

## JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: VINCENT JOMANTAS

15 October 1979

**JAMES GLEESON:** Vincent, to begin with, in Lithuanian your name is Vincas Jomantas.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, that's correct.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now what do you prefer to be known by in our catalogue? Would you prefer Vincent or Vincas?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Vincent might be little bit less confusing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. That's the name you've really adopted for your—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That's right.

**JAMES GLEESON:** As an artist in Australia.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** The name doesn't change except the spelling changes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. It's still Vincent.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Still Vincent.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All right. Vincent, we've got a number of things now, all sorted out in chronological sequence, that we hold in our gallery. What I'd like to do first of all is to go through them with you and get you to tell us about them. I think the earliest work we have is a drawing for a work called *Untitled Study for Sculpture in Bronze* of 1958. A work eight feet and six inches high, now in the National University at Canberra, in the Physics Building. Can you tell us about that?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, so far as I'm concerned with it, conditions was stated by architects in producing that work. Specifically it was spelled out that's for Science Faculty, and they did want in somehow to project image of science. Well, they didn't hold me to that sort of commitment that we got to literally explain that a function of the science of something like that, and I did use some maybe abstract forms—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** They can be called, but generally worked rather in organic forms and that means it was between sort of dynamism of what I envisaged science has today, projected with a sort of semi organic form into it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** The drawing here is just initial sketch that was presented to architects as idea, not as developed work.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But of course the original work didn't change very much at all.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Some elements only top element changes slightly. Of course it was consideration to employ the water—idea was to use that water in—

**JAMES GLEESON:** It was to sit in a pond or a pool was it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, to sit in a pool, but they wanted to have water functioning with a sculpture.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Now I am not believer in that you put a sculpture, a dolphin or something like that that's squirting water out. My idea was to enclose the sculpture in a mist, and we succeeded to some extent, except that later on we been beaten by the water, because we cannot filter that water properly.

**JAMES GLEESON:** How did you go about creating this mist effect?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well we did use a centre element, what is the sphere, like a eye, presented it in the water, with special

**JAMES GLEESON:** Or like the nucleus of an atom?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, it could be considered one way or other way. But it's general notion of scientific image in a way, but as I said I didn't try to spell out exact. Now that centre element produced a mist by special nozzles was fitted in producing the mist. Sculpture got to be enclosed in a sort of mist.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Initial intention at beginning, it was that sculpture will be standing in a pond, and that pond would be a functional to cool the water for laboratories. But later on the idea was changed, and of course the water is not very clean, and that fine mist failed to produce. It did work at beginning then it clogged it up and so on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The nozzles clogged?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Clogged the nozzles. It didn't function very well and therefore water was switched off.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh that's a pity because the concept of those very precise forms enveloped in a sort of mist is a very interesting one.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, it was exciting sort of idea to follow up, but somehow failed in that way.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It was a mechanical failure because of the water—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** This is mechanical failure, but initially it did not intend to use any water with it anyhow.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Oh I see, so it wasn't an essential part of the concept?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Not in that way.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When you made it, did you make it in plaster first? Or how did you go about creating—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well patterns was fabricated to us—use number of materials to make the patterns for casting purposes. They've been in some instances was used plaster, in other instances was used just fabricated sort of core or bench shapes of intermediate material. Like I used (inaudible) and other things to make the forms just for casting purposes. Really it was cast in a bronze and later on the bronze was finished in the required standards.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So, the original form was destroyed when the bronze cast was made?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Oh, patterns was of course discarded because patterns was made only for that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It wasn't the lost wax method you used?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, no, no, no. Sand casting.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Sand casting. Lost wax is—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Who did it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It was cast by a founder in Melbourne, that is Joe Lemon's Foundry.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What was it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Joe Lemon.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Lemon.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. He was excellent good caster.

**JAMES GLEESON:** He's done a lot of your work?

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** He's done a lot of my work. Mostly his foundry worked only for sculptors—he didn't do other jobs. That means a number of them busts works and a number of works done from right around Australia because he usually works only in sculpture—didn't do any other job.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Is he still working?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, he's not. He retired, and after retirement he died in a couple of year's time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Now we don't have that caster.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's a pity.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well that's our first item. It's interesting that we have the drawing for a work that is in Canberra anyway.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now we come to the *Tower of Grief*, which is a wooden work. We have a drawing for it, *Study for Wooden Sculpture Tower of Grief 1957* black ink and pencil. Is that correct?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Oh that's a drawing here, it's working drawing again. It's not drawing for drawing's sake—not at all. This very early one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Nineteen fifty-seven, was it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, but it's early—what concerns developed—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, a development drawing?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. Early work.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** So may be was second drawing done after that but I don't know what happened with that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When you work on a sculpture, do you do many drawings, preparatory drawings for them?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Not in all cases. Generally drawings is, well, when I exploring idea maybe I'm using some drawings. If I got a handle on certain materials, but drawings is essential as a working drawings, then I am producing working drawings. But that is distinction between drawing in which one I deal with idea or I want to clarify to myself what's going on and why forms or shapes got to fall in certain order. Other drawing will be just working

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drawings but is used to just to handle materials properly. Because estimate materials and—

**JAMES GLEESON:** I notice you have some measurements and figures on it which shows that it's a really advanced—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It was advanced at that stage but considering availability of the material, you know. But it could be that I did alter that in the carving.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well there is the carving there, and it's fairly close, although there are differences. For instance in this very top piece you've cut an opening through. Vincent, is this piece carved from a single piece of wood?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That is single piece of jarrah.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Jarrah.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It was like it obtain machine block and it's block used to prop up machines, instead of coal blocks or what's present using some sort of plastics now—

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it was already an old piece that had been used for something else when you got it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It wasn't old piece. It wasn't used for machines, but block was cut and stored as a machine block but never used.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Never used.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Excellent condition wise. It's no oils or anything on it. It's very clean surfaces and grain is clean. Not stained.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What attracted you to jarrah? It's a very hard wood isn't it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It's hard wood but jarrah is very consistent in grain.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It's very consistent in the colour. I don't like timbers where they have strong amounts of grain. Its grain is very even, and therefore doesn't interfere with the form. Sometimes grain cuts across the form and form disappears. But jarrah is beautiful to carve, it's very controllable timber and I would say that jarrah—I would have the preference to oak.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Really?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** To Jarrah. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Is it hard to obtain in that sort of size?

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No. I always feel that harder and more consistent and closer grain timber is quicker technically to execute than if you have softer grain.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Because you have far better control of it, you don't face any sort of collapsing of the grain under pressure of the chisel.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Less sharpening of the chisels which you've got to have in soft grain and saves a lot of time. But of course you have better finishes on it if later on it's waxed or treated in any other way. That means closeness of the grain, end grain or longitudinal grain, has the same effect in a way that you don't see the end grain and long grain. Jarrah is very good.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you treat it any way when it was finished?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, it was just beeswax.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Beeswax.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Beeswax.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The colour is the colour of the wood itself. No staining?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, no, not at all. No.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It's the natural wood with the beeswax.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Beeswax, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And polished to bring out the—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, usually it polishes from cleaning off that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Beeswax is controllable because if it gets too shiny you always can bring back into more flatter—

**JAMES GLEESON:** How do you apply the beeswax? Do you melt it and put it on in a liquid state?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Beeswax is in rather a liquidy paste. Beeswax and oil of turpentine and maybe some stand oil in it. Apply it on it and cleaned off or rubbed off by hands, human skin, not using anything.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Not buffing it up.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Not buffing up because the cloth leaves fibres on it.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** The title *Tower of Grief*, does that have a meaning, a realistic meaning?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well it has. Maybe it's a very personal thing, but I think appearance of the work suggests its title and I really couldn't recall why I named it this one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you name it after the piece was created?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well it was after I named it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It was, yes. You felt that the title caught the spirit of the thing?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, I believe so. That grief, well, it can be interpreted various ways and no need to feel that I got memories or it could be grief or present day.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Grief for something like unforeseen, you know, non-describable. But appearance of the forms and shapes sort of imply that feel about it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There is a feeling of building up the repetition of things, angles, shapes, repeating through it. Did you mean to suggest that this is something recurrent, you know, a grief that is persistent?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, what I think I did imply from it to some extent, that is grief is grief maybe not quite personal. It is a grief not one person like who did it, I didn't imply that grief is my personal grief, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. It's a more abstract concept?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It's more abstract concept and it is grief of more or less—grief of the tribe or something like that. It's not necessarily—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you have a sort of totemic thing in the back of your mind?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, yes, to some extent I did have that. Well, I mean it was suggested by material in a way because its size of material and—

**JAMES GLEESON:** The shape.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** The shape of it and shapes and scale of shapes was determined by material. That means of course I wouldn't change the general idea of it if I would have three times larger material.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But then that means every formal shape will take the appropriate place within the relative scale of complete work.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it is in a way a sort of totem of grief?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It is like a monument for it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But I don't want to label type of form of grief, or purpose of that grief or what.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no. You don't really start with a fixed idea like that in your mind?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, not exactly. Well of course, it's there, because you have there, somewhere there, for sure. I mean, you got to do something. You got to make it and why you make it—why you crossing the street to buy the cigarettes or you crossing the street to buy the milk. If I make the sculpture it should be something behind why I prompted to do that thing, but usually even artists I don't think that he can identify at that moment why he acts, behaves a certain way.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No. I understand that. It happens that way and then you understand what—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Then you start realising why it happens like that, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes. But you don't start out by saying now I'm going to make a totem.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, no, no. That will be defeating the purpose of anything.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Exactly.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** You know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, now we come to *Girl with Birds* which started out as a built up work in plaster made in 1959 and then was cast in bronze, in an edition of two was it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Edition of two it was cast.

**JAMES GLEESON:** In 1977.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, that's right.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, did we have the original plaster?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No. Its original plaster belongs to Len French.



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**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah ha.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Len French lend it for that purpose.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now I remember the story. Len, I remember saying that he admired it very much and he made it, and offered to let us have it cast in bronze, one for the National Gallery. Where did the other one go to?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I don't know. I think that is—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did Len keep it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Plaster?

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, the bronze, the second bronze.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No. I believe that all was handled by National Gallery, both copies.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh I see. We got both casts?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I believe so.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Because the cost was met for both casts, was met by—

**JAMES GLEESON:** National Gallery.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** National Gallery.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So we've probably got one for the gallery and one to lend.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, I haven't a clue about it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No. Well I'm not clear in that. But I do remember the conversation, oh quite a number of years ago now, where Len very generously offered to allow us to have that cast in bronze because he admired it so much.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. But well both copies I believe was produced for the gallery.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah ha. Now you told me that there were some problem in the casting. Was this Lemon too who did the casting?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, no, no. Lemon was not available to me.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Other foundry was used for it.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. This was in 1977?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, yes. Casting was I think too complex for experience of the foundry because they usually cast architectural pieces only, or cast more or less industrial pieces. Therefore it's difficult even to ask for people more to do that because it's procedure of all casting, sculpture's entirely different than it would be for commercial purposes. But you get away somehow and the finish is reasonable, and the time it will take the patina will be all right too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You were worried originally about this join of what are the hands.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Hands.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Or points of the figure.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Touching, supporting burs, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Originally when it was cast.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, originally it used to be a narrower point.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, and that means—

**JAMES GLEESON:** In the plaster they were narrower?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** In the plaster it wasn't narrower, because it's for structural purposes. But later on when you consider to use something where original materials like that you can expect better finish.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Finer point.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Finer point, but so far as—well that's exactly what's came out on the plaster (inaudible).

**JAMES GLEESON:** Are you happy with that now?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, 50–50 I would say.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Is it this part that worries you still, the points?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, we cannot change them because structurally it wouldn't hold it, because procedure wasn't adopted what I had suggested.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh I see.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** The making or construction was slightly different done, but I did expect what was specified. Unfortunately people say, 'Well, this way or not other way;' They keep smiling and accept the thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Vincent, 1959, the original work, it's very different in character to the *Tower of Grief* of 1957.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Whereas that is angular, sharp, precise, this is full of curves. It's a totally different sort of feeling of form in it.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well it is different material. It's different idea. I did do quite a lot of works including the figure.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I usually treat my figures slightly different ways.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Was a custom, but usually a wooden sculpture, or a sculpture in wood, I see more or less from constructive point of view as—

**JAMES GLEESON:** The material itself.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Material itself, yes. Or sometimes, of course, like a jarrah or some more dense woods, you can adopt for traditional way to carve. Well again, as you can model in way but it would be defeating the purpose because it's—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Not true to the material.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Not true to material at all. I don't have, as a matter of fact, any hang ups about material.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Now I always choose the material for design what I have.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I get labelled that I do a lot of carving. Well it's accessibility of the material. When you do a lot of carving you would think about your ideas on the terms of carving and therefore maybe they develop such way. But really I don't intend or try not to make anything in material just because it's permanent material.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** If I'm using bronze I want to get bronze quality. Otherwise I can leave that in the cast in plaster or it can be cast in resins or it could be cast in anything. But if I'm using bronze, I intend to have a quality of the bronze. Well, I wouldn't say that no works come out that true, because like what we discussed just now, it could be quite nice to have in a plaster and I think would look better than bronze. But plaster, like the permanency, and here material takes over because it's permanent but not because there's quality in it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** In the material, because plaster has quite a good quality except that it's for purpose what is intended, it wouldn't stand the time for it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** So in other works, what I did in the bronze I deliberately used the bronze.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Because bronze got (inaudible).

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you have mind when you did the plaster that this would be made in bronze eventually, or was plaster the aim?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well that was the aim, in a way. I didn't consider—I did have the idea. I did it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Plaster seemed to be the proper medium for it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Plaster was the proper medium for that at that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So the only advantage having it in bronze is permanence?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, is permanence, yes. Of course it's here very, very maybe slight advantages in a bronze in this case, that became maybe slightly lighter feeling that you have in a plaster, because in plaster very large forms there, and the bronze may look a bit more elegant in a way.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. The way the light catches the curves, the highlights.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, you don't have such large areas as you have in the plasters. Maybe more grace you see in the line.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Well now we come to *The Poet*, for which we only have the drawing. Vincent, what was *The Poet* made of, what material?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It's Oregon.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Oregon was used just for sheer size, because I couldn't use other materials.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What is it, about nine feet?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well that is nine feet, nearly 10 feet high. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Where is the—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Oh, that I have here. I have with me.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You still have it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I still have it. That is badly split at present.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I don't know if anything can be done. Maybe can be filled in with the epoxy.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But material was in a rather bad state then, it was very green.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A single piece?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well it is in a way like carved as a single piece, but it was not possible to get the sizes of material because you got to use about sixteen inches by thirty-two inches and other dimensions of materials. It means in some material still is laminated there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I notice in a lot of your work you use laminated timber. Is that—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. Well that's availability of material you see.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You can't get the size you want.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. In some works lamination works very well.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** They became like a part of the design and it's availability of the material and if you laminate in a scale which is compatible with the total scale, is quite right and therefore I'm using that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Do you do the lamination yourself?

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. Yes. Usually laminations is based on the working drawing in a way because I even use the lamination to pronounce the direction of the shapes and forms.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it takes a positive, creative—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Oh positive, yes. I am not laminating and then carving from it. I usually make assemblages of laminated pieces.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So that these pieces, like the ones around us, are in a sense assemblages rather than—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Carving of from one piece. No.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When did you start using this sort of assemblage technique? Has that been always a part of your approach?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well some works is even demanding to be approached in such manner and other works of course maybe will be, well, more or less present I think on the terms of those assemblages. Of course when I start carving it always used to be a one solid bit.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You do have a very wide range of approaches and commands over material because you're one of the sculptors, few sculptors, who use wood and metal and polyester—all sorts of different media in your work.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well I would like to use even more materials and be influenced by using them. But to some materials they don't respond. For example, I don't respond very strongly to constructive steel or something like that. Then it's now difficult to make nice looking designs. But I believe that you've got to put something more than just a plain sort of logical conceptual exercise in to make things work. Emotions or feelings about it comes straight. If you don't have, well you cannot produce much. But materials, knowledge of the materials and range of materials, I think gives the freedom for any artist more or less to express his feelings better than if you are limited or for lack of knowledge about what to do with the material. Sometimes you've got to sacrifice idea or look for very unwise compromises if you don't have the feel about it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Vincent, *The Poet* is still in the sort of totemic tradition—a long vertical, upright vertical shape.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** With the characteristics of the totem carvings. But some of your later work moves quite away from that, spans out so that it's broader than it's high, and become multiple forms on a single base.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Were most of your earlier works in that sort of totemic form, single units?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well they varied, they all the time varied. Sometimes, you see, I feel that everything hinges on initial idea or feel what you have and so I see sometimes, well, let's say that you see the images and those images take certain shape. I'm not really saying that I'm doing that. That between such and such years I did elongated forms, that's forms purely emphasising structure or something—not at all. Because I'm very slow with what I design, sometimes I'm carrying the idea for a year maybe two years until I do that. Maybe because at this stage that idea has, well, seconded to other ideas what I have. But I usually don't see that I got to work one way or in one style, and I can use organic shapes, I can use very structural ones, very refined shapes and that could be one half of here I will do that, other half of here I can do that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, something of course pushes you to do one way or other way, or behave certain way at that time of your sort of creative activity. But I couldn't say why it happens. But I don't worry if somebody says, 'Well he's not consistent because he did that thing and now last year we did see his work, which has sort of organic qualities, now he does very defined thing and clean forms', you know. I don't see that as a controversy at all.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *The Poet* seems to me to be a very exciting mixture of organic and constructional forms.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I mean the central focal image of the ball contained in these—oh, I don't know what you call them—arcs or forms, have a very organic feeling about them. Yet the whole thing has also this constructional element. Were you always interested in this combination, this fusion of organic and constructional elements?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well it could have some, I suppose, can have certain influences on it, and influences would be Lithuanian folk carvings.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Which one?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Lithuanian folk carvings.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Really?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. It did use wood very extensively.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It was wooden buildings, crosses, chapels, and everything they all got up to twelve, fifteen feet high all the time. That means we didn't talk about artefacts like carved that you can handle, but they usually are very monumental. Maybe that has rubbed off to some extent.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. It's hard to avoid those early experiences.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, I don't have intention even to avoid. But it could be that, like in *The Poet*, a lot of elements what you can see now used in the oak crosses and they might be fifteen, twenty feet high.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Really?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well that's something I know nothing about. But that's interesting.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well they are slightly different shapes and forms.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, of course.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But that sort of rhythm going right through that structure is very typical.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. That's very interesting. Well now, again, quite a different work, *The Sorcerer* of 1964 in wood which we bought in '64 from the Rudy Komon Gallery. Can you remember the scale of that? I don't think we have measurements because that is currently I think on loan in New Delhi.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I think that's Foreign Affairs.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** People bought it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well it's part of the national collection but it was bought and is now on loan.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well I think the dimensions here should be something about four feet. I got to check that later on. But, well that is a wall piece.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A wall piece?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A relief?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Sort of a relief. Again it's intention was not to have the relief that is flattened on the wall, not fixed against a wall. There's quite a strong dimension in it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But has that very strong sort of decorative quality in it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There it is.



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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It is five feet.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Five feet high.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What sort of wood was that?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That's Canadian cedar. That work developed in a very unusual way, because intention was to use only what we have in the background there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. When they made that I was fascinated about that sort of lamination of the wood—very narrow strips often.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. These are separate pieces that go across, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. Later on when they did that, it looked to me too flat. It looked very sort of graphic (inaudible) and just rather empty. Therefore other elements on top of it was sort of invented later on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Almost like a collage?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. It is typical assemblage of it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** You know. The most difficult part of it was to delay those elements, that they don't look a devised afterthought, or introduced for sake of filling in space.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It took quite a while to solve that problem. But then of course I forgot about first idea, completely about the background when I'm talking, it became as a background only for the elements what I use there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But initially start only with one single shape.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. That's that horizontally—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Striped, laminated.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That is a shield-like thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Shield-like, that's right, yes.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Idea was to use like a shield or something. But when I considered to introduce new segments in it, new shapes in it—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Still in Canadian cedar?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, still and they were very uniform. It's very fine grain and it's softish but in construction it's quite all right. That means then they have the struggle to make them work, but when they start work, then of course that shield became like a background.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Vincent, *The Sorcerer*, what sort of surface did you put on it? Is it just wax again?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Just wax, again it's a very thin coat of shellac, just to seal the grain and wax on top of it. But it's a very thin coat of shellac. Shellac is hardly important there, but end of grain becomes not so absorbent as it would be otherwise.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Just to protect it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Does the title have any special significance? Did it come after the work or did you—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well the title in this case came maybe with the work at the beginning when I made it the shield, because really that shield looked more threatening than when I introduced other elements. They soften up that impact to some extent. But it's stuck with the name of it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. I notice this motif of sort of four wedge like shapes, sort of coming in to meet sort of off centre in the middle, is something that occurs in a number of your works—a motif.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, well I know I have the habit of always bringing the sort of points to create a sort of centre of attention to something. I want to force the people to look through it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Like a pointed arrow.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It all goes this way.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It's all coming into the centre.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Into the centre.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The fact that it doesn't quite meet in the centre creates attention.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That's right in some extent. For some reason, I always try to repeat myself.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It's a personal motif?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I suppose it is personal.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now *The Sitter*. We have a drawing for that and a bronze.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *The Sitter*, study for the bronze sculpture of *The Sitter* 1964, pencil and then the bronze.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, that drawing was sort of initially made a drawing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I don't, when I make the drawing, for sake of drawing, in a way, I don't intend to make the sculptures after that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But in this case, it was the drawing seems like suggested that this drawing called a sculpture.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** A lot of my colleagues they have always arguments about, they say, 'Well, the drawing, it should be drawing, in this media'. You cannot have any substitute for the drawing. If you have good drawing you cannot make the painting, you can make the sculpture from it. But in this case of course drawing looked like a drawing of the sculpture.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I lost that impact. Well maybe if it's not look like sculpture it may have a different effect. But to me it did have. I thought why not try to make the sculpture from it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** So in very rare occasions it happens like that. Later on I developed the sculpture which is in a way I followed the drawing and make it. But I never like to work from models. If I make maquette, maquette should be very vague. Maquette is just a sketch for the sculpture and then you develop it. But in this instance, you know, it happens that I just made a sculpture according to the drawing, even didn't change the scale.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So it's very small.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No. That is about four foot.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, is it? And the drawing—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, but what I meant that scale, this scale of volumes and shapes in it I still retain. That's what I did have in the drawing you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was this cast by Lemon?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That was cast by Lemon Foundry, yes. It was very good cast, excellent cast because it's very large volumes and they've been cast in two pieces only.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Really? Where is the join?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well the join somewhere around here.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Around about the lower torso.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That's excellent casting.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A unique casting?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, it would be unique casting in this size.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There weren't two or three, no editions?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, it's two editions was on that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Two?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. That's the second one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, in the same casting process that is edition doesn't mean anything except that you know that so many pieces are.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But in quality you cannot determine exactly as lithograph sometimes, one from 25, doesn't mean it will be better. Maybe three from 25 will be better.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That means has no bearing on it. A matter of fact, on this one the patina is far better than on the first one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Because patina was here more or less cured to wait a long period. That means in the first one, patina was applied maybe during four days, and then there's a final thing. In that one patina was repeated may be three times every six months or something...

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh I see, it took a while to complete.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Its patina here to some extent obliterated completely a bronze. Well patina is identifiable to the bronze but it's very heavy like antique patina. Very solid and very permanent in that one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Marvellous. Good. Well now, one of my favourite ones, *The Awakening of a Giant No 1*, wood and polyester of 1967 bought from the Rudy Komon Gallery.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, this seems to me absolutely a departure from what I'd previously seen of your work, in the sense that it had a very strong organic feeling about it.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well, matter of fact it was at that time when I produced that one, *Awakening of a Giant*, it was first version, that was second version. But it was entirely different. It was seven footers and they separately standing and it was again a one bronze from that made there, say again different one. That means for some reason, I was concerned to *Awakening of Giants* you know. That first version, that wood and polyester resin, I did use New Zealand Kauri for it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** It has sort of yellowish appearance.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I remember the colour is very important.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. It was without polyester bands when it was done. When I put it them on a polyester base, they look a bit divorced from it. Therefore I introduced a pinkish sort of polyester bands and I created joints which ones didn't exist before. They been joints because wood what was used, it was used core of logs what is left after peeling plywood.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That means I constructed shapes by cutting this long post, like a core, and joining them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it's laminated?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well it's not really laminated, it's like you would cut an angle, you will cut a post and to join it at different angle.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** This one is laminated, yes. But then those polyester rings come later on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** On those joints.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I just wanted to unify the thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Were the polyester shapes cast?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, no, no, no. It's imbedded, it's cut out and imbedded then.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well it's cast over but it's not like cast rings and slipped over on that one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The colour was applied?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Colour was in the resin.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It was in it?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** In the resin, not applied on the top.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. You impregnated the resin?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, yes, that's right. Resin did have the dyes and colour is in the resin, it's not painted over.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Awakening of the Giants* was a theme of a whole exhibition I remember, wasn't it, or you did a number of works?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Well that was one, there was two versions there, and a third one came later on, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you have any sort of literary idea behind that, *The Giants*, what were they?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, well, as a matter of fact it's very sort of powerful moving forms, separate forms. They again started with a drawing, that's nothing to do with the drawing, I mean it cannot relate to the drawing but I did make some drawing, fairly large ones, might be up to four, six feet long, and it was like a landscape with like huge snakes coming out from it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

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**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That's prompted me to explore that element of the shapes of forms. They been rather threatening, that was appeared in the drawing, and therefore maybe labelled them as *Awakening of Giants*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** They are certainly one of the most striking of all the forms I think you've invented, and certainly they've stayed in my mind as one of the most—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, I was quite happy about that. I mean, I really was moved, did have a lot of enthusiasm and that. But as I say it started from the drawing, but I wanted to leave drawing as a drawing. Of course it's entirely different. It changed; it's nothing to it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well now the last of the sequence is, apart from the screen, which is still in process, is this work, *The Princess* in bronze of 1972, four pieces on a painted wooden base.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. Well that's three elements, three elements in it, and it's one I would say like a bull or a bison, one represents the bird, and one represents the turtle.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see—the turtle, the bird and the bison.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, and they are very noble and that's maybe going back in Lithuanian folklore or something like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** I mean, don't regard them as animals, regard them as something about that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That is a gathering of those people, of personalities, or what you can call in a way, and they present certain qualities maybe of a human race in a way.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** If you know about qualities of the bird and why we admiring birds, we know why we admiring centaurs, bisons, or something like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** We know it's qualities of the turtle. That is serpent too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see, a central piece, yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, and serpent too, it belongs to it. That is a kingdom of—

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Forces or powers.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, but presented by animals. Why should it be presented by human beings?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Were all the elements, and there seem to be four of them rather than three—

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, four.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Cast in bronze, separately?

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes, this is cast separately.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Then imbedded in the wooden base.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** No, they can be placed very—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see. Just placed on the wooden base.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** That is wooden base is to some extent just for exhibition purposes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see. It's just a stand.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** They could be placed on any slab of the stone or something even look better.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** But it's how to handle them you know, in display and they are not very small and that base is all right, but it could be placed anywhere. You know it's not need to have the base for it. But it's placing is indicated, but that is the general idea of it. I am quite happy about this work.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I think it's a great work.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Yes. I am quite happy about it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, Vincent, we won't talk about the screen now, because that's still in process and we'll come back to you about that. I think we'll leave it at that at the moment, and come back to you at some future time to talk about the screen and the grill that you're doing for the National Gallery.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Most welcome.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Thank you very much indeed.

**VINCENT JOMANTAS:** Right.