Artists, having an affinity for one another, tend to gather in colonies where they can love and bate each other most conveniently. The location of the colony, as on Eastern Long Island, is often as paradoxical as its component parts. Here, a group of avant-garde painters has chosen to work and live in the very core of conservative territory—the towns of East Hampton, Southampton, and their environs. In these socially formidable summer resorts artists rent, buy and build houses where they can work. They are aware of cashmere-sweatered golfers putting nearby, but they ignore them. The golfers, in turn, sense that something suspicious is being done with paint right down the road, and putt on. It is an uneasy juxtaposition, with very little contact and hardly anything in common—it might almost be a mutual reaffirmation society based on contrast. One can't help wondering why the painters come here where even the rents give pause. Perhaps they return each summer because Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell came twelve years ago. Or maybe it is just that Eastern Long Island is remarkably beautiful.

The country is open—potato fields and pastures, lengths of dune and ocean, wastes of scrub oak. the automobile has achieved a local eminence, but not simply as a means of transportation. Here it is judged by more esthetic standards. The artists, like the chauffeured, operate tall vehicles bizarre as Casper Milktoast’s, or roar about in slinky European racing models. In some cases the artist has so failed to consider the actual mobility of his car that, charming though it is, it breaks down continually. There is no real cause for alarm, however, because any other artist is immediately available for consultation. Or almost any golfer, for that matter. But community spirit ends with the closing of the hood. Most of the painters have settled in Springs or Three Mile Harbor, small communities outside East Hampton—on the wrong side of the tracks, some might say. An early farm house, leaning in its silvery frame, is carpetless inside and airy as a gallery. In its bare, vaguely furnished interior bang a few canvases which should he notice the name on the mailbox outside, would make a passing collector’s heart pound. The barn behind the house, stripped to make a studio, is skylighted. Nearby zinnias and dahlias thrive beside a gourmet’s plot of vegetables and herbs. The parked tricycle, the fishing rods, the
fearsome dog, the cats—all the accoutrements of home in the old sense of home—are here, and perhaps a baseball diamond in the field beyond. This artist has settled down. He loves his house and uses his land. He mows his lawn, can repair his water pump. One painter tends a vineyard, pressing his own wine in the fall.

Farther down the road, opposite the graveyard where Jackson Pollock lies buried at the base of a tremendous boulder, the scene is different. In a patch of stubble is a shingled cottage before which five or six of the more curious cars are drawn up. The planting around the house is sparse—a bull briar, hardiest of the local weeds, is doing badly. Facing the road are placed a camp chair and a kitchen chair, weathered and remote, decorated with a disturbing number of athletic supporters. The living room is obscured at first by smoke and people. Then the largest piece of furniture becomes discernible. It is an upright white piano covered with a plastic cloth. It, the two adjacent walls and most of the ceiling, are as violently splattered with paint as any canvas. Paint has trickled down the window panes and dried, letting a little light filter in through trails of red and purple and green—an effect of runny stained glass. The floor is just as colorful, touched here and there by the chilly blue of a crumpled package of Gauloises cigarettes. High as the room, the painting which caused all the trouble looms up darkly in the corner.

The kitchen, too, is a riot of paint. Huge canvases jut out from behind the ice-box, obscuring the herb shelf entirely. The kitchen table has been converted into a palette—beeping portions of egg and ketchup shades, and a deep Bœuf Bourguignon brown. Beyond, in a little dining alcove, an utterly dead sunflower lies face up on the table. Someone uses it for an ash tray. This house two of the younger painters have rented for the summer. Their landlord, after they left, carefully masked off a square of the living room wall before repainting. Now he has, forever by the piano, an original work to remember them by. If you proceed through town to what might be called the right side of the tracks, the painter chez lui changes with the real estate. A long driveway leads him to a residence which would have tempted Gatsby. It is built of stucco, Anglo-Spanish style, graced in front by lawns and lily gardens, in back by a wide Flight of stone stairs leading down to the expansive waters of Georgica Pond. Carpets have been strewn about the terraces for the comfort of cocktail guests, who can sip at sunset and observe the swans below. His snow-white poodle and his angora cat saunter through the bleeding-heart and rattle the rhododendron leaves. At a little distance, in a giant oak-paneled studio, this artist works. Above him, on a balcony, hangs an impressive collection of Art Brut. The house itself contains many more fine pieces—a music room of Stills, a hall of Pollocks, a landing lined with Du buffers, all alarming and immense. Beyond, in the boat house, another painter works, and in the gate house still another. - There are, in addition, two more studios on the estate.

This disparate collection of painters all show their work in a gallery in East Hampton organized by three of them. They appropriated a defunct market, painted it white, installed floodlights. They blackened the windows, shutting out entirely the genteel light of Main Street. Outside stand the elm trees and historic homes, lovingly maintained by the Ladies Village Improvement Society. Inside is the world of the artists' vision—vibrant, disquieting. Very few of the golfers venture in to see it.
MORE FROM ISSUE 21, SPRING-SUMMER 1959

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Ernest Hemingway

*The Art of Fiction No. 21*

*Cipriani, October 2003*

The fact that I am interrupting serious work to answer these questions proves that I am so stupid that I should be penalized severely. I will be. Don't worry...
This week, the staff of ‘The Paris Review’ pays attention with T Fleischmann, drinks tequila with lime, and follows Kim Hyesoon through the forty-nine days before reincarnation.

David McCullough, The Art of Biography No. 2
By David McCullough

“Nothing good was ever written in a large room,” David McCullough says, and so his own office has been reduced to a windowed shed in the backyard of his Martha’s Vineyard home. Known as “the bookshop,” the shed does not have a telephone or running water. Its primary contents are a Royal typewriter, a green banker’s lamp, and a desk, which McCullough keeps control over by “flushing out” the loose papers after each chapter is finished. The view from inside the bookshop is of a sagging barn surrounded by pasture. To keep from being startled, McCullough asks his family members to whistle as they approach the shed where he is writing.

McCullough’s wife Rosalee was present throughout the interview. We were sitting in the McCulloughs’ low-ceilinged living room, which became progressively darker as the tape recorder rolled on, so that by the end of the afternoon, with the lights off, only the nineteenth-century library across the street was clearly visible. During the entire time, almost eight hours, McCullough spoke vigorously and quickly, growing hoarse but never seeming tired. In person the sixty-six-year-old McCullough is somewhat different from the image projected on public television, where he frequently hosts and narrates programs. The voice, coming out of shadows across the room, was full of emotion. His face seemed longer, his eyes larger. He gestured often, sometimes calling attention to nearby objects, such as a piece of cable from the Brooklyn Bridge. At the end of the meeting, he issued an impromptu dinner invitation and whipped up a delicious pasta with clam sauce, one of his specialties.

McCullough was born in Pittsburgh in 1933 and grew up in the boom years of World War II steel production. He attended Yale, where he studied English and visual arts, and got a job at Sports Illustrated in New York after graduation. During the 1960s he edited and wrote for American Heritage magazine and briefly worked for the United States Information Agency. His first book, The Johnstown Flood (1968), was not published until McCullough was thirty-five and already married with several children. He has won the Pulitzer Prize, two National Book Awards, the Francis Parkman Prize and dozens of other honors, and not a single one of his books—including Truman (1992), The Great Bridge (1972), and The Path Between the Seas (1977)—has ever been out of print.
When did you decide, to use Ornton Wilder's words, to "write the book you wanted to read"?

INTERVIEWER

Margaret Leech's...
one of the great resources I came across was testimony taken by the Pennsylvania Railroad from their employees after the flood. It was done in anticipation of lawsuits. They brought people in and sat them down and said, Tell us what you saw and what you did. We've been left with many reports of the disaster from a cross section of the population, all in their own words.