

JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: INGE KING

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JAMES GLEESON: Inge, can we begin with probably the most important of your works that we have in the Australian National Gallery at the moment, and that is *Temple gate*. I notice on the card, it's painted metal, that is steel and aluminium, and we acquired it in 1977 from Realities Gallery in Melbourne. That was an important show of yours. I remember quite a few of the works from that collection. Can you tell me how you came to work up to *Temple gate*?

INGE KING: Well, one of my aims in sculpture or in working in steel is movement. I have used movement in various ways, but in recent years I had a particular interest to use movement that is suspended in some fashion or other or, as I often call it, I like to make them fly. It's often technically a very difficult problem because, well, what might be quite all right even in a small model, could be immediate difficulty to build on a large scale. Another thing too that's important, over quite a period I have worked either with circular shapes or with type of discs. The first circular shape that I used was *The black sun*, that's in Canberra too and I think we talk about that later. Then the next one was *Planet* which is now in Brisbane. Then I worked with pipe shapes—no, with circular shapes like an echo. That was in Realities too. *Temple gate* was the final one. There my main aim was really to have this movement of flight, and the supports of course are part of the sculpture. Another aspect of it is it's very important that people can walk through it. Because since about 1972, I sort of got very interested in spectator participation and that is of great importance to me; to involve the spectator, to rouse his curiosity, if you like, and it is an interest, but it has to work. I mean, my first thought in sculpture is form in sculpture, but these are other aspects of it.

JAMES GLEESON: Inge, correct me if I'm wrong, but my reaction to a work like *Temple gate* is that there is a strong element of paradox or ambiguity in it. That these great discs seem to float in space, to hover as it were. This visual ambiguity, is this part of your conscious—

INGE KING: Yes, very important. Grahame always quoted my work as anti-engineering. Which is quite true. But I think this paradox or ambiguity or paradoxical visual effect I think is very important. Then they live from me. Sometimes I succeed and sometimes I don't. But I think this is quite important.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, there is a maquette which I've just seen for this work. Is your normal method to work from a maquette to a large scale?

INGE KING: Yes, the reason why I do it is, when I first worked in steel I worked directly on a large scale. But not only that I found it was too slow, but I find with a maquette I can work very fast, and get my thoughts down in a spontaneous and a direct manner, I can get completely involved. While in a large one, there are so

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many technical problems that you have to consider to start with, that this spontaneity and even the ambiguity I just couldn't achieve that way.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: But even I do small sculptures. I don't always call them maquettes, because sometimes I might have them with me for six months or a year before I decide whether they will enlarge, or not. It's not a technical question, it's just a question whether they will work on a larger scale and look better, because I'm not concerned just to produce large sculptures. With some of them I feel they're completed in the size, you know, of the existent. That's it.

JAMES GLEESON: Before we go on to this enlargement, do you ever begin by notating your ideas in pencil, work from drawings at all, or do you conceive it from the very beginning in the form of metal?

INGE KING: I conceive it in the very beginning in the form of metal because I find paper or drawings, it doesn't work for me. It's two-dimensional paper, or paper and drawings, actually they spoil my work concept, because I can't work from that.

JAMES GLEESON: So a maquette becomes the first statement?

INGE KING: Oh absolutely. I find too even if I have an idea before I start, I almost have to have a clear mind. I have to eradicate the idea in my mind in order to work in the actual material. It seems to work backwards because eventually then the result will be what I had in mind first. But if I work with a preconceived idea I start off with, it always becomes, or to me, very stale, the work. That's the way I work. I don't think there are any guidelines for anybody. I think every artist has to find his own way of working and this is the way I approach it.

JAMES GLEESON: After you've done the maquette, you then know whether you want to take it any further, whether it's complete in itself, or the scale needs to be taken to, well, something different in order to complete the statement.

INGE KING: Not immediately. I have to take the time. I have to be able to stand back and consider it. I find the moment I have made a work, in one or two occasions I might have thought of enlarging straight away, but very rarely. When I've done a work I feel I'm too close to know exactly what I want to do with it. It takes me quite a while.

JAMES GLEESON: So that this perspective of time allows you to judge whether it needs to go into another dimension?

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INGE KING: Yes. Also it is very important, you see, time allows me to judge how many times it can stand enlargement. I mean, like this work was enlarged I think six times.

JAMES GLEESON: *Temple gate*?

INGE KING: *Temple gate*, from the maquette. But this is between four and six times it's usual for medium sized sculptures. But some of the very big concepts like *Forward surge* that I did for the Building Committee of our National Gallery here, or *Sails*, the one that you have seen down there, this scale is definitely one in twelve and I wouldn't make it any smaller.

JAMES GLEESON: You're quite definite in your mind that that's the scale?

INGE KING: Absolutely.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, what gives you that sort of feeling of conviction? Is it because you relate it to the human scale, the figure in relationship to it?

INGE KING: No, I relate it more to the outside space. Because these pieces are really conceived to sit in there or to sit in the landscape, and in the Australian landscape which is very important. I think if I had gone on living in Europe, my work would have been very different.

JAMES GLEESON: That's a point we must take up presently, because I think that's an interesting point.

INGE KING: Yes, well I think one of the reasons why I couldn't work for so many years when I was first here was like some people say cultural shock. I don't think this was the only reason. It was just the different surroundings and I couldn't come to terms with it. Once the landscape became almost part of myself, and it had a lot to do with living here, it was very much more rugged when we were first here. The first piece in this area, it's much closer to a representational work, is the *Bush family* that Mildura has got now. But that was really conceived as part of the area here, and ever since the Australian landscape is a challenge to me.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. In Europe you were working from a much more personal sort of—

INGE KING: Yes, but then of course I was carving there.

JAMES GLEESON: Introspective? Yes.

INGE KING: The main reason that I gave up carving—I suppose also when I came to Australia it was really a transition period. The main reason why I gave up carving, I felt the shadow of Henry Moore was so heavy that I was very keen here to work in metal and once I started I realised, well, actually assembling suits

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me much better. I would actually like to use particularly stone again. Perhaps even wood. But I would never carve it, I would assemble it.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: I have quite different ideas about it.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you know, or do you know metal work construction or work in England before you came here?

INGE KING: No, not at all. I learnt it all here, and it came about, about 1959 when Robin Boyd approached me whether I would add something to a fountain they had designed and they wanted a birdbath. It was actually a project they got stuck with. I don't know how they had designed it. It wasn't very suitable. They couldn't have it executed in bronze. In those days there were no commissions around. It may be of interest that it took me 20 years before I had the first commission here. It took about 17 years before I sold—yes, 16 years before I sold the first work in Australia. So I thought, well, this would be of interest and I designed his birds for this particular fountain which was supposed to go into Fitzroy Gardens. Robin Boyd, who was a good friend of ours and he was also a very good public relation man, he said then 'Well look, would you consider constructing the whole work?'. I had never worked in steel. But we had a neighbour, a very good engineer and a first class welder, and he had made my electric welder which Grahame exchanged for a painting. He said, 'Look, you take this job and I will help you with it'. So Grahame and he and I constructed this whole thing here. It's about 23 feet high. I have never called it a sculpture; it's a decoration.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: In my point of view the design is wrong for the space it's in in Fitzroy Gardens where there's beautiful tall trees and it's a tree form, and you don't compete with trees. To me a horizontal piece would be much more successful. It's a design, it's a decoration, but it did teach me welding and construction. There was a fair bit to do because we had to do all the bending on the spot here.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you do any actual study at a technical college or something like that?

INGE KING: No, no, never. No I was only taught by this engineer who I think was very much better than most technicians.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, a professional.

INGE KING: Very professional, yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: Inge, to get back to *Temple gate*, now you're lending us some photographs. One shows that with feet, which it must have until it is set into the permanent ground. But it is really designed for those two shafts to appear to come straight out of the base.

INGE KING: Yes, that is so, yes. I think that's quite essential.

JAMES GLEESON: It's an outdoor piece of course?

INGE KING: Outdoor, indoors, I don't think it matters. If you have indoors, you know, the right space around it, I think it's quite all right. Actually, I saw it almost more as a gallery piece.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you?

INGE KING: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: It would look marvellous in (inaudible).

INGE KING: Yes, you know, if you have a high enough ceiling and white walls I think it's quite exciting indoors. I think in a more intimate space it will have more power than it would, unless it was in a courtyard or so.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, there are courtyards in a sculpture (inaudible).

INGE KING: But I think originally Jim did think of putting it inside.

JAMES GLEESON: Did he?

INGE KING: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Would you suggest that it be sort of sunk into the floor?

INGE KING: Yes, yes, yes, yes. You just build the floor or whatever. What are your floors made of?

JAMES GLEESON: Well, they vary from court to court so you don't get that sort of fatigue.

INGE KING: Yes, yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Some places it's tiles, sometimes carpet.

INGE KING: You can finish up against the uprights, you know. There is a welded ridge and you can finish upright against that one. I think that would probably be the most sensible thing to do.

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JAMES GLEESON: Now, you did mention earlier, before we were on tape, about painting and the paint you used for your works. Now, this one is one of those special paints?

INGE KING: Yes, it's called Imperite.

JAMES GLEESON: How do you spell that?

INGE KING: Imperite. I-M-P-E-R-I-T-E. It's made here in Melbourne. It's a polyurethane. It's not an easy paint to spray on. You need good equipment. I mean, any professional painter can do it. I can give you details. I have a whole chart made up of this. I mean, what kind of nozzle to use, et cetera. Again with a particular spray I find I sometimes spray some myself. I can't do it here. I have spray equipment, but it's not good enough. I do it in the engineering works. But I find if you spray it too close a range you get a very shiny surface. If you dust it from the distance, you get a very much nicer surface. But I mean any professional painter, it's no problem, with some instruction they can do that. Why I chose that paint, it has a very nice quality, as long as it doesn't get too shiny, and it's a very hard paint. It's like an automotive paint, and for certain works it is right.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, it should last indefinitely, but it's good to have on record.

INGE KING: Oh yes, it's only if somebody scratches into it, that's really the only reason. Otherwise, you know, you wouldn't have any trouble with it. I mean, as far as rusting is concerned, I think it would stand. It will outlive me, I would think.

JAMES GLEESON: Even outdoors, if it were put outdoors?

INGE KING: I think it would last a pretty long time. Well, I mean, you think of an ordinary motor car. I mean, unless you are in a car accident. I mean, well, the Holdens, they rust, but it's in the wearing parts, it's not on the panels. I think it should last a long time. It's got a very good undercoat, underneath too a zinc coat.

JAMES GLEESON: A zinc coat?

INGE KING: Yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: It's plate, steel, steel plate?

INGE KING: Yes, steel plate. Well, the discs are aluminium but only for one reason. Particularly since I put it in an exhibition it's very much lighter. Aluminium is only one-third the weight of steel. It was easier to manipulate, first of all. Then if the work had been commissioned and been straight installed, we would have made the whole work in steel. But in this case it's painted black and it's neither

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here nor there. The appearance is like steel but that was the only reason why I used aluminium.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. In any of the other floating ones, did you use all steel, or did you use that aluminium and steel through the whole sequence?

INGE KING: No. In the large work I exhibited in Sydney last year and *Hanging cloud* I used aluminium only—again for reasons of weight. Then as the frame work I used a channel, channel section, and that actually made me use aluminium, not only because they were lighter, but the extrudence of aluminium are absolutely accurate with very sharp edges. In steel you don't get that to the same degree, and that was the reason. But again I painted it black and I wanted to have the appearance of steel.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, Inge, I think that covers *Temple gate* fairly well. The two other ones in the national collection are out on loan to Washington, I understand, and we don't have photographs of them. *Boulders in space*, you do remember?

INGE KING: Yes, I remember that quite well. Actually, that was a little maquette. In those days—it was around 1969—I used my old steel and I ground it bright so that it almost looked like stainless steel. Well, it's not a very sensible thing to do. I have given that up long ago, partly because it does rust, no matter how careful or how much you lacquer it because the oxidisation takes place first of all in the grinding process itself by heat, and with ultra violet light that goes through any lacquer. So I wouldn't be surprised if the one in Washington may have rust spots and so on. I mean, a small maquette, it's neither here nor there. But you couldn't use it for outdoor work. Well, that work that may be of interest because in the early steel works I still use quite a lot of texture, and you see the weld. So you do in that, which worked on a small scale. I tried to do it larger and in those days I hadn't really made the acquaintance or hadn't sort of precision work in my own work. On a large scale it didn't work. I think if I had done it almost as precision pieces it would have been better but I did it on a larger scale and then decided to abandon it.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: I made various experiments. At first I ground it all, which took me weeks, and then I decided no, that was no good, and then I experimented with colour and I didn't like it either. So it just sits in the garden.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, these *Boulders* were part of a series.

INGE KING: Yes. Well, that *Boulder* series started about 1967 and it was partly inspired again by landscape. I lectured in Western Australia at a summer school

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in Albany in Perth and I used to go for long walks along the Albany coast; a very impressive, beautiful, rugged coast.

JAMES GLEESON: It's granite down there, isn't it?

INGE KING: Yes. There are the most fantastic boulders, washed by the sea, and the interesting thing is, I mean with these boulders, the main interest was really the interest of balance. You often saw enormous boulders, granite boulders, sitting on tiny little rocks and I don't know how they were held in place, but they did. Well, when I worked in steel of course they were not boulders of this type.

JAMES GLEESON: They weren't rounded forms?

INGE KING: No, they were not rounded forms. I used cubes really.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

INGE KING: But my main interest was balance. I think actually the highlight of it is a work that is owned by BHP which I called, oh—

JAMES GLEESON: Can you reach?

INGE KING: Consisting of a number of open cubes, and it's called *Balance of steel forms* and that was the last boulder shape I did. But you see there I didn't use texture. It's about seven feet high and I made it here, I constructed it and made it here. But, you know, it has got very clean lines. Again there you see the balance because it looks almost impossible. It has the same ambiguity.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes, exactly. That seems to be a thread that runs through a lot of your work.

INGE KING: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: It's an intriguing thing, I think. I find that very exciting. Inge, the other one that we don't have a photograph, again in Washington, is a wall sculpture, and you can't recall that one at all.

INGE KING: Well, all I remember is it was a small wall sculpture and I do remember that I quite liked it. But I can't remember any details.

JAMES GLEESON: Was it a relief?

INGE KING: Oh yes, it would have been a relief.

JAMES GLEESON: Open textured?

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INGE KING: Oh, it would have been assembled, so it must be open. It wasn't set on a steel sheet. It would have been open. That was in a frame and I really cannot recall it. It wouldn't be more than 10 by 12 inches or something like. It's quite small.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see. The date you feel that that was done was about 1969.

INGE KING: Yes, yes. All this work was done around that series, the final *Boulders*. This was the latest. That was done in 1972. But this group there, that wall piece you see there, that was done in '69, between '69 and '70 even I did all these boulder shapes. Those ones, the highly finished ones.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, while we're in Canberra, let's look at the other major ones of yours in Canberra, the RAAF memorial sculpture which is a very impressive one. That's on the what—what's the avenue that leads up to the—

INGE KING: Anzac Parade.

JAMES GLEESON: Anzac Parade.

INGE KING: Yes. Well, that was a competition and there were six of us, or six people competing. I think I was the only woman. We had certain conditions. I mean, it had to go into Anzac Parade. It was a memorial—this is important—but it was not a memorial for the dead RAAF pilots. It was a memorial to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the RAAF.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: Anzac Parade is a formidable area because it's like a big military avenue, if you like. They have those niches where they eventually want to put more sculptures. I knew there were steps leading up to this area and we got the size of the area. We knew what kind of trees they were going to plant. This was one of the first works where I used a number of units. Partly again I thought that people might move in between the units. Now, there are three vertical units which are stainless steel. They range in height from 25 feet to 12 foot six, and one horizontal unit. The vertical units, to me they were wings, if you like, wing shapes.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

INGE KING: The horizontal unit, which is made out of fabricated bronze, very high quality bronze, Kuzelman * bronze, is the flight symbol, I call it. It has one particular aspect that I felt was important. I mean, they are all placed in relationship to each other. But most people will drive along Anzac Parade; very few people will walk. When you drive along this horizontal unit slowly moves. You start to see a bit of it and then it moves behind another vertical unit.

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JAMES GLEESON: In relation to the wing shapes.

INGE KING: Yes. Therefore you get a form of movement when you go past of the whole thing, because otherwise it's a rather static design. This was the way I figured this work out. Actually, it consists of, I mean, the stainless steel are quarter inch and three-sixteenth plate. This was fabricated. I did all the finishing. I did all the grinding on that thing, because I wanted a certain way of grinding. It was interesting that when it went up in Canberra, I was really taken aback. Because I didn't realise until then that the light in Canberra was entirely different from Melbourne. It's a very stark light.

JAMES GLEESON: Absolutely. Yes, yes.

INGE KING: I was horrified, actually. I have learnt since that when very large works go into position, like with buildings, it takes some time before they settle in. It looked very raw and of course people would look at it, and I don't know what thought, they didn't tell me. But I'm sure they weren't too enthusiastic in the beginning. Then of course the plinths wasn't ready. I contracted for all those details and it took a while before, you know, everything settled in. I would say it's the best part of two years, and I think this applies to all major works. It's the same I feel about this big work I've done for the National Gallery, when that goes in and many people know about it and they're expecting a lot. But I think it will take some time to settle into the landscape.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes, yes.

INGE KING: Until they go in I always have my heart in my mouth.

JAMES GLEESON: Inge, movement is obviously an important element in your concept of sculpture.

INGE KING: Yes, yes, very much so.

JAMES GLEESON: Because in almost everything you've done there is an implication of movement, even if it's a sort of paradoxical one.

INGE KING: Oh yes, yes, that's true. Well, I think that tension and movement are very important that give a piece of sculpture a life, in my opinion. I mean, I work, compared to some of the young ones, perhaps relatively conventionally, I don't know whether conventional is the right word, but I work with conventional materials. I don't dig earth or do that sort of thing. I still am interested in form and in manipulating form and I think their movement is very important.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, now there are three other works in Canberra. Which one will we deal with first, Inge? Which is the most important of those three, do you think?

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INGE KING: Well, they range over quite a considerable period of time.

JAMES GLEESON: They do, they're all different.

INGE KING: The first one, if we start with that one.

JAMES GLEESON: Chronologically.

INGE KING: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Now what is it? *Per Ardua ad Astra—Through Struggle to the Stars*.

INGE KING: Yes. Now what is it called?

JAMES GLEESON: Inge, we've discovered the title is *Observer*.

INGE KING: Yes. Well, this particular work was created in 1964-65. I was concerned then with shapes that includes space. That's why you see this round head shape almost. The original maquette had actually two units, that was this *Observer* and there was a much taller unit also with an enclosed head shape.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: I can show you a photograph. I would have loved to do that *Observer* about 10 feet and the other unit 15 feet. They have the presence of a king and queen and they had something quite ancient about them. In those days, as you can see, I still worked with a lot of texture, not only where I couldn't use the world as a texture, I could put great lumps of steel on for texture. I had the steel. Once I finished it, it was sand blasted and then bronze sprayed mainly for protection, rust protection, and then I painted black over the top and often rubbed it back with a wire brush, which gave it quite a nice patina. I could have only done it on a large scale if I had a commission. Well, then I settled for an intermediate scale and only did *Observer* about five feet high, which then in '65 was exhibited in the big exhibition of Centre Five in Sydney. I don't know whether you still remember that, that Hal Missingham organised originally. Then it was bought by the Art Advisory Board about 1967. The maquette of it, which was quite an impressive maquette, is owned by Gert and Renate Block, *the* architects. I don't know whether you know them. He's now got a chair in Auckland or Wellington in New Zealand as a Professor of Architecture. She's an architect too. They bought the maquette under the condition if I ever wanted to do it on a large scale, I could have it back. I met her not so long ago and she hadn't seen any work of mine for many years and she said, 'If you ever want this work back for a larger edition, it's always yours'. But this is how this work came about. Though it's very different from the work I do now, I still consider it a piece that I like.

JAMES GLEESON: An important piece.

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INGE KING: Yes, it's important to me.

JAMES GLEESON: Whereabouts in Canberra is that?

INGE KING: I think is it called City Square? It is off Northbourne Avenue there. It's a shopping centre and it's not a big city square, you know, where the Tom Bass is. It's a smaller, intimate square. I don't know what the street is called. If you ring Dick Clough in Canberra, he will tell you exactly where it is, you'll find out. But it's very nicely sited. It had quite a history too, when they first bought it. They used to lend these works out to schools, and the headmaster objected to it. I was only told this. There was almost a demonstration by the students who wanted to keep it. But in the end I think the headmaster won or I think NCDC decided it wasn't worthwhile, took it away and installed it in this little square. Very beautifully installed because it's intimate—the square is quite large but that's just an intimate area with planting around, and it sits on a little brick pedestal, it looks very well.

JAMES GLEESON: Is this the one that was damaged?

INGE KING: Yes, that was the one. Well, about a couple of years ago or three years.

JAMES GLEESON: And it's been restored?

INGE KING: Yes, yes, it's back in position.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Well now this one.

INGE KING: Yes, that was 1975.

JAMES GLEESON: Its title is?

INGE KING: *Black sun*.

JAMES GLEESON: *Black sun*.

INGE KING: Well, *Black sun* is sort of the start of all my recent work, or the works that I've done between 1974 and now. The maquette was done in 1974, and this was quite interesting. I was involved in a competition for Western Australia and I did the maquette and I decided, no, I'm not sending it there. Because the maquette was acquisitive I didn't think I would get the commission, and I decided, no, I want to keep it and enlarge it for a different occasion.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

INGE KING: Then in 1975 for the arts festival—it was Canberra and then the Mildura Triennial—I was asked to contribute one large sculpture. Thirty sculptors

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were asked and I was one of them and I decided to send *Black sun*. Tom McCulloch was keen on the work and he gave it a very beautiful space. It was on a rise in Commonwealth Gardens and it had the lake behind it. You can even see that vaguely in the photograph. Canberra, I think, was quite keen to buy it, but Tom McCulloch I think had his eye on it too. It went to Mildura and he organised the exhibition and it then was the first what I call *Black sun* one was sold to Mildura. Then I was asked by the ANU whether I would do an edition of two and McCulloch and the Mildura Gallery felt there was no reason why I shouldn't do another one. That was then installed in Canberra in 1976. It's a very beautiful site, you probably know it.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I do.

INGE KING: It's between the staff house and the Menzies Library. So I'm very happy about this because in Mildura many changes have taken place and I am happy I have this work in Canberra.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Inge, it seems in this photograph at least to be in two different blacks, a matt and a gloss. Is that an effect of light?

INGE KING: No, no. That is only an effect of light. Because it is tilted, you see, there.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, yes, there's an angle.

INGE KING: It's an angle to the piece. With a bit of luck I might find it in here and then you could see this better in another photograph. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, yes, of course.

INGE KING: You see there's an angle. That gives you quite a different—I mean, sometimes one side looks almost grey—gives you a quite a different shadow, you see. Then from certain angles you can't see the open space, and then from the back it looks quite different again, on account of the angle because you have a different effect. This is one of the problems, if you use these very simple shapes to get a variation.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, I think this is astonishing in the range of changes that occur, according to the angle at which you look at it and the effect of the light. Here when you see the light penetrating through the circle, you get a totally different concept of it from here. You've achieved that complexity within simplicity very well in that piece.

INGE KING: Well, we had a friend who used to say simplicity is so expensive, and I would say simplicity is so difficult too. I don't find it easy. The older I get the harder I find it, actually.

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JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

INGE KING: I suppose one gets more critical and I think another reason is that many artists, they come to certain conclusions and work according to a formula. I find this impossible. I feel though the work I hope has my stamp or my personality on it, but unless I move on—I need this challenge—it just doesn't work. I don't want to repeat myself if I can help it.

JAMES GLEESON: In a way that *Black sun's* almost become like a signature tune for Inge King. Everyone associates with it.

INGE KING: Yes. *Black sun*, yes, yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, now the other one, where is that now?

INGE KING: That's in the Woden Valley Hospital. I think it's in one of the geriatric wards. Not in the ward, but in the courtyard. Well, what happened was that in 1975, I think, the Arts Council decided three pieces of sculpture should be placed in the Woden Valley Hospital. The main commission went to Jock Clutterbuck whose work is at the entrance, and then Ian MacKay and myself had the other works. Originally actually I wanted them to have this big steel piece, the cantilever that you saw down there, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

INGE KING: But there were all sorts of difficulties. The administration wasn't particularly easy, but eventually we settled for this particular work which I had not done for them. I did this actually in 1974 for an exhibition. It was exhibited a couple of times. It's a work I like very well. There was one stage I did a lot of work with pipes.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

INGE KING: But these ones, you can't even see it in the photograph as well as that but in reality they really dance, they're quite impressive.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, they seem to levitate, you know, to float in space almost.

INGE KING: Yes. Well, that was the idea. What I used, it's aluminium and I kept the aluminium. It's only the uprights, the verticals, are steel and the base is steel, but it's a piece, it's outside, but I mean if it was abused, if people sat on it, or so it's vulnerable.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

INGE KING: But apparently they haven't had any trouble with it there.

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JAMES GLEESON: Are the pipes reinforced inside?

INGE KING: No, not at all.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: Well, pipes are very strong, they don't need reinforcement. It's more the vulnerability is where the joint takes place, because it can be broken. Actually, you can't weld it in. It's put in with grab screws and it can be, you know, it can be repaired, I mean, it's not a great problem. But it's about nine feet across, and about five foot six high. I think I have the measurements somewhere. I think so. Maybe it's here. five feet by nine feet. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, I think that covers the works that are in Canberra. One of the important works that are finished or in the progress of being completed is—

INGE KING: Shut it off for a moment.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, Inge, the one we're talking about is the big one. The biggest one surely you've yet done.

INGE KING: Oh yes, most certainly.

JAMES GLEESON: For the National Gallery of Victoria.

INGE KING: Yes, well actually it was the Building Committee of the National Gallery that commissioned this work from a model or from a maquette that was exhibited in the Powell Street Gallery in 1973. I had an exhibition there of I think about 12 works which were called Works for Monumental Sculptures. I had it under the condition that I wouldn't sell the maquettes because I felt once I sell the maquettes I can't enlarge them. They were works I had worked on over about a period of three years, and I had worked out all of them could be enlarged and the enlargement varied between three and four times up to 12 times. There were two works which I saw and to me the main works. One was the maquette *Forward surge*; the other one was a maquette called *Sails*. Both of them I want to see enlarged 12 times. Which for the person who is not used to thinking in terms of scale, it's an enormous enlargement because out of 12 inches you have 12 feet. *Forward surge* was commissioned and the original model just had single arches. They were not fabricated. It was a single bit of steel.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

INGE KING: Before I put the exhibition on I had discussed it with my engineers and had gone into each piece, how they could be enlarged and also to get an idea what problems are involved, because that's very important. It's all very well to say a thing, you know, is here and I know some sculptors do this. But I've

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worked for too long in this area, and I like to cover myself if I can. So I knew there had to be a slight alteration to the work and so far that it had to be fabricated and you needed a fairly wider base. Then again it's one of those ambiguous or has ambiguity in the sculpture and they are anti-engineering in their balance. So enlarging it to such a scale I needed the help of a structural engineer. Again I had to find somebody who was sympathetic with the sculpture, because some structural engineers would just say, 'Oh well, you need a base that's 10 feet wide' and that's all. That of course ruins the whole thing. He was a young man. I knew the man he worked under and I knew that I would get a first class job. He did certainly a very good job. Then I had engineering drawings done and I made the second model which you see here in those photographs.

JAMES GLEESON: What scale is that?

INGE KING: Again one in 12.

JAMES GLEESON: One in 12.

INGE KING: It was the same scale.

JAMES GLEESON: It's the same scale.

INGE KING: Then the drawings, the engineering drawings, they were also one in 12, from which the work was built. Then we started building the sculpture. Now, the whole problem was it's built like the hull of a ship. There's an interior structure which had to be all precision engineering because all the curves had to be absolutely exact. The reinforcements had to be right and then it's clad with quarter inch steel sheet, which was also a major job, even to attach them to it. Then the edges had to be ground. This was very important because the edges are of great importance, that they were absolutely accurate and the workmanship was—

JAMES GLEESON: Clean and precise.

INGE KING: Yes, yes. Workmanship was good. Well, the people who did it, actually they make pressure vessels for steam engines and also for atomic energy and they work a lot also with stainless steel.

JAMES GLEESON: What's the name of that?

INGE KING: Well, the people who fabricated it they were called Thermal Engineering, but the engineer behind it was a man called Fasham. I want to mention him because if I have any complicated jobs he is the top man. Actually, he is helping tremendous with his rolling geared for your Gallery.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah yes, yes, in Canberra.

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INGE KING: Yes. They work mainly in aluminium. But he's not only more sensitive, he loves problems and he's quite a wizard.

JAMES GLEESON: A rare man.

INGE KING: Yes, he's a rare man. I think he should really get the mention because he deserves it. In conjunction with him and the computations we worked out the details. I made the second model, and then it went eventually into production.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

INGE KING: It was finished end of 1976.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, it's finished already?

INGE KING: Oh yes, yes. It's lying in storage. Well, the Building Committee was keen. Inflation was just taking off. It was 1974 when they commissioned me with it. The preparations for me took about 18 months for it, and they wanted it finished. They knew that the arts centre or the area wouldn't be finished and so they are storing it, or it's stored with the Board of Works. At the moment it's only got an undercoat of paint on it. The final paint will go on—

JAMES GLEESON: It will be black?

INGE KING: Black, yes, on site. It was quite a task and I don't think many sculptors—it's not only the scale. It was the complexity of making the work that was quite a challenge.

JAMES GLEESON: It's four units, isn't it?

INGE KING: There are four units and I do visualise people to walk through them, and to get quite different with your visual experiences because the way these units overlap, the way they are placed you get different vistas, they open out. There are areas, because they have these hips, they open out in a certain way, and I think that should be quite exciting. Also you cannot enter the concert hall, but you can walk through these units and go into the concert hall.

JAMES GLEESON: It is to be placed near the entrance?

INGE KING: Yes, near the concert hall on a lawn, and I think they will have blue stone paving around it.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, and it will rise straight out of the paving, not on a base?

INGE KING: Oh no, no, no, no base. No, no. It rises straight out of the paving. The measurements are each unit is 24 feet wide and they range in height, the

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tallest one is 17 feet, then one is 13 foot six, 10 foot six, and 15 feet. They are all fairly large. They'd be fairly difficult to scale too as far as vandals are concerned.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

INGE KING: They will have a commercial paint, Dulux, on it—mainly for maintenance because you can always re-spray black and it's cheap and it's straightforward, which is important in a public sculpture of this type.

JAMES GLEESON: Inge, of all your works this one seems to have the most sense of movement, in that it's intensely full of great implication of movement. As one looks at each detail or each element, it seems to be a—that's an exciting photograph. Yes.

INGE KING: Well, again I want them to fly or to dance almost. I hope they will do that once they are on site because once works are installed there are certainly different implications. But what is quite interesting in this site, there is rise from the street level. I mean, the lawn rises to go to the back part of the building. It will be in between so that they will be slightly elevated, which I think should be quite good.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, it is certainly a master of architecture. Tell me about the other one. I saw a maquette in your studio for *Sails*. That seems to me also to be on a level with this one at least. It's the most beautiful maquette.

INGE KING: Yes, well, these were the two main works I had in this exhibition, and probably the most ambitious and the ones, well, I was most attached to. The others were sculptures I think of interest, but they were never quite like those two. Actually, the curves or sails, some people say that it reminds them of the Sydney Opera House, and they are probably right. I hadn't thought of it, but it has this spread about it. What happened, somebody had given me once a cone shaped piece of metal. It was very large and it was sitting in my studio for a long period and I got a bit fed up with it, and I started to cut that cone up and even then it sat in the studio. All of a sudden I started cutting those shapes out, and then relating them. It was actually the first of this group. *Forward surge* was a bit later. I worked on this for a long time—I think six or eight months. I had the shapes cut out and I ground them again and I took bits off and then before I got the relationship right it took me a long while. Actually, at that stage I started to work differently from the way I used to work. I only worked when I felt I was absolutely in touch with it. I would let them rather sit for a month until I could do the right thing. I wouldn't do anything in between, and I've been working like this ever since. One is not always quite as complete but in this piece, as well as in *Forward surge*, every aspect of it had to be—I mean, I had to be really in touch with the work before I touched it. This is why I took so long, I mean, the time I might sit in my studio for hours and do nothing but, you know, either look and so on, or do something else even. Because with sculpture you do a fair bit of

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physical work that you can do while you can't, you know, do the creative thinking. But this is how those two works really evolved.

JAMES GLEESON: *Wave* is again, the maquette, one in 12?

INGE KING: Yes, that's again one in 12 because I see this really as very large, as a monumental sculpture, and again I want people involved. I want them to walk through it. It's like walking through a gorge. Well, these pieces are almost environmental sculptures. Actually, in way, it always reminds me a bit of the gorge of Ben Nevis in Scotland, which I was rather fond of. It may have changed a lot now because I haven't been there since the middle of the war. Contrary to *Forward surge*, some of the interior areas or the walk through areas would be quite bleak because of these great big shapes.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, canyon like forms.

INGE KING: Yes, almost, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Inge, this would involve fabrication too? You would never get steel thick enough.

INGE KING: Well, no, it's not to get the steel thick enough because I don't think it's necessary for this piece to be so thick. You could do it probably in three quarter inch. You could use inch steel. Calder has done that too. These would be problems I would have to discuss with engineers. It's a matter how to install it. What is the most feasible way of doing it? Really I haven't had the chance to go into this particular one. It wouldn't be as complex to build as *Forward surge* because the curves move horizontally and not vertically, not forward, you see, in that sense. Though there are a couple of things that are of balance but, I mean, technically you can rectify that with a base plate. I mean, that would be set into the ground. That wouldn't be any problem. But the final fabrication, I wouldn't quite know. No, I wouldn't mind at all to do that in plate steel. I would think it would look most exciting. But it's a matter whether it can be done. I would almost prefer it because there's no reason for them to look—

JAMES GLEESON: Really thick.

INGE KING: No, they would never look very thick. I wouldn't want to go beyond three inches really. But it just depends how they could build it and again, in a case like this, you have to work with the structural engineer and take computations out. But I have talked to engineers and they don't seem to think it's a great problem. Certainly not like this one where they scratched their heads, with *Forward surge* but not with *Sails*. I think it's a bit more straightforward.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, it's certainly a most impressive concept, I think, a very beautiful one. Inge, is that the last phase up till now, or have you moved into

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some new area? I notice you were working in drawings, if you can call them that. The first drawings you've done for a long time?

INGE KING: Yes. No. I did do drawings a long time ago, in England still. Why I abandoned drawings, it really limited me or inhibited me in my sculpture and this is why I stopped drawing, and stopped drawing for so long. Now, with those last drawings I did, while I might sometimes use photographs of my sculptures in conjunction with it, but they are not drawings for sculpture. I mean, I know for instance Klippel does so many drawings for his sculptures, and I find for me this is quite impossible.

JAMES GLEESON: A different approach altogether?

INGE KING: Yes, I must have an entirely different approach and that was one of the reasons why I started to use a spray gun. Because I might sometimes do definite drawings, but I think again they may be different. I have some ideas of using pen and ink perhaps. I did actually quite a few where I used collage, which I like very much. That, of course, is related to my sculpture too because it's fabricated or it's assembled, if you like. But sometimes I use newspaper. Not in the ones you saw, but I have some others ones, and some of them I used a bit of colour. But then I decided, no, I'd like to stick to the black and white. In a way it's related to my work, though it's an entirely different concept, but there's a light and shadow and I seem to be happier with it.

JAMES GLEESON: Inge, the recent sculptures that I saw of yours, the smaller pieces, still seem to be involved with an environmental concept, a defined space in which forms float, or seem to float.

INGE KING: Well, it started off with *Temple gate* where I had the first floating form, and then I got more and more interested in suspended shapes. Over the last 18 months or two years I set some of those shapes into frames and there really you could almost call them space constructions, because I really worked with space there. The open space, some of them, well, one I enlarged. That was *Hanging cloud* which was in my Sydney exhibition last year. Another one I'd quite like to enlarge is a work that is almost like a framework, into which people could walk. I wouldn't take it beyond eight feet, but I do visualise that. But some of them I'm quite happy that they remain small.

JAMES GLEESON: Remain small. Well, Inge, that seems to cover that ground. Now, what we need is sort of biographical background. When and where were you born, exact date?

INGE KING: Twenty-six November, 1918, in Berlin.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

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INGE KING: Well, I grew up in Berlin. I went to school there. I spent my childhood there, which was not at all artistic in that sense. I did draw since I was quite young. My mother was actually quite a creative woman. Not a very easy person. I was the youngest of a larger family, by far the youngest. My sisters were adults when I was a small child and I think that was quite important. Do you want any personal details, which I don't often give?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes, all that. We need a biography.

INGE KING: Well, I grew up in a very European middle class surrounding with nanny. I mean, I didn't see that much of my parents because my early childhood from that point of view was very sheltered probably. I was in many ways fairly extrovert. I loved sport. I loved particularly gymnastics and I was quite good at them. I often say I grew up in the Berlin zoo because I used to play there. Not only that, I drew the animals as well. You see, in European cities children are taken for walks, which is very different, and also very different from England. But in this park or in this area, I mean, we had a great deal of freedom. We played games and we had a lot of fun. Then by the time I was about 12, 13, life wasn't very easy. My parents were old, my father had Parkinsons. He was exceedingly sick and there were also many financial difficulties. So I think from that stage onwards I saw things that many young people nowadays probably wouldn't experience. Well, I went to a very good school, which helped me. I had quite a good background from that point of view. Really, if I had had my choice, I would have liked to do medicine. Well, I was 14 when my father died. I mean, that was out of question because of course I couldn't have done, apart from the upheavals that took place and after '33—I mean under Hitler.

JAMES GLEESON: Of course, yes.

INGE KING: But then at the age of 18, just after I finished school, I left home. Not in any antagonism, but because I couldn't do what I wanted to. I joined a group of young people who lived together, very much as they have communes now. It wouldn't have been very usual here. I owe them a lot from the point of view I worked there in the house. I did a number of things. I then had in mind I wanted to be an artist, really only as a second choice. I felt that this was one study—I was quite good at this at school—though I would have preferred a university career by a long shot at the time. But I felt that was the only other way that I could go on studying the way I wanted to and felt I could develop the way I want to. This commune, if you like, gave me or taught me some independence, which was invaluable. Not independence. I wasn't frightened. From that point of view I think from my early childhood I was very lucky. I had a very good background. I would have gone anywhere. But they taught me something—to survive without money. I had to do this, because when I started studying I really didn't have any money whatsoever. I got a room from somebody and I did housework from six till ten in the morning and I found a teacher who taught me. And I helped him a bit.

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JAMES GLEESON: Was it a sculptor?

INGE KING: Yes, sculptor, yes. He was a wood carver. The artist who influenced me most at that stage—you see, I grew up still in the era of German expressionism—which was of course from '35 onwards—that was almost abandoned and I didn't start studying until '36, or '37 nearly. This man, he was a woodcarver and I thought it was necessary to learn woodcarving. I was very vague about this. Actually, it was quite interesting. Before I started I remember one day I was also very keen on the work of Kathe Kollwitz and the sculptor who was my idol was Ernst Barlach, the woodcarver. For instance, the exhibition we had out here not so very long ago, that Peter Stuyvesant brought out, really didn't give much impression of his work because most of the work was in bronze. There were other maquettes for those woodcarvings, I knew them well. Or some of the bronzes were taken from the woodcarvings and it's a very different impression. Well, of course, Barlach was a mystic, and this is very Germanic. I mean, it was very near to me because I grew up with this background. From this point of view, actually, England was a considerable shock, but I come to this afterwards. However, I decided before I even did sculpture, I did quite a bit of drawing and Kathe Kollwitz who lived in Berlin, I rang her up and I asked her whether I could come and see her and she said yes. I must say it was a bit daring in a way. I spent quite a memorable afternoon with this woman. She was an exceptional woman.

JAMES GLEESON: How old was she then?

INGE KING: Oh, in her mid sixties. The two Kollwitz's were very hard hit by the Nazi movement, because both had signed the International Socialist Declaration very much earlier. Her husband was a doctor and worked mainly as social practice. I mean, not social in the sense of socialise but they lived in an area of Berlin, a very working class area. It was interesting. She still had gaslight. I mean, they could have afforded to put electric light in but it was never changed. He wasn't allowed to work any more, and she wasn't allowed to exhibit. She had been president of the academy in Berlin and they dismissed her straight away in '33. She was still allowed to work at home. She was still allowed to hold a pencil in her hand, which was more than some artists were allowed to do. She was basically, I would say, a tragic character. Not tragic that she was depressed, but tragic in concept and of course she was what you would here call a social realist. But her work moved in this way. She was a daughter of a clergyman, of a free Lutheran pastor really, who became a bricklayer because he didn't like the doctrines of the church. A very independent woman, but her basic concept was—I mean, the whole German Expressionism is violent and tragic, the two main characteristics. Anyway, I had a long talk to her and she said to me, 'Don't do it if you can help it. It is so difficult'. I've remembered it until now. I still remember the way she sat there, remember her very beautiful hands. She looked exactly like in her self-portrait. She was a small person, small woman, but she had a way of looking, not down on you but she looked down in observance—a very truly

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aristocratic face and appearance. Anyway, I mean, I was 18 and difficulties. I mean, I started and I haven't regretted it. I agree with her it's difficult.

JAMES GLEESON: We all accept that.

INGE KING: Anyway, well, I worked for a short time with a teacher and then I was still accepted at the Berlin Academy. I mean, nowadays you can have a very different approach, but I felt I wanted to find out, I wanted to learn my craft, and I wanted to learn. I worked quite academically. I think from that point of view, actually in this whole Nazi Germany, the influence was quite dismal really, because you couldn't see progressive or really contemporary work any more and when you are young, this eventually has an influence on you. You can't help that. Well, actually, to make a living with the woodcarving teacher at the academy I used to do quite a bit of commercial work for him. Then I worked in the studios. I mainly did modelling. Then in '39, I mean, things got very difficult. I don't like to talk about these times, but I got to England and I worked there for a while in various jobs and in 1940 I got the offer, I got a scholarship to go to the Royal Academy. It had helped me that I was at in Berlin at the academy because I didn't take any work I had done—I couldn't take anything with me—but I had some drawings, and they were interested. So I started at the Royal Academy, which I didn't like. It was a very claustrophobic atmosphere. Not that I had so many free ideas, but somehow I didn't care very much for it. But also then war started—or it had already started in 1940—and they closed down after a couple of terms, which I wasn't altogether sorry for. They said any time when they reopen again I could come back. They were always very nice and very helpful to me. Then I floated around for a while. I got a job. I designed a doll and I made that doll and then I taught many of the young émigré girls in a hostel how to do this doll. It was a complete workshop that I established. It was quite interesting. Then they eventually got a woman who was a supervisor of this, and a woman who did nothing but the clothes for the dolls, and it became quite an industry. I left after a while.

JAMES GLEESON: Was this in London?

INGE KING: That was in London. In 1940, end of 1940, I had also been going to the Central School for night classes, just drawing, where I met actually Hal Missingham, my first encounter. I remember looking at this man, who was most of the time in the horizontal. I had thought this man comes from Australia, all this distance. I mean, I always marvelled at him because to me this was the other end of the world. The Central School, they couldn't keep open because the bombing became very bad. I was bombed out a couple of times and they moved to Northampton. I had the choice to move with them—which I did, to find out that they had no sculpture facilities there, so I only stayed one term. But through one teacher I met their painter called Johnson, I think. He was quite a well-known painter. He came from Edinburgh and he said, 'Look, if I were you, I would apply to Edinburgh. It's a very good school and they also have a very good scholarship

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system', because they had a Carnegie grant, an enormous one. I wrote to Edinburgh and they were willing to accept me. But I wasn't allowed to reside there because in those days every foreigner had to leave Edinburgh, because it was the Firth of Forth. There were certain areas in Britain that they called protected areas. They were actually very noble. They went to the police themselves, and they said, 'No, we can't do anything about it. Not a single foreigner, no matter what the nationality is, can stay in Edinburgh'. Then they wrote to me and said, 'Well, do apply to Glasgow. You can't get quite the same conditions' because Glasgow financially wasn't very well off. But I got accepted there and then I got a small grant from the International Student Committee in London. I did my Diploma at Glasgow and then I got a scholarship and I did what they call a post diploma, a 5th year. I was very happy in Glasgow. It was actually the only time I could just work the way I wanted to and I worked very hard. Many years later, about 10 years ago, Grahame and I visited my old teacher, Benno Schotz—I doubt he is still alive—who was very helpful. But his remark to Grahame was, 'She was a very demanding student', because I worked 12 hours a day. Well, I suppose I had so many interruptions before I had had this, and all of a sudden I had the opportunity and everything was there. What we did, we did fire watching so we could stay back. We slept in the school quite often. But once I left art school I found it very difficult.

JAMES GLEESON: What year was that?

INGE KING: Nineteen forty-five.

JAMES GLEESON: Forty-five.

INGE KING: Well, first of all, I had to teach because I mean it was still part of the war. It was the end of '44, '44-'45. I didn't want to teach in a secondary school. Eventually, through a friend, I started teaching in wartime nurseries, what they call kindergartens, but that suited me in a way quite well. It was quite a creative job. I worked with children half the day, and the other half day we fabricated toys in a workshop, because they were not available. That pleased me better than being stuck in a school and working for exams and that sort of thing. I couldn't work. Teaching is very demanding and for two years—

JAMES GLEESON: Was this in London?

INGE KING: No, that was still in Glasgow. Yes. I didn't leave Glasgow till '47, then I moved to London.

JAMES GLEESON: That's when I met you first; 1947, I think, at the Abbey.

INGE KING: I moved to London and then, I mean, I had quite a number of problems, or prior to this. I can't remember how I met Oliffe. It was some friend

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who knew him, and I don't know where he went. I came to the Abbey. Were you there already? We came about the same time, I think.

JAMES GLEESON: The beginning of 1947 I arrived.

INGE KING: Oh yes, that would be earlier because I didn't get there till mid 1947. You would have been there.

JAMES GLEESON: Perhaps a few weeks earlier.

INGE KING: Yes, I still remember you doing your own washing, Jim.

JAMES GLEESON: Probably because no one else would do it.

INGE KING: Quite. I'm sure you still remember Sister Agnes and Sister Deane.

JAMES GLEESON: It was quite an extraordinary place.

INGE KING: Yes, it was extraordinary.

JAMES GLEESON: Grahame was there too.

INGE KING: Yes. No, he came a bit later.

JAMES GLEESON: A little later.

GRAHAME: September, late '47.

INGE KING: Actually, then I made an arbitrary decision to move away from representational work.

JAMES GLEESON: Up to that time it had all been representational?

INGE KING: More or less. It became very much freer then, like these musicians that are out there. You may still remember them, this lot were related to Zadkine or to Cubism, if you like. Well, I worked this out almost rationally because I felt: how far could I go in one direction? I felt the non-representational work offered something, quite a newer venue. Then I started direct carving, which I hadn't really done before. I had done quite a bit of carving.

JAMES GLEESON: Wood or stone?

INGE KING: Both. I did both. Then, well, Klippel arrived and, you know, this was quite a community.

JAMES GLEESON: It was lively atmosphere for a while.

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INGE KING: Yes, yes, yes. You may also remember that Grahame—and who was there?—Doug and Max Newton, we used to call them the bush boys. Do you remember that?

JAMES GLEESON: They were living out in what was the bush. The orchard was just so overgrown it was like the bush.

INGE KING: Yes. I lived quite a bit off the land there too. I used to bottle all his cherries and his apples and all sorts of things. Well, I was in the Abbey till '49 and then I got a very small grant. I had my first one man show in early '49 in the London Gallery, where you had yours with Ord Misson.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes. That was a few months after that.

INGE KING: Yes, a few months after you. Then I went, I lived for six months in France. I have a great love for France. My background was partly French. My mother was of French origin. I mean, this was her grandparents who were French, but we spoke quite a bit of French at home. Though my French wasn't too good then, but you get used to it again. I loved Paris, you know. I think you might have found that there wasn't a great deal of stimulus in Paris really at that time.

JAMES GLEESON: Not in that period.

INGE KING: But six months later, end of '49, I went to America, to New York. That was an incredible experience because, well, I really made a point of meeting people. I took some of my carvings with me and I exhibited them there in what is now the Grace Borgenicht Gallery—they were then the Laurel Gallery. It was mainly through the sculptor Herbert Ferber I met, and through him I met Rothko and Barnett Newman too. I first saw the first Jackson Pollock show at Betty Parsons.

JAMES GLEESON: What year was that?

INGE KING: Nineteen forty-nine, end of '49.

JAMES GLEESON: Forty-nine.

INGE KING: End of '49. Could have been early '50, I can't recall. I was there for 7 months between August '49 and April '50. It was one of the decisive experiences and New York was sparkling then.

JAMES GLEESON: Completely different to Paris.

INGE KING: Oh look, I found it absolutely, oh, mind boggling.

JAMES GLEESON: Alive.

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INGE KING: Alive. I would say even in my present sculpture, many of the painters of the sixties, the American ones, they're the ones that inspire me. It's their vitality.

JAMES GLEESON: Not the sculptors of the period?

INGE KING: Not so much the sculptors. I find that more inhibiting. I mean, some of my earlier work, people have related it to Smith perhaps when I worked with those cubes and so on. That could easily be so. But I found the painters are more stimulating to me. It's vitality. It's not that I want to paint or use their paintings and sculpture but it's just the spirit of them. In the seventies I have found very little that was so stimulating from there. But I don't know, we don't see that much here but what I have seen. But people like Oldenburg or Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers and all these people, I mean, they work in an entirely different vein. Segal. But it's just the vitality that I find so important and stimulating. Then also in 1949-50 New York, you know, after war torn Europe, it was sparkling, it was clean, it was very safe still. You could go into Harlem. Not at night time, but in the day time, even as a woman, without any difficulty. Actually, also I exhibited some sculptures in the Klee Club and a woman who was very active there, a person, was Louise Nevelson. Her work then was very different. She carved and it was more in the Moore tradition but more surreal.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: I met her once but, I mean, I didn't know her. But she was very interesting because she was then still largely involved with dancing. You see, she belonged to the Martha Graham group.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, did she?

INGE KING: Yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I didn't know that.

INGE KING: For her, body movement and art is all very inter-related. Another person who used to work and whose work I didn't like at all at the time—it was very commercial really, you saw it everywhere—was Noguchi. I lived in Greenwich Village and Noguchi had lamp stands and all sorts of things in every shop. I still think again Noguchi's greatest achievements are, well, his work with space, his gardens. I mean some of his sculptures I like exceedingly well. Actually, we went to one of his studios in Japan, in Shikoku, and he works with a stonemason there and it's an absolutely ideal set up. I was green with envy. I mean Noguchi is now an old man and he makes tiny little maquettes just in clay and this man just enlarges them in stone. But this is a very sensitive man, the stone mason, and I could work with him. I see quite different possibilities. It's very

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well arranged because it's right on the Pacific and he works for Noguchi and they work and ship straight across to America.

I mean that was the most interesting time and when I came back to The Abbey I had every intention to go back to America. I had made all sorts of inquiries. Actually, yes, another important thing happened while I was in the States because I wanted to stay, I wanted to find out what possibilities there were and I had applied for a scholarship and I needed some recommendations. Somebody said to me, 'Well look, go and see Walter Gropius. You might find him very helpful'. He gave me an introduction. I have a sister who lives in New England, not far away, so I went to Cambridge to see Gropius and, you know, often when you see people like this I had not many illusions, I had a few photographs with me. I mean, they are busy, and I really didn't want to impinge on his time. But it was one of the very important experiences of my life. I spent about two or three hours in his office and I think he was interested in my work. Actually, it was due to him that I got the offer of a scholarship at the Institute of Design in Chicago, but I'll come back to that later. But he talked to me quite a lot and about himself too. Because he said, 'Look, I have ideal conditions here but basically I am a European and if I had been able to remain in England and work there, I would have preferred that even under quite stringent conditions. I would have preferred that'. After that he went back to Europe a great deal, until his death. But he hadn't been back to Europe at this stage. It might have still been late '49. We had a long talk and it was very interesting to see that this man, though he was really revered, he had ideal working conditions, he could build, but felt very much like an émigré. Well, of course, these people, more so even than myself. I mean, for me England was a shock but I was 20 when I got there. But these people were mature people and of course it was very much harder. So it was an experience I've never forgotten, that afternoon in his office.

I went to the Institute of Design in Chicago and had a look at it and I would have gone there had I gone to America only because I felt it might open certain doors for me. I didn't want to see another art school. I didn't like the atmosphere. I didn't like the place but I thought I could put up with it for a few months if necessary. However, when we came back or soon afterwards, Grahame and I got married, and Grahame might have come to America for some time. I was very keen to go, but he couldn't get a visa as an Australian then. You could get visiting visas, but not for any length of time. I could have emigrated on a German quota which was very large, but the Australian quota is exceedingly small. It's now different. You can, you know, go if you want to work there as an artist, also you get permission to stay. But you couldn't do that at that time. So, actually, I had had Europe by that time. Grahame was very keen to come here, so we came to Australia.

JAMES GLEESON: What year was that?

INGE KING: Fifty-one.

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JAMES GLEESON: Fifty-one.

INGE KING: February '51.

JAMES GLEESON: You said it took you a long time to adjust.

INGE KING: Yes, it did. I tell you one thing. I made up my mind I will not look back. You see, I had emigrated once, and the first emigration is the hardest to adjust to. I think people do not realise that. It was quite interesting when I was listening to Alan, Alan's lecture. It was very stimulating.

JAMES GLEESON: This is Alan Davey, just sitting across from us.

INGE KING: Yes. But no matter what difficulties he may have had, these experiences, unless you have experienced it, and fundamentally it does something to your whole system. From that point of view, I mean, first of all I wasn't willing to look back. I decided we had made a decision to come here, and also we wanted a family and we had to settle somewhere and as a sculptor, in particular, and I think as an artist you have to settle. You can't just wander around all your life. Well, some people might but as a sculptor in my position, one certainly can't. Though I couldn't work I never felt resentful. I found the atmosphere in many ways stifling. Well, we built this house and we did many other things. I started doing silver jewellery here. I had done a little bit at college. I had to pick up on a number of techniques. I worked at Melbourne Tech for a while. I mainly did it to earn some money and I knew I could design and I designed it from a point of view of a sculptor. We needed the money too and I could sell anything I made, so it wasn't very hard. Then I did two works like this, *The Head of Christ* and the other one that's called *The Saint* which was done actually for a commission in nine years and I didn't start working until about 1960.

JAMES GLEESON: Then it was in steel.

INGE KING: That was in steel.

JAMES GLEESON: The first time you'd worked in steel?

INGE KING: Yes, that was the first time. It was Robin Boyd who started me off, but I did want to work in metal. I got very interested in it.

JAMES GLEESON: You've done no direct carving since?

INGE KING: No, none whatsoever. I don't think I'd ever carve directly. If I used stone or wood, which I'd like to do, but I would assemble it. I might use a chisel here and there but I'd like to use it in conjunction with steel brackets. I have certain ideas. Whether I will ever see them through, I don't know. I am more interested even in stone, and Australian stone again fascinates me. You see the majority of good stones here are basalt or granites. Now, you have to work with

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stonemasons who have the right equipment. It's not something that you can just chip away. I mean, you could grind it away like Danillo Vassilief did very cleverly. But I don't want to work at that scale. I want to work in conjunction with steel, so I don't know yet whether this will ever be possible, but I am just marking my time on that.

JAMES GLEESON: When you first came here, any artists that you met up with like Vassilief—did you meet Vassilief in Melbourne?

INGE KING: Oh yes, yes. Vassilief didn't live far from us. I met Vassilief fairly early in the piece. But actually in some ways my thinking—he was much freer—at this stage was probably much more rigid. I appreciated his work but I didn't get quite so much out of him. I mean, he was in and out, sometimes you saw him, sometimes you didn't. He was quite a character. No, I met other artists, other sculptors. There were a group of us. There was Norma Redpath, there was Cliff Last.

JAMES GLEESON: Jomantas, was he there?

INGE KING: I'm just wondering whether he was in our first group—Redpath, Last, King. Yes, I think it was Jomantas who was the fourth. We exhibited in 1953. I exhibited work I had in England, done in England in the University Gallery in the School of Architecture. He had one exhibition. No, Julius Kane. Jomantas was not there. It was Julius Kane, Clifford Last, Norma Redpath and myself, and we called ourselves the group of four. Then two years later we exhibited again and we called ourselves the group of four plus Gunterstein. He was a man who has never done sculpture again.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: Then eventually, not till '59, when I think Norma Redpath and I went to see Eric Westbrook and he gave us a survey show and that was a group of six. There was Jomantas and Zikaras were included. The critics absolutely panned us. They didn't like the idea that sculptors should have an exhibition and it wasn't very good. Well, I even remember the first exhibition Grahame and I had together in 1951 here in Melbourne at the Peter Bray Gallery. As I mentioned before to you, I had 10 carvings that I brought from England and very few people saw them. They only saw little glass case for silver jewellery and many asked me many years later, you know, 'I didn't know you're doing sculpture now'. People weren't very aware of sculpture then. But there was the four of us and particularly Julius Kane, as he was called later on, he was quite a driving force. He was probably one of the most important sculptors Australia had at the time. Perhaps the only true Expressionist we have ever produced. Of course, he didn't get much recognition at the local sculptor's society, who consisted mainly of shrine sculptors, as I call them. He was quite dynamic. He had a lot of fights with them. I didn't find it was worthwhile fighting with them. I preferred to keep my mouth

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closed. But he left eventually and, well, by 1961 Julius Kane had been abroad. Then he had stayed with Lyndon Dadswell in Sydney for a week or so and he was initiated, our group of Centre Five.

I don't know whether you know much about Centre Five, but we were a group of sculptors. There were six of us at the time, or seven. We called ourselves Centre Five because we had a five point program, mainly to improve conditions for sculptors in Victoria. In New South Wales it was very much better. There were people like Dadswell and Margel Hinder and even Tom Bass who was flourishing at that stage. But here in Melbourne there was absolutely nothing. Our aim was really to promote sculpture, not for ourselves, but so that other sculptors, also some of the younger ones, could benefit and we gave lectures in the Architectural School. I did that mainly and I organised also with the Architecture School studio lectures. The architecture students in second year would come to our studios, to everybody's studio of Centre Five. We were seven then. That was Norma Redpath, Lenton Parr, Clifford Last, Zikaras, Jomantas.

JAMES GLEESON: Julius Kane.

INGE KING: Julius Kane and myself. They came just to see how sculptors worked. It was interesting. I did one group of lectures with Melbourne University architecture students and the other one in the Melbourne Institute of Technology, what is now the RMIT. The RMIT students were much more interesting because they worked in workshops too. They were practical.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

INGE KING: So, you know, the architecture students, the others from the university, they just came and they had no interest in either the technical or even in the personal involvement either. Still it was quite productive and we showed slides and we saw architects. I don't know how much effect it had. As a group we stayed together until about three years ago. We had various exhibitions together, firstly in Newcastle, then the one in '65 in Sydney. We had two exhibitions in Sydney, actually. The Hungry Horse the year before that you might remember. Because I did most of the letter writing and so I organised the exhibition. Well, the other members didn't put much actual work in, but I think you make up your mind if you take something like this on. I didn't expect that. On the other hand, the strength of the group was whenever we decided to have an exhibition, or it was arranged, the work was absolutely on time. Everybody was absolutely reliable. We never interfered with each other but we met once a month and you sort of heard what you know—

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

INGE KING: We had a contact, and I think this was very good. Then various people, Norma Redpath, opted out when she went to Italy of course, and Julius

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Kane, he died very soon afterwards which was very tragic and a great loss. So it changed but we stayed together. Then we decided, well, a group like this wasn't needed any more. We still see each other now and then and I work with Jomantas at RMIT and I see various people. But circumstances change.

JAMES GLEESON: You teach now at RMIT?

INGE KING: Yes, I'm there one day a week which I enjoy. For the first time. I taught nearly full time in a teacher's college for fifteen years, because we needed the money and I couldn't expect Grahame to earn the money for my expensive tastes too. So with a family I had to be fairly well organised.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, Inge, I think that covers it very well indeed.

INGE KING: Well, I think I've talked too much.

JAMES GLEESON: That was excellent. Thank you very much indeed.

INGE KING: Thank you for your patience.