

JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: FLORENCE MARTIN

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JAMES GLEESON: Ms Martin, we have a number of your designs for ballets in our collection and I was wondering if you would tell us, first of all, how you became to be interested in designing for theatre? Where did you study and what drew you to the theatre as an area for your art?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, it all started in Melbourne. We lived in Melbourne, and my sister and I had always been very interested. We'd read a lot of ballet books and we loved the ballet, but had no hopes of ever designing for it. Then we met Doina Ribush who was producing plays, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Lower Depths*, various things in Melbourne. He got us to do designs for those two plays. Then I think after that we did *Midsummer Night's Dream* for Keith McCartney at the University Theatre, and a little bit after that time the Colonel de Basil ballet came out.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, in the thirties; '38 or something like that? Or earlier?

FLORENCE MARTIN: It was about '38. Now, first one company came and then the second company came. With the second company, which was his really first—the top company, with Somala Rubashinskin.

JAMES GLEESON: I remember them very well.

FLORENCE MARTIN: You remember them. They were to put on a new ballet by Igor Schwezoff called *Lutte Eternelle*, and Lawrence and Hill had been commissioned to do the costumes. The choreographer didn't like them and a great fuss was going on about all this, you see. Then he saw a little painting of mine at a party that the hostess had on the wall. He liked this. He inquired who did it and all the rest of, and eventually came out to see us. From then my sister and I both worked at this very hard to get the idea of what he wanted, not knowing that anyone else was doing it, and we moved like tigers. Well, anyway, in the end they liked our designs, or Igor liked them. The Colonel was not so sure. Anyway, he was brought out to our house, and I remember him crawling all around the floor looking at these things, you know, everything all spread out and we were terribly impressed, of course, because he was just a name to us, you know. He decided, yes, he quite liked; yes, they might be all right. So from then on we have to work away and alter a few things and change some colour schemes and so on and so on. The ballet was not to be put on in Melbourne. It was to be in Sydney. At that time I had never been away from Melbourne because I'd had this car smash and fractured my spine, and sitting around in a wheel chair. I said, 'Well, I can't get up to Sydney', and this was all very disappointing. But, anyway, he said, 'Well, you'll have to get up there because there'll be things to alter, and you had better be coming', you see. So we had a

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great furniture van. We took up all the special mattresses, special wheelchair, special everything, and we arrive in Sydney. We took a flat up there for three months and worked liked tigers and did quite a lot of altering. The set had to be changed a little bit. It was terribly exciting. Well, it ended up we were getting off to all the ballet parties and taking them up to the Blue Mountains for trips and everything. The ballet went over very well; it was quite a success.

So at the end of all that this company was going back to America, and they had great ideas that we should go to America, go to New York, a lot of scope there. So we didn't see any possibility whatsoever and felt 'Well, that's it, we've had our ballet days there'. So we went back to Melbourne and we did the *We Pra Piano Concerto* for Borovansky. We were getting a few more ideas by now, a few more ambitions, and everything happened in a weird way. A very top Berlin orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Heiderman, came out to Melbourne. He was a Jewish migrant. A friend of ours who had known him in Berlin said, 'He's here, you must go to see this man. He is a genius and he'll get you on to your crutches or something'. Because I was sitting, you see, I was in a wheelchair. They wouldn't let me have braces. So I said, 'Well, I think it's a bit silly because I know that I can't walk around. They tell me I can't cope with braces'. I had no balance. So in the end I did go to see this man. He was not allowed, incidentally, to be allowed on the BMA for 16 years, but he was practicing. He had a big sort of a gym rigged up out at Fitzroy and people were telling people, you see, and one's going along for exercises, massage, advice. All that he could do, but he wasn't allowed to operate because he wasn't on the thing. So instead of people who'd been going from all over the world to learn from him—anyway, there he was. So when he saw me, he said, 'What you want to do is to get onto your crutches, get standing up. You can't sit around. Come out, I'll make you crawl around, do all kinds of things'. So I did, and I used to go in about four times a week and eventually got to the stage I could sort of stand with a walking stick and someone's arm to hang onto. We still had a trained nurse trailing around. Anyway, as time went on, he had braces made for me which were not—they were very heavy and he couldn't get the equipment. It was now getting on to wartime.

JAMES GLEESON: Was this during the war?

FLORENCE MARTIN: It was getting on to wartime. It was about 1939; very hard to get materials. He said, 'What you really want to do—I wonder if you'd mind just putting the blind down?'

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, it is getting—I'll turn off.

FLORENCE MARTIN: At that point we thought, 'Well, if we get to New York, that's the place that I can get better callipers made'. He said that he wouldn't operate but there might be someone over there that would think they could do it. He said, 'After 12 years I don't think it's much likelihood'. Anyway, we saw ballet callipers (inaudible). So this went on for quite a bit. We didn't think there was a

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hope in life of getting away, but we came up to Sydney. It was in the summer of '42. Yes, it went on for quite a bit. While I was practicing getting better, we could dispense with the trained nurse and I was sort of getting around a bit, you see. So, in these rather heavy braces—but I could stand up in them—and a walking stick. We came up to help Harry Miller, and Loudon Sainthill had a big exhibition of theatre designs they'd brought out from London under the auspices of the British Council. You might remember this, they gave a big show in Sydney and they took all this things by Motley, Cecil Beaton, Oliver Messel. Oh, they had a big Epstein curtain for David, Degar bronzes; a wonderful collection of stuff.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I believe I—where was that?

FLORENCE MARTIN: You remember that?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. I can't remember where it was.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, they had it first in Sydney and then they went to Melbourne. Then, of course, the war intervened and they couldn't take it back and Harry was very worried. Now, Evatt, who was the Minister for Education at that period, he wanted to give a show—

JAMES GLEESON: This is Dr Evatt.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, Clive Evatt, wasn't it?

JAMES GLEESON: Was it Clive Evatt? Oh yes, the state minister, that's right. Yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: I think. He wanted to give this big show—at a gallery that's not there now, of course—down at the quay; a big thing with a glass roof. for the American Red Cross, in aid of. He persuaded Harry to get all this stuff out. Anyway, Harry and Loudi had said they would but Loudon, having a bad stutter, we had to give lectures to the school children all being brought in each day, you see, and all this sort of educational thing, ballet, Shakespeare, a lot of plays and various—William Constable, was another Australian designer that showed. Tat's and I showed ours and Loudi, of course. So, anyway, Harry wasn't too keen. He thought if a bomb comes and drops on that roof all our stuff, you know, it was awful. But it went on for six weeks. He asked us to come over to help with a bit of the lecturing part, and we stayed with Melanie Price Jones down at Double Bay here. And used to rush into the gallery every morning and give our tours, you know. So at the end of this period they thought—there was a woman called Arlis Storey, who had a gallery in New York, and she wanted them to bring all this over on the way back to England, if they could get there. They were four F, by the way; they weren't able to join up because they were something; wrong eyes, hearts and I don't know what.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

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FLORENCE MARTIN: If they could get it to America and then get it back to London, was the project. So we thought now, perhaps we can do this thing. Go over, give a big show in Los Angeles, (inaudible) wanted to do on the way, and then to New York. But, of course, it wasn't simple because you couldn't get permits to travel.

JAMES GLEESON: No, nothing was simple in those days.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Oh, it was impossible. So while we were in Sydney we went into all this and, anyway, it seemed that in the end it was possible. We booked up tentatively on a cargo ship going around through Panama. We were to go on this ship and Loudon and Harry wouldn't be able to come till later, but that was going to be all sort of sorted out and the stuff arranged and transhipped over. So we went back to Melbourne and found a wire waiting under the door to say they had discovered that I was disabled, of course, and couldn't take me on the ship. So we tried a couple of other ideas but, no. We had to have doctor's letters galore and all kinds of things. To get money to go was another big item because no money was being allowed out.

JAMES GLEESON: No, of course not.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Unless you had some very big excuse. Our idea was to go for the doctor reason—which was a very certain reason too—that we wanted to see people in New York, and we had letters from the various doctors. In the end, it was all passed and clear that we could go if we could (inaudible). So we put in word at the Matson Shipping office and a man called Greenway—he was rather enthusiastic—he said, 'I think there is quite a chance'. So one morning—this was about the following Saturday morning—the phone went and he said, 'I can get you on a ship leaving next Wednesday from Sydney'. This was the Saturday. There was a King's birthday on the Monday. Everything was shut. We couldn't get on with any business bits until the Tuesday; beyond the old express, of course, in those days. See this was before you could hop on a plane and go.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So would we or wouldn't we? So Tats had to rush in, see the American Consul. We were supposed to have a guarantor in America, which we couldn't get. She put an evil eye on him or something because it was all fixed up and we got on the express and up to Sydney. The old Australia Hotel, which is still there. We were not to talk about this thing; we were not going. It was just, you know, all sort of under the hat. So we then went down to the shipping office, heard that it would not be going—our ship—from Sydney. It went from Newcastle the following Friday. So for two or three days—it was the Wednesday of the Friday—we were here. On the Thursday morning, great excitement—half the staff didn't turn up—a Jap sub had come into the harbour.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I remember that.

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FLORENCE MARTIN: Anyway, that was great excitement. On the Friday we got onto the train and we went up to Newcastle, and when we got up there it was about eight o'clock at night, and of course, everything was a blackout. We didn't know what we were getting onto. We imagined it would be a *Mariposa* or something like that. It was a little Dutch freighter. There was a kind of rope ladder going up the side of it.

JAMES GLEESON: Goodness.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Of course the captain had no idea I was disabled. They hadn't told him. He had no doctor on board and he didn't want me, of course. He was so horrified. He had a completely bald head like Yul Bryner and waxed white moustache. I got to the top of this thing and the purser, a great big man, got hold of me and yoked me up, you see, and I landed up at his feet. He was so horrified he said afterwards he didn't know which way to jump and, of course, there was nothing he could do. So he had retired and he was brought back into the shipping thing for the war and he was bringing troops out and then a bit of cargo and a couple of passengers going back. It was a lovely little ship. All camouflaged, of course. There we were and we had a lovely suite, a beautiful cabin—oh, gorgeous. But I had to go up about three flights of stairs, hop up with my one stick and Tats' arm, to the various bits, the dining department and all the rest of it. He would stand at the bottom and he'd watch me doing all this, because he knew I was going to break my leg. He was waiting for it and it made me so nervous because I just didn't like being watched. But as it went on, at first he wouldn't talk to us at all. We sat at his table. There were only two other passengers. Major Rawley, who had come down from Singapore and these places and was on sick leave. He was going back to New York and he was sort of pale green, you know. And another man who we thought was a spy. He always sat at a little table by himself, a very quiet little man. He never spoke. He was Canadian. We knew that he must have a good reason, but goodness knows what it was. We never knew; never spoke a word to him. Anyway, Major Rawley and the captain, Tats and I sat at this table and the captain wouldn't talk to us at all. Just ignored us; tried to pretend we weren't there. For about three days we zigzagged—

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, across the Pacific.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, and then we went right down below New Zealand, way down off the beaten track. By this time he'd thawed out. He was a dear old man. We became great friends in the end and always kept in touch, and eventually years later we went and stayed with him and his old wife over in Holland. He was a dear. But, anyway, we didn't touch in anywhere. No ports, of course. One morning very early, about two o'clock in the morning, we'd been told always to have our little pile of things, little valuables out (inaudible) and the sirens went. We were all making for the boats and he came along and said, 'Get back in your bunks because it's a false alarm'. It's only a British raider I think, coming along behind. All the false signals had been given. So back we got to bed

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and he said afterwards if that had been a genuine thing, we never would have been picked up because we were way off the route.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, heavens, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: But, anyway, we landed in Los Angeles and we went across on a train, took about four or five days all across mid-west. Terrific heat wave on; it was about June, end of June.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you have the exhibition with you?

FLORENCE MARTIN: No, that was off. I was forgetting about all this main part. The exhibition—we were now to go straight to New York because Loudon and Harry—the thing had been held up—they still thought they were coming to New York, but the Los Angeles side of it was off. Well now, when we got to New York we had a cable from them to say it was all off. Everything had been stepped up in the way the 4F's had gone up a jump and now they were in the navy. So, of course, all that thing had to be completely wiped out and all the stuff was stored here down in the vaults somewhere, and wait till later.

JAMES GLEESON: Can I just interrupt you? When you designed Lutte Eternelle was that the time when Sidney Nolan was doing Icare?

FLORENCE MARTIN: It was and we met Sidney for the first time. He was giving a little exhibition at a gallery attached to the Art Gallery in Melbourne. He had a little show of ballet designs, the Icare and all kinds of odd bits he had there. He was very young and very tentative at that stage. I think we had pink walls all around it, I remember, this gallery. That was our first sight of Sidney. But did he go on from there?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, indeed. I thought it might have been (inaudible).

FLORENCE MARTIN: Kenny Roll, he was another one. He was longing to do ballet designs. Of course these boys, see, they all wanted to get in with the Russian Ballet, so that they thought we were pretty lucky, and we were terribly lucky. Kenneth Roll I remember coming along one day with a whole lot of designs he had and, 'Oh' more than anything in the world I want to design for the ballet'. Of course Loudon, that was his ambition, and it was a terrible thing. We became great friends as time went on but at that point I don't think he could have liked us very much because all his designs, you see, that he had done and worked hard on were scrapped. It was an awful thing to happen.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: It was a mean thing, but Igor had his ideas of what he wanted, and I think what happened was this. Loudon was a man of very definite ideas. Now, he would want his designs as they were. Igor was quite capable of saying, 'No, I won't have that'. He wanted someone more amenable. We were so

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anxious to get in we didn't care a rat. We did them, you know, any colour he wanted. We said, 'Right'. So that's the way we got in there.

JAMES GLEESON: Did the company go to New York?

FLORENCE MARTIN: The company was in New York and, of course, when we arrived there we had various introductions. We saw our doctors and we got no help much there. They said, 'You're a sitter and sit in a wheelchair'. I said, 'I don't want to sit in a wheelchair. I want to get into braces and be walking around on crutches and new braces'. So then we went to another doctor and he was much better and nicer. He said, 'Well, I think what you really want is to get onto you callipers—new callipers; these are pretty heavy—and learn to walk on your crutches. You'll just have to get your balance'. So I had visions of having to get around New York, you know, not being independent at this stage. Tats had to sort of help me in the morning and help me all the time. She couldn't get on to a job because, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So, anyway, we could see that things—if we wanted to stay there—would have to improve. We went for six months. We had enough money to last for six months. That was what was allowed us in the end. Of course, we got so excited about this place; it was so wonderful to be there. Of course Igor was there and he was wanting me to do designs galore.

JAMES GLEESON: America wasn't in the war at that stage, was it?

FLORENCE MARTIN: It wasn't. No, it hadn't. Had it?

JAMES GLEESON: It hadn't come in. Pearl Harbour—

FLORENCE MARTIN: This was '42. When was Pearl Harbour?

JAMES GLEESON: Well, it probably was. Yes, I think they were probably were in by that time. I'm not sure.

FLORENCE MARTIN: I think it might have started.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes. So it was wartime in New York?

FLORENCE MARTIN: But you wouldn't know. It was wartime New York but, good heavens, you wouldn't know it. I mean, all the old fat ladies used to get upset because they couldn't get their certain brands of things. But it didn't have anything to do with the war.

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

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FLORENCE MARTIN: it was terrible. Of course, it was all going on at home and we felt sort of pretty awful because we'd hopped off at the critical moment, but you couldn't do much by staying. Dr Heiderman said that if I hadn't gone then, he said, 'Every year you're getting older. If you want to get independent, get onto your better callipers. You should get going now'.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: That was really what drove us to it. There was a great worry going on about whether it was the thing to do. I suppose it wasn't but, anyway, there we were. Having got there, we didn't want to come back. It was so wonderful, you see, and we were learning so much. I had lessons from Sergei S Souderkine, he was an old Russian ballet designer.

JAMES GLEESON: Had you trained in Melbourne before you left?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, I hadn't. Because during the 12 years I was sitting around with my back worries, not able to sort of get around, I did a lot of drawing and illustrating fairy tales. Kathleen and I, we had little exhibitions. I don't know if you've ever heard of old Margaret McLaine. Did you ever know Margaret McLaine?

JAMES GLEESON: No, I don't believe I did.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, she had a gallery in Collins Street, and we had this sort of fairy tale exhibition. It was Grimms and Hans Andersens. No theatre at that stage. This was long before we met Doyle or anything.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So then I had lessons from Edith Allsop. She used to come out to the house. She was a great cubist. She'd been in Paris studying under Andre Lote.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: She tried to get us on to this. Well, I was not a cubist. I was a painter. But we tried hard; it was all quite good. At school, of course, I'd learn from old Archibald Colquhoun, and did plaster casts. But apart from that, and doing autograph books for all the various ones, well, that's the extent of the learning.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. So this contact with the Russian designer in New York was really the first—

FLORENCE MARTIN: He said 'You have an awful lot to learn', so he showed me a lot.

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JAMES GLEESON: What was his name?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Sergei Souderkine. S-O-U-D-E-R-K-I-N-E

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: A ballet that we'd seen and loved when we saw it in Melbourne was *Paganini*, remember that?

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes. I remember it well.

FLORENCE MARTIN: He did quite a lot for the Russian Ballet and a lot for the ballets over in New York. He was living in New York now. A Russian friend of ours introduced us and said, 'He does give some lessons but he's more or less sort of given that up because he's been so busy'. He was doing all the Radio City things at that stage and a whole lot of musicals and goodness knows what as well as ballet. Anyway, we went along one morning and he was in a funny old studio over on the west side. When we arrived he came to the door. We knocked about 16 times and thought he's not in. He came; a little short fat thing with a dressing gown on. He just looked at us, you know. I was petrified. Anyway, we went in and all around the walls, just instead of wallpaper, it was just masses of his designs everywhere you look. Lovely, gorgeous things, and all the Paganini designs and everything. So, anyway, we said what the thing was. I said, 'I'm doing these ballet designs and I'm still not on the union and I don't think I can get on it for a while because you have to pay \$500 hundred dollars'. It's now about 20 times that. You had to do a big exam, and also the waiting list was very long. You had to wait for the old chappies, you see, to die off before you could get started. So, anyway, I said, 'I'm plugging along. I'm doing things for Igor Schwezoff now' because he had some ballets he wanted to put on and he thought he could wangle things to get me in with the Monte Carlo Company. So there was great arguments going on. That's when this Malediction thing came up and he liked them very much and he wanted to use them but couldn't, you see. It was awful.

So Souderkine said, 'No, I can't take on any more pupils. I've given up teaching. You'll have to learn from someone else'. He was very abrupt—didn't talk too good English either. So we had a bit of a chat and he introduced us to his nice—very large, enormous Valkyrie type, she was an opera singer—wife. An American. Huge; about twice as tall as he was. And very, very nice. Anyway, back we went to our apartment and that afternoon there was a knock on the door. It was Souderkine. He said, 'I thought it over'. He said, 'My cat died lately and I think I might take on a pupil'. Sort of instead of the cat, you know. It was the funniest thing. He came in and he said, 'Now, I've brought a lot of pencils and (inaudible)'. He said, 'Now look around and see what you've done'. He looked at some things I had there and he said, 'Oh yes'. He used to come every day and give me lessons.

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JAMES GLEESON: I see. Oh, well, that was good.

FLORENCE MARTIN: He got interested. He was a marvellous man. He showed me such a lot and taught me such a lot. Anyway, he was very keen on draftsmanship and I had to, you know, work at that thing. That went on for quite some time and then he was on a very strict diet and he knew he'd die if he ate ordinary things. He had to live on bananas and milk or something frightful. Of course, he said, 'It's no good to me. I think I'll go off it fairly soon and then I'll probably die'. Well, he did. He had a heart attack and he died. But, anyway, in the meantime he'd become a great friend and we liked him very much. He was a dear little man and very kind.

So from then on I kept on with all this designing business and there were various companies like Grant Mouradoff had a small company. It was going over to Europe and he made me do a lot of circus designs for him. Couldn't use my name—it was all very sort of under the hat—because if you did you'd be clamped into jail or something, not being on the union.

JAMES GLEESON: Because you weren't a member on the union, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So then Kermit Love, who was doing also a lot of designing for big musicals and things, I met him and he was on the committee of this United Scenic Artist thing, Woodman Thompson was the president. I was talking to Kermit and he said, 'You know, I think the only way—now, I'll put in a word for you. I think you can get into the next exam. I think it comes up in February', He said, 'Anyway, I'll see what can be done'. Well, believe it or not, I did, I got into the next exam. But I had to go up to Montreal, take out first papers. We went up there for about four days and we became resident aliens. We got on the quota, came back to New York and the exam. Chagall was doing it.

JAMES GLEESON: Was he?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Because he had to do the designs for Eleka from Assin.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: He was not allowed to do them. They were not accepted until he did the exam. This dear old boy, he was there doing it. Eight o'clock in the morning till four in the afternoon. You had to do a whole lot of designs beforehand to bring in, and then you had to do a lot of stuff while we were there. You had to answer all the oral part, and also fill out papers; a colossal thing. Kermit, very nicely, had told me more or less the kind of questions they would be likely to ask and the kind of books to get, so that's a great help, enormous help. So I got 90. Ninety. I thought I'm made, you know, no more trouble. But that was only the beginning. You then had to dig your toes in. We'd somehow got the money over. I've forgotten. Oh, I know. I broke my ankle. Tats dropped me. She was carrying me into the bath and we fell over the mat and I broke it. It was a marvellous thing to happen because the doctor was able to write out to our

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doctors in Melbourne and the bank and things and say that I had to stay on over there and needed more money.

JAMES GLEESON: Isn't that extraordinary?

FLORENCE MARTIN: And we got it over. Well, anyway, this has all been going on along the way. So then I did various things, a lot of costume designing. What happened? Oh, yes, about that period Igor was going down to South America to be attached to the Teatro Municipal in Rio and in Buenos Aires. Yes, both. He hadn't put the Malediction on in New York—there had been too much fuss going on with that—and he went off. Actually, he went off before I was on the union. I can't remember all the details of what happened where, but that's what happened there. He went off to South America and we were supposed to go too. We wanted to very much because there were about three ballets of mine he was putting on.

JAMES GLEESON: What were the other ones?

FLORENCE MARTIN: *Judgement of Jupiter*, Seagull thing—I've forgotten what that was going to be called. Virgil Thompson was writing the music for that. Anyway, off they went and we were all set to go. Then it turned out that if we got down there, we wouldn't be able to get re-entry permit. This was before Montreal, before our thing came up.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: We were really there on a very tentative kind of a thing, you see. It was rather sort of touchy. If we got to Rio and we couldn't get back to New York, we would then be deported home to Australia, which we didn't want to do. So in the end we gave up that idea. But I did a lot of small designs at the Maledictions—these were big things to send—and sent them all down to Igor.

JAMES GLEESON: You mentioned the music was Liszt?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Malediction. Yes. That was Liszt? Anyway, all these little designs were made and sent down, and the big ones I had. You see, that was why I still had them, because usually you have to stamp them with the United Scenic Artists thing, after I (inaudible). The people that were doing the ballet or the play whatever, they keep the designs.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So I didn't have as many as I wanted but anyway. So where did we get back to? New York. So this was going on. Then I had an exhibition at a gallery called the George Binet Gallery in 57th. I had some ballet designs, some paintings. Now I was having lessons from—we were there for 10 years, so this all went on over 10 years.

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JAMES GLEESON: All through the forties and into the early fifties?

FLORENCE MARTIN: It went from '42 to '52. It was a very good period in New York; lovely time to live there. I wouldn't want to live there now.

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

FLORENCE MARTIN: This gallery wanted me to give a show and I collected up a whole lot of odds and ends that I had. As I say, some ballet and some paintings. I'd been going to some lessons now at the American Art School. Not the Students League on 57th but a new one started up on 56th Street. It was a very good school and they gave me a bit of a grounding in oils. I'd never touched oil paint before.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: You, by the way, are James Gleeson.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: It dawned on me afterwards, see, talking to you on the phone that I'd been talking to James Gleeson. I said to Tats, 'I don't think it could be the one, the painting one, because I can't imagine he'd want to come and interview me'. That sort of didn't sound right. She said, 'Well, you never know, perhaps it is'.

JAMES GLEESON: It is.

FLORENCE MARTIN: When I saw you, I thought, yes, that's right. Because one night at Cyril's, a party he gave, I wanted very much to meet you because you had been interviewing a Macquarie Gallery show—probably for the *Telegraph*.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: He said that, yes, you quite liked them, were quite all right, passed. Twenty-five years out of date and they made me feel so old hat. I thought, my Lord no one will ever want my things. You know, I am old hat. What am I going to do about this thing, you see? So, anyway, you were going to be at this party and I thought perhaps I could have a word to you and just see if you thought there was any hope. Anyway, I asked Cyril to tell me who you were. In the end I didn't have the nerve so I sat there and I didn't meet you. So, anyway, there we are.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, we meet at last.

FLORENCE MARTIN: We meet at last. So in the meantime that was very good for me, telling me that, because I knew that I probably was a bit and I need to, you know, try and see what I could do about it. Well, that's a long way ahead; we

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better go back to New York. So I gave this show and got on with my oil paints and got keen about that and I thought if I go on with the theatre—it was getting very involved because over the snowy seasons in New York it's pretty hard getting about. I was now, incidentally, along the way. I'd learnt to walk on crutches. First I'd go down to the front door. Then I'd get around the street a bit and then I'd go around the block. Igor's studio next door, I used to walk around on the bars there. He was pretty good, he used to sort of bully me along, you know. He's always been a terrible bully and he made me do it. I got going so that I could get around and I had to get onto buses. We couldn't afford taxis. Kathleen was now on a job with the Australian Consulate. First she had one with a lift. She gave up the ballet designing that she had done in Melbourne because one of us had—

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, you both worked on?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, and she was very good draftsman, a very good drawer.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: But she was the one who had to be the man of the party, make our bread and butter money, our rent money. She was first on lift job up at 103rd, in a hotel, from four o'clock in the afternoon till 12 at night so that she could be with me in the mornings. Well, after that she was down at the Council on Foreign Relations. Then a friend of ours who had been with the Australian Consulate—she wanted to join the WACS or the WAFS or whatever and go off to Washington and she wanted to know if Tats would like to take over from here on her job there. So she did, and she was there for the rest of the war in the decoding. She used to be there till 12 o'clock at night sometimes waiting for these cables to come in. Anyway, she did all that part, whereas I would make the money sort of on bits. It would come in in nice little hunks, and then I'd not be doing anything and I wouldn't make anything. She was making the steady income.

JAMES GLEESON: Day by day. yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Which was the only way we could have survived there because we couldn't get any money from home. So that went along and we had about, oh, I think eight moves from apartments to apartments during the 10 years we were there. For about three years at the time we at a lovely one in Madison Avenue, just at the back of the Sherry Netherland between 59th and 60th. For a while there they wanted to pull it down and put a cinema up. Everyone was supposed to be—you know. We could just be put out in the street at any moment, if they didn't take our rent, that is. We had to want to pay our rent every month, but if they took it they couldn't put us out. So we all conscientiously kept on paying our rent and it was sent back. It was pretty dicey. We didn't know how this was going to be, because we were getting it for very cheap. It was noisy like

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nothing on earth. We were on the fourth floor, right on Madison Avenue with the buses and everything coming past all day and all night. But we loved it because there were shops down underneath us.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: I could get a bus just at the corner there. Tats could get her bus to her job down at Rockefeller—the whole thing was very convenient. And I was by this time able to hop on and off the buses by myself, you see, and get down. Now Kolinsky was making a lot of the costumes.

JAMES GLEESON: Was this Malediction?

FLORENCE MARTIN: No, this was for Grant, my first experience with her—the circus costumes.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: It was the middle of the winter and everything was snowed up and I used to have ice picks and every kind of coat and earmuffs you could think up, you know. If you fell over, which I periodically did—I had an old fur coat that was nearly leather by this time; most of the fur had worn off. It was awful. You would have to get down to this place of hers, right down on the—oh, she was 40-something, I think. I'd get down on the bus and then you'd have to get out and walk over all this icy stuff to get to her house. It was a beautiful house, all lovely chandeliers and it was dark sort of pine green and white and these lovely crystal chandeliers. She was a most wonderful person; the best ever I think, of the ballet.

JAMES GLEESON: Who was this?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Karinska.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, Karinska.

FLORENCE MARTIN: She was the very famous one with the old Russian ballets. Everything had to be exact and perfect, and she was always late. Nothing was ever ready in time. So working along with her you had to see to the costume, the material choosing, you see, all that had to be done. If I could have had a team of sisters working with me, if Tats hadn't been on a job and we could have done it together. But it was all very difficult. You see, I had to do more than I could really cope with. Odd friends would help me and that but it really was pretty awful.

JAMES GLEESON: You didn't actually have to make the costumes yourself?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Oh no, no. That was Karinska and then Edith Lutcheons. Edith Lutcheons was also a great one. She was making for a lot of the shows,

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and she came into it. She had a great triplex up on 72nd street. She had been first of all making for people in London. She married a cousin, Archie Lutcheons, and they came over. Oh, he suicided or something and she came over from New York. She married a newspaper magnate, a multi, and started off this thing in a small way. She was making for the Motleys. Elizabeth Montgomery was now in New York and they were carrying along. They also had to do this awful exam thing, you know. Anyway, Edith, she had this wonderful arrangement going on but she needed a secretary and a sort of general helper. In the end Tats—this was the end of the war now—she left the consulate and she was working with Edith. That was quite an exciting job because she had to do a lot besides a secretary. It was all kinds of jobs. It was about seven people took over after she left. Seven people. Half of them were dying of nervous breakdowns because it was so hectic. She took on everything, anyone that came over.

Now, Cecil Beaton would come over and want Edith to do all the costumes for his something or other because he was a friend of hers. She'd take it on whether she had time or not, which meant that everyone had to work at night. It was against the law that people could go on working after a certain hour. She would put down the blinds and have everyone working. She was doing everything wrong. It was hectic. Well, anyway, that went on and in the end Tats had to give up. She wanted very much to take a job at this lovely Swartz toyshop on 5th Avenue. It was the most gorgeous toyshop. So she left Edith and she was there. I went to Pennsylvania to have some chiropractic treatment at that point. Some wonderful man who was supposed to make you walk up the ceiling, you know. But it wasn't much of a success. I had the treatment (inaudible) came back to New York.

This was going on now to, oh, about 1949, was it? We were able to get at last money sent over from home. Things eased up and we wanted to go on a little visit to London to see our old aunt who was getting pretty old and always wanting us to come over. So we decided to go over for three months holiday. In the meantime, we had done over the course of time in New York a little bit of getting around. Not an awful lot because we never had any money. But I had a very great friend called Betsy Barton, who was also a paraplegic. She had a back smash the same as mine—car. Her father was Bruce Barton. He was in congress. He was a very wealthy man. They lived in a lovely, beautiful house on 53rd Street, just off 5th. Oh, she had her Cadillac with the hand things and all the rest of it, and she used to love getting around the country. We had some lovely runs around.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, nice.

FLORENCE MARTIN: She had her house up in Connecticut and she had a ranch in Phoenix, you know, Arizona—I didn't go to—a house in Los Angeles, all this and a sort of world that I had never come on before. Her parents were so nice and very, very kind. They gave wonderful parties and goodness knows what. Then dear little Mrs Barton died. Betsy, who had been making quite good headway, we had a mutual friend, the man who introduced me to her was called

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John Gregory. When the war was still on, I'd been walking along the street one day, just near my door going into Madison Avenue flat, and the wind was blowing like nothing on earth. I could hardly stand up. I'd been down doing the marketing and I had my bag round my neck, you know, on a string. He was coming along behind and held the door for me and I went in and said, 'Thank you very much'. He said, 'You could do a lot better than that'. I said, 'Well, not on a windy day'. I said, 'Come in and I'll show you I can do better when it's not windy'.

So I went in and in the end—he had his uniform on—he said, 'I'm really writing a book on this'. You know, teaching paraplegics and people, you know, the amputees, to walk with crutches and braces and all the rest of it. He said, 'I'd like to get you to demonstrate for the little diagrams and things, and there's a lot of things you could help me with'. Because he decided I was walking quite well on the crutches when I told him what I had the matter with me and everything. Well, he used to come along and give me tips on walking. He had been a prize-fighter, quite a well-known one—boxer I think he was. He married one of the three beautiful daughters of the Rajah of Sarawak, the white rajah, one of those daughters. He was now divorced but, anyway, he'd had quite a glamorous career and now he was very anxious to help with the war thing and he was doing this. He was in New York for three weeks and he said, 'There's another little one, Betsy Barton, that I'd like you to meet who is also trying to walk on these braces but she's not making much headway. I think she wants someone like you to push her along'.

Where did we get to?

JAMES GLEESON: You'd met this man.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I've forgotten his name.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Betsy Barton. John Gregory.

JAMES GLEESON: John Gregory.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Now, John Gregory was there for three weeks and he said, 'If I can bring you together with Betsy I think you can help her with her brace walking'. He said, 'While I'm here, I'll bring her over tomorrow afternoon and we'll do a bit of walking exercises together'. He said, 'She wants encouragement. She's not making much headway'. In other words, he had too much money and too many people helping her. She'd had an operation to her back. They'd taken where the bone was like mine, sticking out. Had this lapendectomy. Now she had a lovely straight back but she wasn't really as strong as I was, so I was lucky not to have had that. So, apart from that, she was a wonderful person. She wrote books; she had written one and she is was writing another one and doing a lot for the paraplegics and the war effort. Her father had started off the Institute for Crippled and Disabled in New York, and all these GI's and ones were going

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there. Very good, you know, making marvellous headway. So Betsy came over and we got on fine. We did our walking and we decided that one day she would come to me and the next day I would go to her. So we'd go out walking around the block together. Oh, you know, it was great. She went to my brace maker, Thomas McHugh, who'd been making for me. He made me a wonderful pair of new braces. The doctor had put me on to, you see. He was a very top maker. Majorie Lawrence was also going to him.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, really.

FLORENCE MARTIN: She had just had her worries.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you meet her at all?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, I did. She had a pair of braces. One day I went along and Mr McHugh said, 'Have a look at these'. They looked about six feet high, without her in them. This was just hanging on the wall. She was a huge woman. We said, 'How on earth?'. Any way, he said, 'There she is, she's getting her braces'. So just after that I went to a dinner being given, a big charity thing. She had just got to the stage that—do you remember?—she was able to lie—Tannhauser, I think—lie on her thing and sing at the Met, at the old Met.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, she was able to come on and sing, and this had happened and there'd been a terrific do about all this. She was just beginning, you see, to be able to stand up. At this dinner she was making her first sort of public performance out of a wheelchair. So after dinner we sat and we waited and there was a sort of little curtain down at the end and a platform had been rigged up. Then eventually the curtain was drawn back and she was leaning on a sort of balustrade thing and she sang. So that was fine. She was able to lean there nicely and comfortably. But after the thing was over, going out I met her and she had a talk about braces and crutches and all the rest of it, and about our brace maker Mr McHugh and so on. She said she wanted to me go along see her. So I said, well, that would be fine and we made a date. It was the middle of the winter again. It always seemed to be the middle of the winter when I wanted (inaudible). Snow everywhere. Anyway, this John Gregory that's had been helping me do things, he said he would take me up. She was way up at the top of the other end of the town to where I was. So up we drove on this awful snowy day and arrived there and the butler came to the door. He said, 'Oh, Miss Lawrence is in'—wherever it was—'Los Angeles' or somewhere. I said, 'I'm very sorry but I have a date with her today'. He said, 'No, no, she's away'. So I thought, well, of all the things. I could have kicked them to the middle of next week. I thought, well, I suppose after all she probably had to go off hurriedly and I couldn't help that. So a little while later I had a letter from her. She said she apologised profusely. She had to go off—she did have to go off in a hurry—and she hadn't been able to get in touch, because I wasn't on the telephone.

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JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: We had no telephone. This was when we were living in Madison Avenue. We could never afford a phone. Anyway, so she said, 'Later on when I come back we'll get in touch and meet again'. Well, we never did. So that was Marjorie Lawrence. Well, this all went on with Betsy—we got back to—and we did our practice and then John went off over to Los Angeles and he was to work with a big hospital over there, with the paraplegics and the amputees and all the rest of it. A little while later he wrote over and asked if I would go over and help with the disabled over there. Sort of a bit of sunshine work, I think, more or less. You know, sort of encourage them along. I couldn't because at that stage I was busy and I wanted to get on with my painting and I thought if I give all that up, go over to the west coast. It was very difficult really and I didn't want to.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. There was a split demand on you?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes. I knew it was probably good work, but I wouldn't get on with any the other part at all. It would be a sort of full time thing helping him. So I said, no, I wouldn't. So in the end, anyway, this went on. We went over for our holiday to London on the *Queen Mary* and we had the roughest crossing that had been known. It was the most terrible. We were given little cabins. We got on at the last minute and it was rather a sort of last minute arrangement.

JAMES GLEESON: What year was this?

FLORENCE MARTIN: This was 1949.

JAMES GLEESON: Was it January by any chance? Because I was in the Atlantic in January '49 (inaudible).

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, it would be funny if you'd been on the ship.

JAMES GLEESON: I wasn't on the *Queen Mary*. I was going from London back to—

FLORENCE MARTIN: It was summer. I was trying to think. It was not summer it was spring. It was the end of April. We thought we were going to have the summer over there. After the summers in New York, which are pretty hot, we'd forgotten what summers could be. We'd been in London way back in 1925 but we'd forgotten what it was like. So we took more or less summer clothes. We had this frightful crossing. We had little cabins in what they call the pocket, which were not usually leased to people. But they were all we could get and we didn't care, you see. But it was where you got all the worst.

JAMES GLEESON: Movement of the ship.

FLORENCE MARTIN: They didn't have any outside portholes or anything like that, and very hot and very awful. But we didn't care as long as we got there. All

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the ropes were up and couldn't stand. Oh, well, it was fine for me because everything was there to hold on to. I adored it; I thought ships were the thing. So we got there and we arrived on this awful freezing day. We went out and we bought about 10 more woollies and overcoats and everything else. Anyway, we had a lovely three months and saw our dear old aunt, and we were very glad we went then because she died about the following year.

JAMES GLEESON: Was Loudon there then, did you see him at all?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Loudon was there. No, he wasn't, not at that point. That's the next time we went over.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Loudon and Harry didn't go over to London until '52. Or '51 it must have been because we went in '52. Yes. This was the '49 holiday trip.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So, anyway, we loved it. Tats had always wanted to live in London, since her very early run over. She'd just left school at that stage and we had our first trip over and she always wanted to go back. So we could have stayed on in New York and become resident aliens, because now we'd had our first papers taken out, and you wait a while then you get this other thing and you can become citizens. Did we want to become American citizens or did we not? So I remember one Thanksgiving Day—we now had a rather nice little flat over in 56th Street, down by Sutton Place. Things were very much looked up. We loved living in New York. But, on the other hand, did we want to be American citizens? Did we want to live there forever? When it came down to it, no, you see. We thought, well, we'll go back to New York. All kinds of things had happened, many things, because when you get to New York it's an exciting place. You have adventures. We had so many adventures I could write about 20 volumes on it, but you just don't do that. By now I'd been more or less engaged, or you didn't call it engaged but very much tied up to a Russian friend. I didn't know whether to marry him or not. My sister was very much against it and it would have been absurd because he was a kind of—what shall I say—concentration camp victim, not very steady. Old aristocracy, White Russia and all the rest of it, all the background about the place, but as mad as a bandicoot. Anyway, I fell for him. But as time went on I began to realise: how was I going to cope? If I had a couple of good legs, yes, I would have. But, oh no. Well, I met him first; he was painting our flat. They used to get all kinds of jobs, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: His old aunt the princess was a friend of Igor's and Igor produced this man to come and paint our flat because he was doing all kinds of odd jobs. He painted beautifully, he was very good. Over the course of that, tied up in there, it was snowing all around the place and I wasn't out much. Tats was

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out and about on her job all the time. I got to know him fairly well, you see. So, anyway, that went on and it would be on and it would be off and the time would go along and then Tats said, 'Well, we'd better escape'. I think it's a jolly good idea. But this is happening after we came back to New York, after our holiday in London. We were back in New York then from '49 to '52. So that was all going on. Things got so worrying that in the end we escaped. We got on to a ship at a moment's notice. We got a red-headed opera singer took over the rent of our apartment, which we still had for another 18 months, and we got on to a *Georgik*, an old wartime thing, an old rig. They were putting on all kinds of odds and ends at that stage. It was the only thing we could get on to. We went around by Ireland, called in at Cove and eventually got to Southampton and London. I at that stage thought I didn't know if I wanted to stay in London or if I'd go back to New York. I was still sort of, you know, torn you know, this way and that way. Anyway, we settled in for a bit and then I got this terrific urge to get back to New York again. Almost went, but that went on for about five years or so, all this coming and going. What did happen was that the following year, when we'd really got fairly well dug into London and Tats was loving it and I was up to a point loving it, but not too much because the buses were more difficult. I couldn't get around as I did in New York quite so well.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you do any designing in London?

FLORENCE MARTIN: No. I didn't. I didn't want to do any more theatre. I thought I'd had it. I wanted to concentrate on painting. When you're doing theatre you can't concentrate on painting.

JAMES GLEESON: No, I can imagine.

FLORENCE MARTIN: You're in a rush all the time. I was just about turning handsprings every day of my life trying to cope with my general getting around. Keeping on top of the world in the way of health, because you had to, to cope. Not always feeling on top of the world. I thought if I get away from the theatre thing and do my painting in my own time I think I can cope. So at that point I was getting a bit more used to London, but not really fond of it, not like New York. It was the year that the coronation happened, or the year after. Trying to get a flat in London was very difficult because everything was full up. They said, 'Next year you'll be able to get anything you want'. In the meantime we took an awful little place at a place called Park West just by Marble Arch, Edgeware Road, which we'd heard was a terrible place. You know, Jack the Ripper period.

So, anyway, there we were and I went on with paints and I showed. Oh yes, '52 that was, but the year before Harry and Loudi had come across and now of course they were in London. They'd had a terribly difficult time. Now, when they first got there, they couldn't jobs. Loudon couldn't get steamed up and going. Anyone would have thought that he could have got going straight away, but he couldn't.

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JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: They were very poor, and getting a bit desperate. So that was in '51, or '50-'51. So one day Harry went along to the Redfern Gallery. He knew Rex Nan Kivell and he wanted to ask Rex if there was any kind of job that he could pick up for him. Rex, before Harry could get a word out, Rex said, 'Harry, come and help us'. Someone's died, walked out or whatever had happened, and we need help badly. He walked in there and he never looked back. As time went on, he now of course is head of the works.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: For a long time, for some years, Rex had very, very bad arthritis. He couldn't get around. He had some sort of lovely house out in Morocco and he would spend most of his time out there. Harry was in charge; he was the one who was doing all the work. He worked like a tiger and he was a wonderful one on that, you know. He really settled down to it. About the same period, Loudin had the chance of doing designs for Stratford and in *The Tempest*. Well, he never looked back. He started off and he just went sailing ahead, and did the *Coq d'Or* opera. Did you see it?

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

FLORENCE MARTIN: It was the most magnificent production.

JAMES GLEESON: We have many of the designs for it in our collection.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, you should have seen the production, it was glorious. So that was going famously and they were now in a very nice little flat on South Audley Street. Harry, he introduced me to Charles Harding who had the Traffic Gallery in Mount Street. First of all, I had gone along to see Harry, of course, as soon as we got there and talk about shows and things, and I showed him what I had. He said, 'Well, I can give you a small show at the Redfern but it would be in a small room'. He said, 'I think it would be better if you had a show to yourself, kind of thing. Now, do you know the Trafford?'. I said, 'No, I have no idea'. So anyway, Charles Harding was brought into it and he gave me a show the following year, '53. So that was quite good. I did not too badly. I had a lot of the designs, some theatre designs, and all sorts of other fantastically looking things because it was all imaginary. At that stage I never did anything very real. I'd never done a landscape in my life. They were all sort of out of my head. So I sold quite a lot. But it was all very, you know, 'my friend the duchess'. It was all very like that. Charles, who was an honourable something, and his partner, the honourable something Trafford, they really didn't want to sell you. It was all just too beautiful. The gallery was beautiful and the flowers were beautiful. All the people that came were marvellous. We had a very, very posh opening and it was all very good. But I thought: this isn't quite what I want. You had to pay rent for

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the gallery. I thought, you know, it's not really getting me anywhere. I'd like somewhere else perhaps.

So Arthur Jeffreys also had a nice little gallery on Davis Street. I was doing small stuff, the small things. I thought: it's a dear little gallery. It also is a bit sort of velvety. But you didn't have to pay rent for that. He was fairly fussy. Did you know Arthur?

JAMES GLEESON: No. No, I didn't.

FLORENCE MARTIN: He was an extraordinary being really. He had a great flair. Robert Melville was in it with him, and he was the draftsman. Now, he had great knowledge and he would guide Arthur when Arthur got wild ideas. He would sort of keep him down, you know, a bit. But between them both they were running a very successful little gallery.

JAMES GLEESON: I read a book by Melville which was very good; on Picasso, which was excellent. (inaudible) book was excellent.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, he was a most interesting person. Anyway, I talked to Harry about this. He was my mentor, you know; one could always go to for advice. I said, 'What do you think about Arthur?' He said, 'I think he'd be a wonderful one for you, and if he takes you on he'll never look back. You know, you'll sort of be made. I think he might like your things but you show him'. So, anyway, I went along and showed him. 'Well, yes. Oh'. He liked some very much, but not others. He couldn't quite see a show. He terrified me—a very sophisticated type. He came with a huge cloak. Not very tall but he had great presence. He was an American, actually; came from Virginia and a multi-multi. Marvellous house on Eton Square and a palace in Venice, you know, and all that. So anyway, he said, 'Bring me some more along again some time'. So I tried a second time, still no go.

Then I broke my leg. So while I was in bed with a broken leg I was doing a lot of owls, owls and little things, birds, insects. Harry came along to see me at one point there and he saw these things and he said, 'I think Arthur would rather like those'. I said, 'I don't think so, you know, I don't think quite sophisticated enough for Arthur'. He said, 'Well, you show him when you're up and doing'. So I did and he loved them—butterflies, ants and grasshoppers and little bits of grasses and stuff. So he said, 'Now I'll give you a show' and we booked up a time for the following spring. So, anyway, he went off to his palace in Venice and the little gallery was all being re-velveted, re-carpeted—all very exquisite. Arthur came back via Paris and suicided in Paris.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, now, that rings a bell. Yes. I remember.

FLORENCE MARTIN: There was a picture this big on the front of the paper when I went out and got the thing that morning on the doorstep. There was Arthur. Well, it was all very tragic and very sudden. Robert Melville had no clue.

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He'd had a letter the day before saying that he was on his way back and dying to see how everything looked. Harry said that he had threatened for quite a long while to do this thing. He carried around a pill, a suicide pill. He was a great showman; he'd talk a lot. He said, 'I'll take it one of these days' and he took it in Paris. So that was that.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I remember reading about it.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So the little gallery, poor little Melville, was left with—no provision had been made, no nothing. He wasn't a businessman; he didn't want to run a gallery. But all his commitments went on over the next year, you see, including me. He said, 'I'm going to carry right on until all those commitments are through and then'—about a couple of years, actually—'it will head up'. So another American bought the gallery and also a big thing that was next door, a big beauty salon place, he bought that and started the Grafton Gallery.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: He took in the Jeffreys and all of that became the Grafton Gallery. So then I had to find a new home; the Mercury Gallery in Cork Street, which is sort of an offshoot, in a way, from the Redfern. Because Stan Harding, who had been with Harry for six years—we knew him moderately well—he went in with Jill Raffles and her husband who started this very, very good little gallery. Do you know, it in Cork Street? Just along the same side of the street as the Redfern.

JAMES GLEESON: (inaudible)

FLORENCE MARTIN: And had been doing very well. So I had a show there. That's Mexico and Ireland, more or less things the things that I was showing out here. The following year I came out and showed quite a lot of Mexico and Ireland at the South Yarra Gallery in Melbourne by Vara Doolia.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, (inaudible).

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, who I saw just the other day.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I saw her last week in Sydney.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, I saw her over at the Covent Gallery. Got up-to-date on her because I thought she was closing down. She said she's not altogether closing down; she's sort of privately dealing now. So that was nice. Anyway, I had a show there and we were out in Melbourne for a bit. By this time we'd been feeling London, we loved it, but it was getting almost time to think if we were ever going to come back to Australia and get a bit of a warm up. It would be rather good, you see. We came out on a sort of a prospect. We'd had two or three runs out in the meantime and stayed with a cousin in Melbourne. I had also a show at the Argus Gallery before the Doolia show. Ruth McNicol, you may know. Yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: I know Ruth quite well.

FLORENCE MARTIN: She managed that for me, and the little Bramoz Gallery. On the first trip out I had one at the Bramoz Gallery. Pat Collins was in charge at that stage, and Ruth. That's when I got to know her.

JAMES GLEESON: Ruth is now working with us at the National Gallery.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes. Is she? I didn't know what she was doing now. She had all her New Guinea things.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes. Well, she's now looking after the New Guinea things, cataloguing them for the gallery.

FLORENCE MARTIN: That's interesting. I haven't seen her for quite a bit. Last time I was in Melbourne I didn't see Ruth. But I got very fond of Ruth; I like her very much and she was always very, very nice and helpful and good. Anyway, so had that show. Well, then the South Yarra thing. After that we went back to England and we thought we'll have a winter in Sydney and see how we like it. We couldn't bear Melbourne because it was too jolly cold and we wanted to get away from the cold. So back we go. Came out here in, I think it was 1970. We had a flat over at Colebrook, Double Bay, and it was lovely and warm in the winter. 'Oh, it's gorgeous'. We thought this is the thing, 'We'll come and live in Sydney'.

JAMES GLEESON: That's what brought you here?

FLORENCE MARTIN: So we came to the end of our rent and things and the flat that we had in London. At one point we nearly bought a house over there and settled in. Then we found that if we did that, it was all going to be so involved with our money arrangements. We'd never taken capital to England. We'd always had our quarterly remittances. It meant altering our whole thing and we didn't really want to do that. So now it was getting to the stage where our solicitors and people in Melbourne were always trying to nag us into coming back and they said it would be so much easier to cope with your money matters if only you lived in Australia.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So anyway, as I say, we got to the end of our flat lease and decided. So we came out and we bought a flat in this building, but not this one. We lived in it for a few months and then went back to England. We were there for another two years getting straightened out and then, you know, everything wound up. I had another show there at the new Grafton Gallery. A man called David Wolfers, he used to be a critic and then he took on having a gallery. He was a friend of a friend of ours and he wanted me to have one there. It was a dear little gallery. I showed mostly Australian. In fact, I think it was all Australia with him. Anyway, he was all set to go on having Australian shows, I

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think. But I said, 'Well, as a matter of fact, I am not going to be living in England much longer. I'm going out to live in Sydney'. He said, 'Well, keep in touch and, you know, maybe you'll come back to England. You mightn't even like Sydney'. So I said, 'Well, anyway'. So off we went and, when we came out, decided that the little flat that we had taken—and we put tenants in—it was too small. It was this, plus a room there and the next-door room but no workroom.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: No studio. I used to, when I was out here, I used to paint in the bedroom and that was all right but to sort of settle down, and dear it was awful. We couldn't fit our furniture and stuff in, it was awful. So these people in this flat suddenly announced about two days after we got back that it was on the market. We came over and we looked at all the glamorous lights out there and thought: this is it, most beautiful. It really did look lovely.

JAMES GLEESON: It is spectacular.

FLORENCE MARTIN: At night it's gorgeous, and even in the day time, of course. Lovely in the early morning, all the sunrises. So, anyway, we moved over and settled in here. So the following year I wanted to give a show in Sydney and a friend of ours knew Mrs Turner and is a friend down at the Macquarie. They came along to see me and have a talk about it. Mrs Turner, yes, she liked it and she wanted me to do a lot of grass. She loved my grass ones. I haven't got any up, but she was looking all around. At that stage I had a few up, you see, of the grassy looking. She said, 'I think a lot of grass, and keep it all Australia'. So, anyway, I set sail to do my Australian landscapes to the best of my ability. Not being really on my thing because I'd always been much more of a fantastic thing. Until the new Grafton show, I hadn't really done Australian landscapes at all. So I felt a bit sort of doubtful about them but, anyway. So she liked them and I had that show, you see. So it was mixed with grass and landscapes and goodness knows what. I don't think it was very good painting, as far as I remember but, anyway, I had it.

So after that I thought: now, what do I do next? Do they want me to give another show in two years? Do I go on doing the same sort of thing? Do they put me in the mixed shows or what? But they didn't ask me if I'd like to show in the mixed shows. They didn't show any interest whatsoever. They expected me just, I suppose, to produce another show in two years.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Well, honestly I didn't know quite—and I had a lot of friends coming up at that stage wanting me to do things for them and I'd go on little things. Now my next-door neighbour, Shirley, who wanted things all around her walls and I decorated her house for her. Then friends of hers would come along and see them and want some and I kept on doing this. But I wasn't getting

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all that far. So Cyril was doing my framing; he did all the show for the Macquarie. Dear little man. I was really getting very fond of Cyril and Alice.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, (inaudible)

FLORENCE MARTIN: Anyway, he was most encouraging. He rather liked my thing. He was very keen on a frog that I had. A frog that was at the Macquarie show and a Prouds gallery man bought it. Cyril regretted this frog and I said, 'I'll do you another'. Well, I tried but I could never get a frog quite as good. Anyway, he loved my designs. In the end I gave him three ballet designs that he was very keen about. But he was helpful. He gave me good criticism. Then he said, 'I think it would be a good idea to have a show in Paddington, one of the little galleries in Paddington. Why don't you have a changeover somewhere there?'. So I said, 'Well, that's fine, but where?'. So he said, 'Barry Stern is starting this exhibiting gallery. It's going to be a very nice little gallery and he's a great friend of mine'. I said, 'But I don't think Barry Stern would touch me with a 40-foot pole because I'm not his type of thing at all'. 'He's rather nice, let me show him some'. So he said, 'I'll framed this one and that one'. So in the end, anyway, he showed them to Barry and Barry came along and looked at more. Much to my delight and surprise, he did, he quite liked them. So now I'm going along with him which is very helpful and good because he is again a good critic and he keeps me on the—more or less—track. But all that was at the point that we'd planned to go last summer on a trip over to England. The first that we'd had since we came out here in '72, and we'd promised that we'd go over. We have a lot of relations and friends there, and we said two years. Well, of course, this was about six years or something.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: So we didn't want to put it off but Barry wanted to give me a show last year. So anyway he said, 'In the meantime, I'll show your things at the Glenmore Road, mixed things, and sort of work you along in'. So then suddenly he announced out of the blue that he'd like to give me a little show in August, you see. I was hoping to heavens he wouldn't want to until this next year, this year. So I said, 'Well, I'm going away. I won't be back until the 31st July' and he wanted to have this thing on 15th August. That'll be a fortnight. 'Oh' he said, 'That's all right, a fortnight, plenty of time. So all the framing—Cyril will do all the framing—and everything will be fine. You just come back and everything's good'. Well, he chose things that some of them, yes, I thought were fine; other ones I wasn't too sure. But, anyway, he was happy. So off I go, but I knew that Cyril was ill. Of course he'd been very ill.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

FLORENCE MARTIN: When I saw him before we went, I thought: oh, you know, dear oh dear, oh dear. Anyway, he was quite bright and cheerful. He was here one day just before we went and he said, 'I'll get everything done for you', you

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know. 'I have to go and I probably have to have another operation'. He'd had one. 'But' he said, 'I'll be working along' and, you know, seeming like his old self. So off we go. But just before going I had a word to Barry and to Leon over at the exhibiting gallery—Leon, who was there then. He said, 'You know I'm afraid that Cyril has cancer'.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. I think we all knew.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes. I said, 'Well, I rather suspected and wondered', but, anyway, that's that. He said, 'I don't know if he'll be able to go on working much longer but, of course, he might. We don't know'. So off I go. Well, when I came back, we arrived the weekend that he died.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: About the day after I got back and before I'd even got on to Barry, Alice rang and told me the news. That was, you know, just about his funeral and all the rest of it. So it was terribly sad.

JAMES GLEESON: So very.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Oh, terrible.

JAMES GLEESON: Alice was so broken up about it.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Oh, she was absolutely knocked flat, and I don't wonder because they'd been such a happy pair and done everything together, so it was a terrible thing to happen. Anyway, dear little Alice, she came to the opening of that show, which I thought was wonderful. She said, 'Cyril would have wanted me to come and here I am'. But she wasn't fit to be out.

JAMES GLEESON: No. No, she'd been very ill herself.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes. Oh, she wasn't fit to do anything. She was just marvellous to keep going at all, because they were stuck in Honolulu then and of course couldn't travel and, of course, she was so ill. Anyway, it was just a terrible time for them. So anyway there we were. The little show came off, and I've just gone along since then and here we are.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Well, before we wind it up, could you just tell me, there are a few ones here that don't belong to the Malediction series. One you mentioned (inaudible).

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes. Now, one was *Obsessions*.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

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FLORENCE MARTIN: *Obsessions* was for Igor Schwezoff's ballet *Lutte Eternelle* that we did for him in Australia. Now, it was put on in Sydney; then it was put on in New York, and also down in South America. Apparently it was quite a success all around. The other designs, the Blackenmores, I think that was for Grant. It was one that he wanted to use and then didn't. I did other Blackenmores for him. Then I did *Judgement of Jupiter*, had Blackenmores in it also.

JAMES GLEESON: What was that a ballet or a play?

FLORENCE MARTIN: Yes, that was ballet. That was one Igor did down in South America. That had a lot of rather exotic designs but I haven't got them; only a very few of them. Some were sold, some went off. The Bernice Park singer, she was a nightclub singer, the daughter of Ruby Foo, who owned a chain of restaurants over in New York.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

FLORENCE MARTIN: She was a boorish looking being. She was a friend of John Gregory's—that's how she came into it. She wanted all these exotic hats and she wanted wonderful dresses and things. I suppose he pushed her into thinking it would be a good idea if she got me to do them, and she paid very well for it so it was fine. I went along to see her and she lived in a marvellous apartment up along Central Park. Anyway, I designed quite a lot of odd bits for her. That's what these were; just sort of stray ends belong to Bernice. Anything else that you wanted to ask me?

JAMES GLEESON: No. No, that covers it very well. Thank you very much. You've been very patient and very good.

FLORENCE MARTIN: I've gone for hours. I was hoping to heavens you'd put up your hand and say stop at any moment you didn't want to go on.

JAMES GLEESON: No, it was absolutely first rate. Thank you very much indeed.

FLORENCE MARTIN: Then you cut out the bits that aren't interesting and interview me.