

My life had a blueprint from the beginning, and that is the reason that I don't need to make blueprints or drawings for my sculpture. What I am saying is that I did not become anything, I was an artist. Early in school, they called me "the artist". When teachers wanted things painted, they called upon me, they called upon "the artist." I am not saying that I learned my name, animals can learn their names, I am saying that they learned it.

Humans are born from eggs and the shells make these eggs. We are born readymade. People always ask children, what are you going to be when you grow up? I remember going to the library, I couldn't have been more than nine. I went with another little girl to get a book. The librarian was a fairly cultivated woman, and she asked my little girl friend, "Blanche, and what are you going to be?" And Blanche said that she was going to be a bookkeeper. There was a big plaster Joan of Arc in the center of the library, and I looked at it. Sometimes I would be frightened of things I said because they seemed so automatic. The librarian asked me what I was going to be, and, of course, I said, "I'm going to be an artist." "No," I added, "I want to be a sculptor, I don't want color to help me." I got frightened, I ran home crying. How did I know that when I never thought of it before in all my life? I was only following the blueprint for my life. Then, as I matured, I was restless, I needed something to engage me, and art was that something. I knew I was a creative person from the first minute I opened my eyes. I knew it, and they treated me like an artist all of my early life. And I knew I was coming to New York when I was a baby. What was I going to do anywhere but New York? Consequently, as a little girl,

I never made strong connections in Rockland, because I was leaving. I told my mother I wasn't going to get married or be tied down. I planned to go to Pratt Art Institute so I could teach and support myself. Well, I did get married, and when I met my husband, I think I willed myself on him because I knew that he was going to propose.

Marriage was the only complication in my life. In retrospect, it was simple. My environment didn't suit me. I knew where my talents were and where I had to go. My energy, curiosity, and talent went in search of experience. It was the wrong experience for me. I learned that marriage wasn't the romance that I sought but a partnership, and I didn't need a partner. Anyway, I was married and we moved to New York.

My husband's family was terribly refined. Within their circle you could know Beethoven, but God forbid if you were Beethoven. You were not allowed to be a creator, you were just supposed to be an audience. This empty appreciation didn't suit me, and from the beginning of my marriage, I felt hemmed in. I was a creator, and I had to make things. I studied voice, painting, and modern dance during those difficult years. Dance fascinates me because I don't think we know how to control our bodies. We think that walking on two feet controls it. But you can't really control the body, unless you're like Martha Graham, who took all her life to control her body. The body is very intelligent if you know how to use it. I love dance because I think that it freed me, and then I knew that I had to free my voice. I was shy. I used to be so shy I couldn't open my mouth. And I think that the role society creates for women had a great deal to do with it.

I continued my studies, and then my child was born. The greater restriction of a family situation strangled me, and I ended my marriage. For me life couldn't be a complement of master and slave. And so I gave myself the greatest gift I could have, my own life. I could control my own time, and for that very reason I never worked for anybody. I paid a price for that and didn't give a damn if I didn't have shoes, because art was what I wanted. People emphasize the things that matter to them, and for me it was my entire life. I certainly was not happy in all these situations in my life, because I needed control and I paid a very full price. Once I was feeling a little sad, and to cheer myself up I walked up Fifth Avenue and window-shopped. As I recall, Bergdorf Goodman had mannequins covered with sheet music and standing in what looked like water, I don't think it was water, it may have been a mirror, but it was pretty fantastic. You could see the influence of Dali in those windows. I then went into Bonwit Teller because of the beautiful things in its windows. Now, I'm not taken by "beautiful things," but I was depressed and I said, "Look, Louise, you don't feel so hot. If the president of Bonwit's came out and said, 'If you work for us two hours a day, from 12:00 to 2:00, we will give you half a million dollars for the year' - would you accept it? I said no."

And at that time I wouldn't have, because I needed my full consciousness to project ideas. I didn't want to make things. I built an empire, and you don't build of that magnitude by cutting time. Those two hours I would have to give to Bonwit's would take away from my total awareness. The energy I would have to cut would make my work suffer.

No obstacle was great enough to keep me from my art. But people always stay where they shine and are happy. In Maine, and at the Art Students League in New York, and then in Munich with Hofmann, they all gave me 100 plus. I couldn't have gotten 100 plus in mathematics, could I? You take a painting, you have a white, virginal piece of canvas that is the world of purity, and then you put your imagery on it, and you try to bring it back to the original purity. What can be greater? It is almost frightening. Well, the same thing happens with my sculpture. I have made a wall. You know that before I tune into this I go through a whole tantrum until I break in. I don't know how I have lived this long being such a wreck over these things. But I renew myself every time. I never got over it, and I imagine that if I hadn't done this physical attacking, I don't know how I would have survived. I mean, I think the thing that kept me going was that I wouldn't be appeased. You know some people get appeased, or they buy a dress or they buy a hat or, I don't know, they get something. But I couldn't be appeased.

I went to art school, and yet one only benefits from notes here and there. Creativity shaped my life. Now, for example, a white lace curtain on the window was for me as important as a great work of art. This gossamer quality, the reflection, the form, the movement, I learned more about art from that than in school. I can sit in this room ten years and just look up and feel I've seen miracles. The building across the street is a school-supply warehouse. That may be its practical function, but it has a different one for me. I see reflections, I see lights off, and once in a while lights are left on.

In those windows the reflections I see are monumental, enormous, and every minute it changes with different light, the activity is endless. My tastes are satisfied by this. I don't need any more. I am entranced here wherever I look. It is an old street filled with patches, but the pattern satisfies me, and what more do I want?

Other times in my life I have responded to other things, but each time they were things that I found and things that I always knew were there, both from exotic civilizations and my own. At one time, I collected African and American Indian art. It started in Paris in 1931. Someone took me to the Musée de l'homme and they had an exhibition of African sculpture. There were masks and full figures, and I took one look and saw their power. Those marvelous things made an impression on me. I didn't have to study African sculpture, I immediately identified with the power. When I returned to New York, I would go in the subways and see the black supporting columns and recognize their power and strength standing there. They did something to me. It isn't that I only looked, it was as if they were feeding me energy like the primitive sculpture did. I have always had a good eye, and so it was easy for me to collect good things. I loved American Indian things, and I wanted them around me. I have had them. I identified with the Indian things. A lot of people speculate as to what they want to be if they were reincarnated. If I were reincarnated, I would want to be an American Indian. I like the look of them, their whole makeup. There is a kind of strength about them that appeals to me, and I like the fact that we know little about them. You see, I am talking about them visually, those wonderful features and costumes, they are a fantasy.

them. I have retained this stubborn edge. Men don't work this way, they become too affixed, too involved with the craft or technique. They wouldn't putter, so to speak, as I do with these things. The dips and cracks and detail fascinate me. My work is delicate; it may look strong, but it is delicate. True strength is delicate. My whole life is in it, and my whole life is feminine, and I work from an entirely different point of view. My work is the creation of a feminine mind—there is no doubt. What I wear every day and how I comb my hair all has something to do with it. The way you live a life. And in my particular case, there was never a time when I ever wanted to be anything else. I was interested in being myself. And that is feminine. I am not very modest, I always say I built an empire.

This is my empire, and it is my home, it is my life, a feminine mind, and a womanly life, a life of a woman. Perhaps my thinking transcends the traditional concept of what makes something feminine as opposed to masculine. In sports, women compete as well as men. The tennis players have women champs with great endurance, so do the golfers and the swimmers. These women are marvelous in their fields, but they are still females in their fields.

There is a line of difference in the approach and in the mentality. A woman may hit a ball stronger than a man, but it is different. I prize that difference. There are preconceived ideas about the woman and ~~her weakness that are ridiculous~~ Women through all ages could have had physical strength and mental creativity and still have been feminine.

The fact that these things have been suppressed is the fault of society. And because of that, few women have had the courage to dedicate themselves to art. In a way, it is a sacrifice, but it is a

choice. I have met distinguished and accomplished people, and many have said, "Well, you have fulfilled yourself as a woman." But one fulfills oneself. You are a woman, and you fulfill yourself; you are a man, and you fulfill yourself. And there is a price for what you do, and there is a price for what you don't do. It is a two-way deal. I felt, maybe partly through environment but certainly through birth, that I could take my true heritage and pay for it. I wanted this, and I felt rich enough to pay the price. It may sound arrogant, but that is true. I felt that I had the equipment and maybe, say it is a gift, but I knew I had it, and I felt that through this special perception I could live a meaningful life. When I was young, if the Rockefeller wealth had been put at my disposal and someone had said, here, you can have a different job every day and have pearls from your neck down to your feet, I wouldn't have changed. There's all kinds of money, the banks are full of it, why should I be impressed. I was energetic and healthy, and I didn't care if I only had a piece of bread and butter and cheese to eat. We make our own decisions according to that blueprint. Women used to be afraid, I've met many of those women I studied art with; one of them said to me, "I am married and have three children. I was not willing to gamble." Well I wasn't afraid, I felt like a winner. And even if I didn't sell my work, I still felt like a winner. I am a winner.

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STAY HERE In the end, as you get older and older, your life is your life and you are alone with it. You are alone with it, and I don't think that the outside world is needed. It doesn't have much influence on me, as an artist, or on us as individuals, because one cannot be divorced from the other. It is the total life. Mine is a total life.

As a segment or chapter of a total life, my current metal trees or sculptures are a continuation of the flow of my work. These

metal sculptures are made directly-organically-and are an extension of the process of my wood sculpture. I use existing or, as they say, found forms as well as forms that I personally design. However, the art of selection of a form is for me a sculptural act and I do not consider the selected 'found form' less mine than the invented form. I invent my environments, totally. Working in metal has allowed me to fulfill myself as an environmental architect. With the assistance of the crew at Lippincott in Connecticut, I have created works that begin to approach the scale of my projected concepts. Working in the open is especially difficult as you are in competition with the scale of the universe. In enclosures, you can create infinite universes by illusion-shadow and light, but outside, scale becomes critical. Space is the greatest luxury whether it be in a room or out of doors.

I had never worked directly in metal before or, for that matter, in a foundry, but I am working near my capacity in an atmosphere of harmony. I can translate cor-ten into butter and butter into cor-ten. *BY THE SAME TOKEN, BUTTER CAN BECOME GRANITE OR STEEL.* Of course, a good forty to fifty years of concentrated visual thinking and working places me in the present position of finding that there is no difference between hard and soft substance-mayber I'll find that butter turns to the liquid that it is.

I build up elements and tear them down and work until my eye is satisfied. When a maquette is enlarged, there are different considerations and I never merely enlarge. I rethink and add and change edges and thickness of forms as well as adding new pieces. My works are always in process until they are installed and, even then, I've made changes.