59. I did a harbour series. One, two, three, four, I think. That's the number one. It's in Sydney Gallery as well, or maybe somewhere else, I can't tell you off hand now.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, that's one we don't have a card for, so we must check on that, but that's a linocut.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Linocut, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, right.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Then is the next. See, it is a more complicated print series.

JAMES GLEESON: This is just one colour, is it?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yellow and black. It's a background colour printed as well.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Because of the harbour I put yellow and black, two colours. That is another print which was a little bit later to '61.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, what title is that? No title?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I can't remember the title now. But I can check it. I know who got it at home. It must be title written on the back. I can't give— because I am one person, I never keep records.

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JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Never keep.

JAMES GLEESON: And you don't normally title your work, or do you?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I mean, in the early '60s I used to give more titles, I remember, more lyrical, romantic titles.

JAMES GLEESON: But you didn't develop the habit of writing the title on the print?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Now I realise, I just sign the name, the year and sometimes I'm not even sign the year. But generally I sign the year as part of the tradition of graphic art. The edition, the year, then you know exactly. But I didn't write the title. Something I remember because that title, Daniel Thomas called in, I'd just finished that print.

JAMES GLEESON: *Black harbour.*

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: He looked at me—that was in Kirribilli—'How you call it? Is it something to do with harbour?', he said. I said, 'Of course, *Black harbour*'. And that stayed that way.

JAMES GLEESON: Now this one is also in the Sydney Gallery.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That is in the Sydney Gallery. Daniel has private print, I gave one. I got a suspicion maybe he gave that to the Gallery. I don't know.

JAMES GLEESON: I don't think so. I think this would have been in long before Daniel came to us.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: It went to exhibitions that one, maybe. Well, I can't remember because (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: That's 1961, *Black harbour.*

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Sixty-one.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you ever work in woodcuts?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: No, linos.

JAMES GLEESON: Always linos.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Now it happens I start to like (inaudible) and it stuck with me for a while. Till I can (inaudible) after. See, that was the colour print. I think, one, two, three colours is that one.

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JAMES GLEESON: *The hero remains.*

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: No. Behind is always the sun.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, yes. So I'll cross (inaudible).

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Behind is always the sun.

JAMES GLEESON: I'll cross that title out. That is incorrect.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: It was quite a large linocut. It's in Sydney Gallery as well.

JAMES GLEESON: It's in several colours.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, in three colours.

JAMES GLEESON: Three colours.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's quite big one as a linocut.

JAMES GLEESON: And, like Evie, you cut a special block for each colour? You didn't hand cut.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: No, never. Because I thought that is an old tradition.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Every print should have identical from the blocks, has to be from the blocks. Every block has to be cut, then you have the edition similar. When you hand paint—

JAMES GLEESON: They vary.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: They vary.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That is an old tradition with graphic art. As soon as you change the colour, it becomes a different print. I mean, in theory.

JAMES GLEESON: That's true.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: See. Then that's the idea. You stick it with edition, then you destroy it and then it stays there. That is part maybe last of my work which is maybe based more Lithuanian. I say sun comes, that's important. The summer comes. Maybe it's little bit more something different. But I still feel I had that Australian influence, because when you come as a young man you get that

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influence. Bit of rugged country, something roughness, there is something maybe there. As you notice from those prints, after '62 it become more simplified.

JAMES GLEESON: This is a fairly complex one. What was the date of that, can you remember?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Sixty-two.

JAMES GLEESON: Nineteen sixty-two. There is still a strong—what would you say—not figurative, but a natural landscape element—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: (inaudible) I always felt, you know, even in a certain obstruction certain landscape element comes through, in very abstract way.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I mean, maybe that's the (inaudible). That could be the horizon.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, extremely abstract

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Extremely simplified. That could be even the horizon. You see that line there, it's a line here.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: See, that's my upright. Here it's very hard to say, but it's a certain there. Horizon is somewhere there. Because if you look around here, you know, I feel that so strongly, that vast cognitive bit of roughness there. But there's something there. You see that difference. In Europe, well, I was too young to (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: See, I feel that here.

JAMES GLEESON: But in all these early ones, certainly the landscape is very strong.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, I think so too.

JAMES GLEESON: It becomes simplified as you go on.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Very simplified. The simplification goes, then slowly goes there. Maybe here it's little bit more. But see that line there?

JAMES GLEESON: That's a horizon line.

Circa 1979

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's the horizon. Something happens, see.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: It's still getting more simplified if we can compare those two.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, this one.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That is the (inaudible) after.

JAMES GLEESON: This one is not titled, 1963 silk screen, one colour black, four out of 12. When did you move to silk screen?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: It happens. See, you work in the medium and suddenly realise technically though it is so demanding, and then you know you feel the limitations. When you start to get simplification broader terms you need some medium where you can do it, you need a brush stroke and it's there. You know. In linocut, you imagine, you have to cut that line and it's so technical (inaudible). So I had to switch. I look at people. Oh, what was there? One of the pioneers, Jim Hynes. He was East Sydney Tech. He moved to commercial. But he used to make silk screens. They used to mix their own prints those days. Was nothing available. He gave a lecture and I looked at him, you know, and I thought, 'That could be a very interesting medium', because you can go with the brush over the silk. That's the way I used to work. Over the brush of the silk; that's always done that way.

JAMES GLEESON: So this is really brushed in?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Brushed in with a glue and then printed because somewhere start to feel more freedom, you know, more direct and more simplified. If you want the image, you succeed to do it directly and you get there.

JAMES GLEESON: You've never used stencils in this—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: No, no. I never got stencils. Even Barbara (inaudible) today said, 'So good, even a dribble of paint they can cut themselves'. But I thought again, 'Don't have to do linocuts'.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, exactly.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: What's the good of it?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. It's a different medium (inaudible).

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That's right. I mean, all those things they couldn't happen (inaudible). It's impossible. It's not me.

Circa 1979

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Then you see they become more simplified. So it's a year difference between those two.

JAMES GLEESON: Between?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Sixty-two and '63. Behind this always the sun.

JAMES GLEESON: And it's untitled?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Untitled serigraph of '63, which won the Grand Prize in the Mirror-Waratah Festival in Sydney that year, in '63. Then they become more simplified again.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: There's certain editions. I did that one with bit of colour and the top without a colour. Daniel liked that one.

JAMES GLEESON: This is the same print as that, except that there's a second block?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I said I did a second block with things. That's without.

JAMES GLEESON: This is '64, one in seven, black only. This is the same year.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Sixty-four.

JAMES GLEESON: With two colours, one in three.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes. that's right.

JAMES GLEESON: What is the colour? Did you vary the colour in the three (inaudible) prints?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: No, I think I did only three or four prints with that colour just to see for myself, because I never thought I'd show it. Got doing too much and then suddenly I have to show someone, so I had to take them and show it.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: So it happens.

JAMES GLEESON: This is the same brush technique?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Same brush technique as the silk screen. That's the earlier one actually here.

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JAMES GLEESON: Well, that is—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That is from my one man show.

JAMES GLEESON: No title. Nineteen sixty-one, a linocut, three of 25.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, that was in my one man show in Macquarie in '61.

JAMES GLEESON: So it belongs to that earlier series?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: To that earlier.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you ever give it a title?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: (inaudible) some of them I gave titles, but I thought the year and what you do that year, you know, that simple. Then '65, that was between the last one's I did.

JAMES GLEESON: What about this one, does it come earlier?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: That come towards '64, I think, '63. Sixty-three.

JAMES GLEESON: This one won the Grand Prize?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: No, that's wrong. That one. No, sorry, I don't know.

JAMES GLEESON: This one won the—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: This one.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Well, we'll put that in there.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: This one, yes. Maybe that belongs to another one. Oh, we can check after. That was the last one which was more simplified and that's the end of my graphic career.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. And that was what date?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Sixty-five, I think.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, '65. Three out of four.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, and then I stopped. I stopped printing for a while because already I was moving in gouaches, water colours, broader terms and then suddenly realised, 'Why should I do it through silk? Can do it directly'.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

Circa 1979

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: So because of the ideas I said before, 'Let's try to do something in water colour'. I was trying and I remember even episodes of those days. George Duncan was trying for three years. He nominated for three years to become a member of the water colour institute. I find out after, after I become a member and I went for the first annual meeting. I suddenly realised Brian Stratton and myself were the youngest members present.

JAMES GLEESON: Brian?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Stratton and myself.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes. Oh, goodness me.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: The rest of them were age difference. I walked out, I said, 'Well, well, I thought the Contemporary Society's getting a bit stale', you know. (inaudible) when you see that. I thought, 'Let's do in that media, try something a little bit different. It's needed'. That's the reason I stuck those days more with gouache, water colour, so they could big size, they could be smaller size, they could be any size.

JAMES GLEESON: Greater freedom.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I mean, a greater freedom and let's do it. It's still art, you see. That's the reason I was sticking more to those ideas. Even that helped me, that particular meeting. I thought, 'Well, let's do something', you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Henry, have you stuck to water colour and gouache or have you moved to acrylic at all?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I tried a few acrylics. Not very much because I realise suddenly when you are familiar with that gouache technique, when you got the wash, you start to feel water, you control after a while. You suddenly you can feel it what will happen. I try to do the same with acrylics, it doesn't happen, because that pigment is disintegrating. Becomes a little bit like (inaudible), you know, those points.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I'm not very happy with that. I want a smooth surface. I could never really get, I did some acrylics but you know it's not as simple.

JAMES GLEESON: With your gouaches or water colours you work on the horizontal?

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, always on the floor. Always flat and then you move the paper. I get that English paper. Is that a Kent paper which is 75 feet long by 5 feet.

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JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: You can work on that for the big size. I love the Arches paper now, that Arches is the French paper.

JAMES GLEESON: Arches is marvellous paper.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Beautiful. You can do a lot of things on paper, absorbs everything, beautiful.

JAMES GLEESON: Henry, now you haven't done any print making since '65.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Since '65. I don't know. Everybody's doing now.

JAMES GLEESON: I know. It's become the in thing.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Everybody's doing it. Yes. Why not? I mean, I achieved that, what they taught in the mid fifties, you know, and thanks heaven it happened.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, I think that covers it very well Henry, unless there's anything else you want to add. You're going to give us—

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: I will give you that, or even I will (inaudible) home after. Maybe I can print you a bit more details (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: Factual information.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Yes, here it's very shortened, you know, a plotted biography, but I give you more

JAMES GLEESON: All right. Well, I think that covers it and covers it very well.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Thank you.

JAMES GLEESON: Thank you very much.

HENRY SALKAUSKAS: Thank you.