

JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: EVA KUBBOS

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JAMES GLEESON: Eva, first of all we want some biographical material to help us with our cataloguing. Could you tell us when and where you were born?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I'm delighted to. I will try to answer this question but, well, I suppose I have to tell you where I was born. It's a little difficult to reveal my name but I suppose under these circumstances I have to. So I was born in Lithuania on 8th February 1928.

JAMES GLEESON: And Eva Kubbos was your—

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, Eva. Actually, my name is Eva Gertrude Kubbos, but I sign Eva Kubbos.

JAMES GLEESON: Your family were interested in art or have a background, do you have a background of interest?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, not really. My family was not involved in art, as far as I know, but I remember my mother had certainly an artistic talent. She used to draw the ideas, she even painted a few paintings, but she never sort of came to have an education in art. So obviously she was just a housewife. But I suppose if she would have got the chance to study she might have been reasonable, you know, she could have been an artist, yes. Of course she encouraged me to go ahead with the studies, and even when I was a child, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: You were interested in art right from the beginning?

EVA KUBBOS: Oh, yes. Well, I was somewhat a strange child, I guess, because I sort of seemed to leave groups of kids and that. I used to be quite happy on my own. I was born actually close to the city but within a country area, a very beautiful area which had this big River Nemunas which was the border line between Germany and Lithuania.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: That was very close to our home state and our houses were built on a hill and we overlooked that river. In the background there were the mountains or hills covered with a multitude of trees and, of course, they changed colour or their character throughout the seasons. Then there were lakes around. So I grew up in a very, very pleasant environment. I seemed to enjoy it too as a child. I seemed to be aware of it, perhaps more than normally children would be, because I seemed to go off on my own and sort of look at things and study trees, for example, when I was about—oh, I don't know—about eight years of age. I did a few studies, I remember that, of oak trees and they were remembered by lots of

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people. Apparently they said they were as good as Durer's. That's when I was eight years old.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: So I always was interested and always scribbled and sketched. Actually, since I've done a lot of watercolours later on, I remember my first confrontation with the watercolour was when actually I fell in love. It was that lots of people came because of this lovely area there to paint the landscape.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: They would set up their easel and start to produce a watercolour or a painting, but I was more fascinated by the watercolours. So what I could do—I mean, not to be a nuisance to them—I sort of offered to bring fresh water, you know, change the water for them. So they tolerated me standing behind their backs and watching. I was very fascinated by this quick brush stroke and how the colours were flowing into each other and how they overlapped and how these wonderful multitude of colourings sort of appeared on the paper. I remember I really was fascinated and that was sort of my first confrontation of artists in my youth.

JAMES GLEESON: Nature then was a great source of inspiration.

EVA KUBBOS: Oh, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Right from the beginning.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. I don't know, I just love the landscape. I was made to look after trees. I had to plant trees when I was very small and I had to look after them. So, in other words, I sort of seem to—and it was a genuine love. Not that I was forced. I liked to do it. I liked to look after part of the garden and this kind of love for the landscape, for nature, has remained ever since. That's how it is with me because here in Australia, of course, the landscape has changed somewhat. A much broader situation, you know, the horizons are long and broad and the cloud formation and the colouring, you know, is somewhat sort of perhaps lighter—light-wise, I mean—but it merges more to greater unity than at home.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I see.

EVA KUBBOS: It was more patchy and, you know, different colourings than that here. It's a sort of a greater unity.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

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EVA KUBBOS: Which I actually like, because if I take references for my landscapes from the landscape here, you know, where I sort of get a bit of inspiration, or it's a source of (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: You still draw from your experience of landscape?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, that I remember. This sort of demands for greater simplicity, as it would have in my home place.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: You know, what I sort of remember.

JAMES GLEESON: I remember some of your early pictures did seem to evoke, you know, your background, your early country experiences very clearly.

EVA KUBBOS: Oh, yes. You probably are right there because I remember as a child—do you mind if I speak a little bit of about my childhood?

JAMES GLEESON: No, no, please do. That's interesting.

EVA KUBBOS: Perhaps being here I sort of seemed to dream a bit here and there perhaps more than I should about my childhood because it's now so far away. I remember as a little girl I used to sit at the window and, since our house was built on a hill, I could see the sun rising. That is in wintertime now. The sun rising and I watched it almost going down because it made only that very short—

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, the northern winter.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, the northern winter and everything was white, of course, covered by snow. I remember sort of the trees were then sort of against the snow very dark and stark and even the birds that might have been there were sort of dark silhouetted. Somewhat I feel later on—after I finished art school and I was involved in printmaking for quite a bit—I remember that certain impressions that I sort of remembered; they came back into my woodcuts or linocuts.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, that's natural, isn't it?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. It's kind of a contrast, black and white.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: A sort of experience partly in my childhood, yes. Also with a dramatic situation, well, drama sets in. For instance, I watched in springtime when this big river cracked all of a sudden and this big ice formation, the icebergs occurred and, you know, it was a fantastic drama. Sometimes you saw dogs on top of the icebergs moving downwards in this very, very heavy current at that time and howling and nobody could help them. They probably came from

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White Russia or somewhere. They might have been perhaps a long way on the way but at the end they probably would have been crushed to death, which was a very dramatic situation that I sort of witnessed as a child. But, of course, that's all in the past now.

JAMES GLEESON: Eva, where did you go to art school?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, actually, when I was at high school and I was about fourth class, you see, the teachers ask every pupil what we would like to become one of these days, what you would like to study. I said at that time—because I lost my father. My father died when I was eight. My grandmother died two years before that and I sort of practically witnessed them dying and, of course, that was very, very sad and a very painful experience for a young person. So somehow—I don't know if this idea derived from these experiences—I felt I wanted to study medicine. When I said I would like to study medicine the teacher said, 'Oh no, not Eva, you shouldn't do it. Let all the others study if they want to but you are very gifted'. Because at that time I had produced—you know, in the art classes—I had produced mainly watercolours, I remember. They were all hanging on the walls and nobody else's was hanging, so they considered me as quite gifted at that time.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: They said, 'You ought to study art, if you can, because you have this God's given gift and it would be a pity if you would ignore it because you could make something out of that'. That was actually the decision—with the help of these teachers—that I made to perhaps to be interested in art.

JAMES GLEESON: The art school was in Lithuania?

EVA KUBBOS: Oh no, no. No, of course, that was after the war.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. The war finished and there was an opportunity to go to Berlin and so I went to Berlin and enrolled as an art student.

JAMES GLEESON: What year was that, Eva?

EVA KUBBOS: It was 1945, straight after the war.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: I entered the art school there, which was called in Berlin in Germany, Hochschule fur angewandte Kunst, and I studied there until 1950. But I would like to add a little happening that sort of actually was a great eye-opener to me. You see, when I came to this art school and I sort of was built up by friends

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and my mother and teachers and so forth, and I really felt I was quite gifted, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: So I came to this school and I was a little late, and I came with some of my artwork that I had to bring along. While I was sort of in this other room waiting for some decision that these professors had to make about me, I just overheard, and one professor said to the other, [speaking in German]. That's in German language. Well, that means, 'There seems to be a little talent there'. That actually was the greatest disappointment in my life that I had so far. So I thought, oh my God, that's what they think. Of course, now I was in the hands of experts—I mean, in art—and I sort of let it be to this and I thought now the only thing is to work hard and to do my best and that's what I tried to do.

JAMES GLEESON: Eva, what was your work like at that stage? Was it similar to what you're doing now, abstract, or was it closer to realism?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, the art school, you see, it was a very strict academic art school. I studied, you know, eight hours per day. We had life class. We had, of course, lectures about art history and so forth and so on—very solid (inaudible) to me. We had a special professor who was quite a capacity world known, he has written quite a few books, Professor Tunk and he also taught to the art students at the university, to the medical students.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: So I had a very solid sort of training and of course you had to have this kind of gift, special gift, to be able to draw and we had life class and that was very solid. We had to work very, very hard and compared to the artists here I feel that the students don't seem to get sufficient enough attention or what, but I feel is definitely lacking. You know, they don't seem to learn to draw properly and sometimes young students they would ask me to come and have a look at their work. Normally I can see these bigger paintings there. I know exactly who their teachers are because they somehow seem to lean on them, but then I ignore this lot and I always would ask for their life sketches, for their drawings, because there I can really see what I want to see.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Most of the time I'm very disappointed, what I see, what they show, because it's a bit neglected. I feel art school—

JAMES GLEESON: Not a solid formal background.

EVA KUBBOS: No, no, they're sometimes fourth class students and, I must say—I'm sorry to be critical here—I feel it's just not good enough for my opinion

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because I wouldn't have been accepted for first year if I would have had work like that.

JAMES GLEESON: Go on.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. No, that's quite true.

JAMES GLEESON: Eva, was it in East Berlin or West Berlin, the school?

EVA KUBBOS: At that time, you see, Berlin was divided in four parts. But there was a unity just the same that stayed after the war, and that happened to be in East Berlin at that time.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: It was a five-year course, was it?

EVA KUBBOS: Until 1950?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: What happened then, Eva?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I just would like to go back still in these years which seem to be important to me as an artist.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: My first exhibition, actual art exhibition that I saw, we were taken by our professor to this exhibition and that was a graphic art exhibition by Nolde.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, yes. Yes, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Nolde. I was very, very much taken by that. You know, it was a graphic exhibition and also watercolours. I just was very fascinated. But at that time I was not introduced sufficient enough yet sort of in art. So certain works did puzzle me a great deal. But they really disturbed me. I kept on thinking day and night and I couldn't quite feel them. Well, you never understand art, of course, but you know there was something that I just couldn't quite get, what it was all about.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: So I went on my own again. Then from then, of course, these schools they saw to it that students saw exhibitions. We were always taken to important exhibitions. I saw more of the German expressionists. Actually, my

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training was mainly sort of focused towards German expressionism. So naturally it seemed to have rubbed on my work a great deal at that time. But I remember at school there were only a few professors which agreed with my idea. I still have a few things here that I might show you one day which I have never shown. I was a little way out. I was somewhat different. I was not quite realistic. My work was perhaps more expressionistic.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Some professors believed in me. Because of that they thought there is this extra talent, she's an individualist, while others didn't quite agree. They thought it was slightly deformed and things like that.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: So there was a bit of this kind of—how could I say?—disagreement amongst professors. I remember. I applied for a scholarship which I got, but I almost didn't get it because a panel of judges thought that my work was slightly way out.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, I see.

EVA KUBBOS: That was Heinrich Heiner. Not Heinrich. Oh, I've forgotten now. Well, that was a scholarship that was sort of donated by one of the widows who lost her husband and he was a famous actor.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Through the Nazis, you see.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: I remember one of my exhibition periods was to go around the theatre and do something around the theatre. Do illustrations or something like that. At that time, for the first time, Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* was produced.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Helena Weigel, his wife, played Mother Courage. That was the original Mother Courage. I went to see it and I was so fascinated. It was a fantastic performance. I was so fascinated and I thought I choose this as my—

JAMES GLEESON: Was this the Berlin Ensemble Theatre?

EVA KUBBOS: No, that was in the State Theatre.

JAMES GLEESON: State Theatre.

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EVA KUBBOS: Yes. So I decided I make that my examination piece for that particular year. So I went there and saw this quite often, and I went behind stage and I sketched and scribbled and I produced a number of lithographs on stone. We had the real stone and we had to grind it and it was pretty hard physical work involved in producing these lithographs. Not like here now you use these metal plates, which is much easier.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: I produced a number of these. When it came to the end of the play, I had an exhibition in the theatre and I exhibited all my works. In fact, every piece was sold. They were somewhat a little bit out. But when these theatrical people—I mean, the people that were involved in this scholarship as well—saw that, my work sold out in spite of the earlier criticism that I might be a bit way out and I might not be success later on. I don't know what they thought under success. Well, they were so happy that they had granted this stipendium to me. Well, all was well either side.

JAMES GLEESON: Eva, when did you become interested in the graphic aspect of art? This was during your school (inaudible)?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, yes, we did, because we had wonderful work (inaudible) there with litho presses and we got also some special. They actually still derived from the (inaudible). One of the artists, Mr Weise, I mean, he didn't become so prominent, but he belonged—

JAMES GLEESON: Was a member of that group.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. He gave special demonstrations. I had him for one full year in woodcut, linocut, especially in these graphic arts. So I got quite a bit of training in this field.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Eva, what forms of graphic art did you study? I know you've used quite a variety—woodcut, linocut. Lithograph you've mentioned.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you do etching at all?

EVA KUBBOS: Silkscreen? No, I did not do any etching. No. But we had also etching class, but I didn't do. I got stuck in graphic art mainly with woodcut. That appealed to be most. Linocuts I did only in Australia when I came to Australia.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Because I felt it was a bit hard to come by wood and also it was quite a bit of—how do you call it?—physical effort, you know, to produce a woodcut

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and lino went so much quicker. But I still maintain that my favourite love in graphic art would be a woodcut.

JAMES GLEESON: Woodcut, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. Because, you see, you are so limited. Even if you want to go into detail you can't because the material demands that you have to think broad. Because you only can execute broad, and that's actually the aim in graphic art anyhow, to simplify the situation.

JAMES GLEESON: So it was woodblock printing and lithography that you really studied closely?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: What about silk screen-printing?

EVA KUBBOS: No, I didn't study it in Europe.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: No.

JAMES GLEESON: So that brings us—when—to about 1950?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: When you finished your course there.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: What happened then?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I finished. Well then, you see, I felt since I came from Lithuania and I never felt really sort of at home in Germany, in spite that I had made lots of friends and I had relatives, but I sort of felt as if I wanted to go. Well, I had very sad experience as an artist because I usually had very little money and it was cold, the winters were cold, and I remember I worked at home. I was sort of actually, I feel, a busy student.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: I came home and I worked at home and I remember at one stage one winter was very severe and my room was not heated and my fingers were all frozen. Because you can't work with gloves, you know. I always have to have bare hands.

JAMES GLEESON: Was that that winter of 1947?

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EVA KUBBOS: It could have been. Yes, it could have been.

JAMES GLEESON: I remember in London it was a fearfully—

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, a really cold winter. Of course, not heated, the room not heated. It was really very sad in a way when I think back now, but I kept on working. Then, you know, after poverty, you know, after the war, after war poverty, that was there and always sad situations that you saw on the street, all these limbless people and blind people. It was something and (inaudible). It just was, I think, for young mind I had to absorb it all and very often I went without food, you know, sometimes for a couple of days and that. I had it very, very hard. Therefore, I sort of only thought I finish it and then I just go somewhere where it's warmer and perhaps where it's not so overpopulated. I wanted to get away from it all.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: That was my greatest desire. You see, that is when I sort of decided I might go to Australia. I did choose Australia because I thought it was so far away and in my mind I thought it could be a very attractive country. I thought it sort of seemed to be unspoiled and, of course, as a young person you thought of these exotic things like exotic plants and exotic animals like the kangaroo and all the other little creatures that sort of you find.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Anyhow, somehow this idea and it was so far away and that's what I wanted perhaps. What, you know, the Germans would say [speaking in German] which the romantics have. I mean, it caught me and that's when I decided to go away.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you have any problem getting here?

EVA KUBBOS: No. Well, I came with my sister. Actually, my brother was here. Yes, he went two years before and he sent these very provocative photographs, you know, sort of in just hardly covered with anything and then they had this goanna on a string and things like that in the bush. Because he had to sign a contract. He went as a displaced person and he had to sign a government contract for two years. He had to go wherever they sent him to do any kind of work. So he was sent more or less to the jungles of Queensland, up there, and from there he sent these photographs. Beautiful brown, you know, beautifully suntanned and he seemed to be happy. You know, he actually wrote that he liked it here. So I thought, well, which other country? It is proof enough. I probably will like it, and if nothing else I could sort of go and paint in the wilderness. That was my idea. So I applied as a displaced person to immigrate to Australia, and my sister and I we came.

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JAMES GLEESON: What year was that?

EVA KUBBOS: We came to Australia 1963.

JAMES GLEESON: Sixty-three.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. Ah '53, I beg your pardon.

JAMES GLEESON: Fifty-three.

EVA KUBBOS: Fifty-three, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: So that brings you to Australia.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: When did you begin exhibiting in Australia?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I arrived. This particular year was a very, very dry summer and it was summertime. Actually, it was beginning of the year, just the beginning of the year. I was quite bewildered to look out of the train and I saw this burnt grass.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: It was dark brown. This summer was very, very severe one and, oh my God, I sort of didn't know what to say, whether to cry or what. I was slightly disappointed to see all this burnt out landscape. We ended up in Bonegilla, a sort of camp for displaced people in Victoria. There I saw this lake which was nice because I like water, I always loved water. But nevertheless there were hills and that landscape was rather interesting and I liked what I saw. But this heat set in. It was so hot and for the first time I thought—

JAMES GLEESON: Coming from Northern Europe.

EVA KUBBOS: Well, it was a wishful wish in Europe but, my God, it's a little bit too hot. But then my first job—you see, I had also to sign a two years contract to take any governmental job that was offered. I was not allowed to go off on my own.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: So the first job that I had to take was I was sent to a fruit cannery—oh, what was this place called?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Shepparton?

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EVA KUBBOS: Shepparton, yes. I didn't like it at first, when we were sent, but later on I thought it was actually one of the jolly good experiences that I had with a great mixture of Australians.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: We had to live in the hostel there. There were gypsies, they came directly from the bush. Also Aborigines. There were students from different universities, from Sydney and even from Brisbane, from Melbourne, there were nurses. I mean, they came from different walks of life. We were all united there in this hostel and we had meals together. So my English—I spoke English, sort of school English—it was not that good, but somehow I could make myself understood. So for the first time in my life I was able to mix with real Australian people, which was quite interesting and good. I never really regretted this experience. Of course, there was plenty of fruit which I never had in Europe and we could eat to our hearts content which was marvellous. So from there I saved a bit of money and I went to Brisbane after the season finished. In Brisbane again there was a certain depression in the country. It started to set in.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: It started to get very difficult with jobs. At that stage the government gave me permission. They closed the books about this kind of signed contract. They said, 'From now on, since it's difficult to get jobs for you, you are on your own and you have to find jobs for yourself. Do whatever you feel like or what you can get'. Yes. So I was on my own and I tried to get a job. I visited the gallery there in Brisbane and the museum—whatever I could see which was sort of culturally interesting. But I had to earn my living, of course, and so I tried as a commercial artist, but it was so tedious. I had to do some kind of clock, little wheels and very tiny little things where I thought I'm losing my eyesight and I just couldn't, it was too fiddly. The money was not bad but it was too fiddly and I gave it away. So I ended up at Brockhoffs' Biscuit Factory.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. Here I was working in this place which was extremely hot and very hard work actually for some time. In spite that at that stage I thought, gee, what a job it was at the fruit cannery. But then I remembered that it was not so bad after all. So I wrote a letter the following year, if I perhaps could come back again and work at the fruit cannery and stay in this hostel. They replied, 'Yes, you can' and also paid the fare. So I went back to the fruit cannery and had another season there. Then there I met some Lithuanian people in this fruit cannery and they said to me, 'Look, come to Melbourne because we are living there, we've got our home, and we will introduce you to more Lithuanians. Then perhaps you might be able to find something for yourself that perhaps is more suitable to you'. So I took their advice and I came to Melbourne. There I thought, 'What am I going to do?'. So one night I sort of did window-shopping and I looked

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at these windows and I saw the backdrops. Mantons was the shop, sort of high class fashions. They had these rather not badly painted backdrops. I thought, 'Well, if I could get a job like that or something similar'. So I called in the next day and asked if perhaps there would be anything like that that I could do, sort of do some background painting and they said they might. After three days they accepted me. So I took this job.

JAMES GLEESON: Where was this?

EVA KUBBOS: That was in Melbourne. It was a big store called Mantons, a fashionable sort of shop.

JAMES GLEESON: Mantons.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. After two years they sold out to Coles and the whole thing was changed.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: But I painted backdrops there. Then there was a competition, that was actually the first competition that I won in Australia. It perhaps has not so much to do with art, but it had to do something still with your creative mind. You see, there was a competition of wool, for the best wool window in the city. You know, there was a reward and there was a competition. So I was asked if perhaps I would like to do it and I said, 'Why not?'. So I tried to create something out of the Australian wool and I was sitting in this window, because I had this big props that you couldn't take out of the door. They had to be made inside. I practically had to stay there for two weeks and work in this window, and people almost thought I was an exhibit as well. But then I actually won that competition. That was my first prize ever I won in Melbourne as such, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Had you been painting for yourself during this time?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. Then I thought, 'Well, I have to see what's happening in the art world'. I felt a bit a restless. I felt I had to do something. So, of course, I wandered through the gallery and various private galleries and looked at art. Then I felt perhaps I should go back to school and see what's offered here.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: So I went to the Melbourne Royal Technical College for some time and did a bit of graphic art there. I produced a few lithos on metal. Then later on I also went to Swinburne Technical College for some time.

JAMES GLEESON: What did you study there?

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EVA KUBBOS: Well, Swinburne Technical College came in, it was actually I had to gain some actual knowledge in my position at that time, because at that time I was the advertising manager. I worked myself up, you know, after Mantons. I was the backdrop artist. From there I went to Mutual stores where I became their fashion artist. Then from there I was asked if I would like to take up a job as an advertising manager for Cannes. It was another store.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: But there I required certain knowledge in techniques in the media, in printing media.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, so for this I had to go to Swinburne Technical College to get some knowledge in order to tackle my job.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you have much time to do your own painting at that time?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, at that time I did. I used to go to markets and I used to do sketches and I was then an expressionist. Yes. I used to paint these kind of market scenes with people and sort of in this way, sort of expressionistic way, strongly simplified situation.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, but still figurative.

EVA KUBBOS: That was still figurative. Then I remembered they started with this Moomba Festival in Melbourne. Again there that was the first time where I actually openly exhibited my work, and these were actually woodcuts that I did and I exhibited them for the first time the critic noticed it. It was Allan McCulloch at that time. He sort of picked a couple of my woodcuts and gave good notice, so that was for the first time in Australia that officially I sort of, you know, can show one or two of my graphic art pieces.

JAMES GLEESON: What comes next?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I have to think.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you exhibit? When was your first show?

EVA KUBBOS: I did not exhibit. No, I did not exhibit anything in Melbourne. No, I didn't. But I kept on working. I produced a few woodcuts and I kept on working, but I didn't show anything. No.

JAMES GLEESON: When did you come to Sydney?

EVA KUBBOS: I came to Sydney in 1960.

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JAMES GLEESON: I see. Your work still then was expressionist, figurative work, or had it begun to change?

EVA KUBBOS: No, not yet. No, I was still figurative and I know for the first time when I came to Sydney there was an exhibition of graphic art. The Lithuanian community had organised something here. Somehow at that stage I always thought every piece I did was so terribly precious to me I didn't want to let it out of my hands. So I took a plane and took a couple, I think a couple of graphic art. They were already framed and that and glass so I thought to look after them and I took a plane and brought them over myself. They were exhibited with the Lithuanian community here in Sydney.

JAMES GLEESON: Where at?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It was not the Lithuanian community. It was the first Australia-wide Graphic Art Show in 1960 at David Jones.

EVA KUBBOS: At David Jones. That's right, it was at David Jones.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Robinson Prints first Australia-wide Graphic exhibition.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: The first Australia-wide graphics exhibition.

EVA KUBBOS: That's right. I sort of forgot, it was so far back. Yes. That was my first.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: So I came to Sydney and I actually fell in love instantly with the city itself and I thought the people—it seemed to have this similar atmosphere to Berlin atmosphere, cosmopolitan atmosphere. Everything seemed to move and I looked at the galleries and somehow I liked Sydney. I thought, 'Ah, that's the place for me'. Since I can choose now I thought, 'That is the place for me'. I'm going to settle and so I settled. I came to Sydney and settled in Sydney.

JAMES GLEESON: And you've been here since. Now, in Sydney.

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I came to Sydney and I didn't regret my step because I very quickly found some friends which also were artists. One of my countrymen was Henschel Krautz and Mr Ratas, Vaclovas Ratas, and of course quite a few Australian artists which I became befriended and we are still friends since today. We sort of came together and one day we thought there was actually quite a few graphic artists working on their own. But there was no society as such existing in Sydney, so we thought what would happen if we perhaps would start to form one.

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There was, of course, Laurie Thomas at that time he was in Sydney and he felt very strongly for graphic art and so we had a chat with him and finally decided we are going to form the Sydney Printmakers Association. That was 1961. I became a foundation member of the Sydney Printmakers Association which is still existing today and they have really grown and they're exhibiting. I hope the society will remain for many years to come an active society.

JAMES GLEESON: Eva, have you had many one-man shows?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, yes, I had a few. My first one-man show was in Sydney 1962 at Barry Stern Galleries. That was somewhat almost a mixture. I was still figurative but I started to move towards the abstract expressionism.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: The reason why it happened was mainly that I tended to get a little bit too framed in, too caged in with my graphic art, because the sizes were limited, the way of expressing yourself was limited. I sort of felt the urge, I wanted to be bold and big. I wanted to have this greater freedom in general in expressing myself as an artist. I think that probably was the main reason why I sort of finally dived into abstract expressionism. But this first show was a mixture of both, I must say. That was then 1964 I had the second one-man show and that was in Newcastle. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Now Eva, you mentioned your entry into this abstract expressionist form of art, which it seems to me to be absolutely logical since you were already expressionist, so it's not a big step to move. What medium did you go for? Was it watercolours or were you using acrylics?

EVA KUBBOS: No, especially for the abstract expressionism the medium was light watercolour.

JAMES GLEESON: Watercolour.

EVA KUBBOS: Watercolour was actually my favourite medium and I sort of could execute it quickly. It seemed to suit my temperament and, you know, you could go broader. Also at that time I remember you couldn't get any good watercolour paper in larger size, so to have this larger size I purchased the heavy offset paper. That was quite large in size so that gave me this wonderful way of freedom to actually produce paintings on larger scale.

JAMES GLEESON: When did you move to acrylics? You did work in acrylics later, didn't you?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, I worked later. Actually, I started to produce them after the Newcastle show.

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JAMES GLEESON: That was '62 you said.

EVA KUBBOS: Sixty-four was Newcastle.

JAMES GLEESON: Sixty-four.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, Newcastle one-man show. Then I was working towards another one-man show and I intended to have one in Adelaide, which actually happened 1968. There I had half of my show consisted of acrylic paintings. There I still could be broad and big and larger in scale, which again I quite liked. I believe at that show the National Gallery purchased one of them.

JAMES GLEESON: That's right. That's this one.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. That's *Earth in spring*.

JAMES GLEESON: Nineteen sixty-eight. So that was painted just before the exhibition, or during the year of the exhibition.

EVA KUBBOS: That was during the exhibition. That was purchased from that exhibition.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: And was painted that same year?

EVA KUBBOS: That was painted the same year, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: It's acrylic on hardboard?

EVA KUBBOS: That's right. That probably was a typical work at that time that I did at that period.

JAMES GLEESON: Six by four feet?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Eva, we're talking about the 1968 *Earth in spring*. Would you regard that as a sort of characteristic one of that period?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, I would say so. I would say so. That was acrylic. At that time I had a very quite large studio and I sort of worked on the floor. I had a great floor space and all my works, whatever I produced, even my watercolours, I have them laying flat on the floor.

JAMES GLEESON: Flat on the grounds.

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EVA KUBBOS: Then I sort of apply my colours, so that I can work around at that stage.

JAMES GLEESON: From all sides.

EVA KUBBOS: I can see from all sides and every corner. That's the way I execute my work.

JAMES GLEESON: So that all your work in acrylic or watercolours are done horizontally, flat?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: I actually never use the easel.

JAMES GLEESON: Don't you?

EVA KUBBOS: No.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, is there anything else now we should know about that. It is acrylic on hardboard. It's four by six feet and it was acquired from the White Studio in Adelaide, from that exhibition.

EVA KUBBOS: That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: In 1968.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: So we've got all that information there. Well now, let's go to some of your graphic work. We haven't, I don't think, got any of your watercolours in the collection at the moment. So one day in future I'll have to come back to you when we get one of those. But we do have a number of graphic works. These three are what? Now that's *Carnival '59*. Oh, here's the earliest one, *Children with fish* 1958. From our card, it's a coloured woodcut on cream paper. It's No. 5 of an edition of 15, executed in 1958. Is that correct?

EVA KUBBOS: That's right, yes. That should be correct, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Is two colours right?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. This one?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

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EVA KUBBOS: I think that was two colours, but is that here? I'm not too sure. Or did the colour not come off? Because I had this, I did a few proofs, artists proofs in black and white, and then I did a few in colours, I remember, in two colours.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: That means what, two blocks?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, two blocks. Yes, I always do, you know, blocks.

JAMES GLEESON: A separate block for each colour?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, for each colour block, a separate block.

JAMES GLEESON: You've never been interested in, say, the technique that Margaret Preston used of hand colouring block?

EVA KUBBOS: No, no, I have never hand coloured blocks. No.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah huh.

EVA KUBBOS: I thought I might do it one day, but I've never done it yet.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Good. Now, *Carnival* is the next one chronologically, 1959. Fairly related, I suppose?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, that's right. At that time, you see, I was sort of involved with figures, I did quite a few woodcuts and linocuts in figuration. In fact, real figures.

JAMES GLEESON: The expressionistic background is still very much—

EVA KUBBOS: That's right. That's right, very apparent.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. This 1959, No. 5 of 25. Again, it's a coloured woodcut, so that there would be several blocks in that.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: *Shifting from dark to light* 1962, an edition of 45 of which this is No. 36. It's a coloured linocut?

EVA KUBBOS: That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: When did you start? You said you started on the linocuts in Australia.

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EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Can you remember just when? Would this be an early one of that?

EVA KUBBOS: Well yes, you see that's 1962. When I came to Sydney I started on linocuts, because I felt the medium was somewhat softer and the execution, you could produce it quicker and perhaps the whole thing was more temperamental.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: I mean, the woodcut was very definite and sort of the medium just didn't permit you to go into small detail and so forth.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: You see, here you can see I'm already slowly moving into the abstract expressionism.

JAMES GLEESON: More abstract. Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, you see, because it is more direct. You see, you have to quicker execute your work, and linoleum was in this case the better medium, you know, apart from watercolour which is actually ideal, was ideal to me.

JAMES GLEESON: Is this really totally abstract, or is there a figurative idea behind it?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I was just at that stage—there might be a reference, a figurative reference, but I was sort of merging into the pure abstract idea. It's not yet clarified.

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

EVA KUBBOS: You see, that was the beginning. It sort of was a breakthrough. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Were any of these exhibited in any of your exhibitions that you remember?

EVA KUBBOS: No, I don't think so, no, no. No, I haven't exhibited.

JAMES GLEESON: No. All right, Eva, now we come to problem areas, ones for which we've got cards but no photographs to recall them to your mind. One is

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called *Coastline* 1965. It's a silkscreen and an artist's proof, which we acquired from the artist in December 1966. Can you remember that one at all?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I did a series of serigraphs and I sort of remember it but not quite clearly.

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

EVA KUBBOS: I have to go through my files and look at it because I remembered quite a few, these serigraphs at that time.

JAMES GLEESON: Would it be an abstract expressionist one?

EVA KUBBOS: I would say so, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, Where did you study silkscreen making, serigraph?

EVA KUBBOS: Ah, silkscreen making. Well, actually I went to various places to people who could do it, and they gave me all this information that I needed. I practically sort of then started on my own to do them.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see. About when was that, mid sixties? This one's '65.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, about '60. I would say about '64. Sixty-four I started to produce them.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Do you do many of them?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I haven't done lately. I haven't done any graphic art lately.

JAMES GLEESON: No.

EVA KUBBOS: But definitely deep in my mind I have ideas and at the moment I just have my mind almost in Europe. I'm going overseas. But when I come back I feel I'm going to dive into printmaking again because I enjoy printmaking. But for the past years I just was happy in watercolour and post colour.

JAMES GLEESON: Of course, being a printmaker who specialises in blocks, you know, wood blocks or linocuts, you do your own printing, don't you?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: You don't have a printmaker do it for you?

EVA KUBBOS: No. So far all prints that I have produced I have produced myself. I have printed, executed them. I mean, cut them, printed them.

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JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Your special interest is in a kind of print that doesn't need a press, does it?

EVA KUBBOS: That's right. No, I don't use any presses. Well, actually that goes back in Europe when I did these silk-screens. Not silk-screens.

JAMES GLEESON: Lithographs.

EVA KUBBOS: The lithographs, of course they were done by press. But all the other, I mean, the artwork that I have produced here in regards to graphic art I've printed myself.

JAMES GLEESON: Printed yourself.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Nineteen sixty-four, that goes back a year or two before *Coastline*, a year before. *Persuasion*, a coloured woodcut using two blocks.

EVA KUBBOS: That's right. Yes, that was sort of quite a strong sort of woodcut, two figures. That was typical.

JAMES GLEESON: Still figurative.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, that was April. yes, that was purchased—

JAMES GLEESON: In April '64.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I don't know where from. We don't have any information about that.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes. No, I produced that. Actually, it was executed I'm sure before '60.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, before '60?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, so we'll put '64 as the date. So it's pre-1960. It was done in Melbourne?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, it was done in Melbourne.

JAMES GLEESON: Was it shown at all in Melbourne, do you remember?

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EVA KUBBOS: I think I actually showed it at one of the Moomba exhibitions there.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (inaudible) Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, in the gallery. The National Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, and that is also the Kuala Lumpur Gallery in Malaysia has purchased it. That was during the—

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Travelling exhibition (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, travelling exhibition of South East Asia.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. What year was that?

EVA KUBBOS: You see that was 1962, you see.

JAMES GLEESON: So it must have been pre '60?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: So that there is another copy of it in the Kuala Lumpur Gallery?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Well that gives us some information about that one. Now, 1964, I don't know whether that date is right, *Towards spring*, linocut.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, that's also an abstract expressionistic work.

JAMES GLEESON: It would have been done in Sydney, I would think.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, that I have done in Sydney. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: After you started doing linocuts.

EVA KUBBOS: Lino, because I didn't do lino before.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, I think that covers it Eva, and covers it very well, unless you have some other information that you would like to add.

EVA KUBBOS: Well, you see, then 1969 I had another one-person show, and that was in Canberra.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

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EVA KUBBOS: Then I sort of participated in group exhibitions, you know. I went to the Third International Print Biennale in Tokyo which was 1962.

JAMES GLEESON: What works were in that, any that we have? No.

EVA KUBBOS: No, I don't think so, no. Then 1962 also I exhibited in the South East Asian travelling exhibition, and then 1962 in South London Gallery. I was very active in this year. Then 1965 there was a contemporary drawing exhibition in Newcastle, and then 1969 International Young Painters' Exhibition in Tokyo again.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Well, I won a number of prizes. Started off 1963 with the Mirror-Waratah, which was contemporary watercolour. Well, I won the art prize Maitland, Rockdale several times. Mosman, Wollongong, Lithuanian Arts Festival in Melbourne and the Robin Hood watercolour, Hunters Hill three times, and also Australian Fashion Fabric Award. Then I won the Wynne Prize Trustees watercolour 1963, 1970, and 1971. Then the Pring Prize at the National Gallery 1970, 1971, 1974, 1975 and 1977. Yes. Well, I'm represented in, you know—

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: You want to know? Well, I'm represented in National Gallery of Canberra, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Queensland Art Gallery, National Gallery in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Merz Foundation New York, America, Australian University, Canberra, Trinity Grammar School, Ashfield, Lake (inaudible) Gallery, Bathurst, Maitland City Collection, and various private collections. You know, I can't quite remember everything, but that's roughly my art activity.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, you'll make a copy of this for our file, would you?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, that's mine?

EVA KUBBOS: Oh, you would like a copy?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: All right. It doesn't matter if I can't quite get all these dates?

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

EVA KUBBOS: Because some of them I don't seem to be able to—

JAMES GLEESON: To pinpoint exactly.

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EVA KUBBOS: To pinpoint.

JAMES GLEESON: No.

EVA KUBBOS: All right then, Jimmy.

JAMES GLEESON: All right. All right, thank you Eva, that's marvellous.

EVA KUBBOS: It was my pleasure.

JAMES GLEESON: Eva, there is something we've got to talk about still, and that's the Young Painters Exhibition. Now, tell me when was that? That was in Tokyo?

EVA KUBBOS: In 1969.

JAMES GLEESON: The International Young Artists Exhibition, the 5th one. This was in Tokyo. Did it go to other cities?

EVA KUBBOS: No, that was only in Tokyo.

JAMES GLEESON: Only in Tokyo.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, in 1969.

JAMES GLEESON: Now what Australians were exhibiting in that?

EVA KUBBOS: Well, there were various. As far as I know there was John White and there was Henry Salkauskas. Well, Henry won a prize at that particular exhibition. There was Tony McGillick.

JAMES GLEESON: Wendy Paramour?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, Wendy Paramour, that's right. Yes. There was John Firth-Smith and Dick Watkins and Noritis.

JAMES GLEESON: Harald Noritis.

EVA KUBBOS: Harald Noritis.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Gunter Christmann.

EVA KUBBOS: Gunter Christmann.

JAMES GLEESON: John Firth-Smith, yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: Neville Matthews?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, Neville Matthews. Well, these are a few.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: I think there were probably a few more.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, tell me about your painting or drawing, it was an acrylic?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, it was a painting. It was an acrylic.

JAMES GLEESON: Called?

EVA KUBBOS: It was called *Forest attic*.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: It was quite a large one and actually belonged to the same period as the *Earth in spring* that you purchased for Canberra.

JAMES GLEESON: Was it exhibited in the same show in Adelaide?

EVA KUBBOS: Yes, actually it was. It was exhibited at the same show.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

EVA KUBBOS: That was executed in acrylic and I used some marble dust. I mixed it with acrylic paint and it gave sort of somewhat the lively surface.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

EVA KUBBOS: Also quite smooth, because few people at that time—John Bailey was the gallery director of the gallery in Adelaide. I remember he went with his hands over it and said, ‘Eva, how did you do it? I thought it was applied by photographic means’. But it was not. I just wanted this kind of surface which was created in combining the acrylic paint with the marble dust. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you do that sort of thing very often by adding other material to the acrylic?

EVA KUBBOS: No, not actually. It happened only for this particular show that I did that. I haven’t done it any more, but I think I will when I will produce more works. Because for certain effects it’s quite interesting; you can use it if you want certain effects. I remember John Bailey purchased also one for the gallery in Adelaide from this same exhibition, also an acrylic. Yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: Good. Thank you very much, Eva.