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Oral history interview with Joyce Wahl Treiman, 1981 October 3

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Joyce Wahl Treiman on October 3, 1981. The interview took place in Pacific Palisades, California, and was conducted by Paul J. Karlstrom for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The original transcript was edited. In 2024 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

[00:00:04.28]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, an interview with Joyce Treiman on October 3, 1981, at the artist's home in Pacific Palisades. The interviewer is Paul Karlstrom, California Oral History Project.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:00:31.17]

Well, Joyce, we've been discussing already our mutual interest in a particular theme, which I think is an important one within the realist tradition. And that, of course, is the stylistic area in which you've worked yourself persistently, as far as I know, pretty much in an unbroken way, if not from the beginning, certainly over the last years. You're very much, I think, a self-proclaimed realist painter, a painter working within a realist mode.

And within this, I think a very important component remains the drawing of the figure, and, specifically within a studio context, the life drawing experience. And this is what I'd like to talk about today. It seems that this figurative tradition, again, specifically life drawing, has been important and has persisted in American art, despite other fashionable modes, nonobjective painting, Abstract Expressionism, which seem to dominate entirely. Nonetheless, many artists, even those who work sometimes in their exhibition work would be nonobjective.

[00:01:59.65]

JOYCE TREIMAN: They continue to do it.

[00:02:00.28]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: They were sort of closet realists. They continue to draw from the figure, sometimes meet. And I wonder if you have any ideas why that is, why the persistence of this figuration?

[00:02:12.82]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I think one of the reasons probably is that from direct observation, you renew your creative vision by forcing yourself to really see again. I mean, the mind only retains a certain number of forms, and if you only rely on that, then you fall into a kind of mannerism.

[00:02:37.24]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Repetition?

[00:02:38.50]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, it becomes a kind of a mannered way. For example, if you doodle, you find that you're repeating your doodles over and over again. So that by continuing a particular observation of things renews the kinds—a whole area of forms and things that you knew were there, but you hadn't used. And you want to keep your vocabulary kind of expanding, and whether you then turn it into an abstract thing or not is—you at least have forms that are organic and belong to a strong visual image.

[00:03:20.17]

I do think—I mean, I know that in my own career, I've constantly done that kind of renewal. And I think it's just a vital part of an artist's way of seeing and working. And really doing it figuratively. I don't mean this kind of goof-off business with forms. You can also do very cliché draw—I've seen so many people just use the model, and not use it, and not look at anything. So I wondered to myself, why are they doing this? They're wasting their—I mean, they could be home just doodling that kind of thing without making use of what they're looking at.

[00:04:08.47]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, let's lay in a little background to set the stage. We don't want to do, this time, a biographical interview, but on the other hand, I think it's important to place you. And you were—I don't know if you were born in Chicago, but you, I believe, grew up there and studied there.

[00:04:29.17]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I went to the University of Iowa. But I had the Art Institute of Chicago as a great teacher. And I think the kind of art historical training I had as well, along with the studio, there was an insistence of four years of art history.

[00:04:47.62]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What did you major in?

[00:04:48.67]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Painting.

[00:04:50.11]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Painting.

[00:04:50.79]

JOYCE TREIMAN: But the studio people were required to take four years of art history at Iowa. And I think you become aware of what the great Western tradition of painting is. And you suddenly realize what the great paintings are, and you're able to make judgments in terms of your own work.

[00:05:07.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Do you think that this then pointed a direction for you, an appreciation for art history and the Old Masters?

[00:05:14.53]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I think it had something to do with it, plus the fact that I always felt that completely nonobjective painting—all great paintings are abstract. So if you can also feel and project and can say something to add to it, makes it that much richer.

[00:05:35.77]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: In other words, it can be measured against a tradition. So enhanced by adopting a position within a greater, longer tradition of figurative—generally figurative art.

[00:05:52.06]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, and I think that I've always—maybe it's the humanist tradition. But I always felt that being able to say something about the human frailty in a way that I respond to it was always very important. It's not that I didn't understand what was going on, but I just didn't want to spend my life that way. I want to make a statement about something that was —

[00:06:25.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And you, I gather, feel that somehow you can make a more important statement, through—

[00:06:30.08]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I think it brings in things that—

[00:06:33.80]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —nature, representation.

[00:06:34.94]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Painting a—if it's a great painting, which we all hope we can do one maybe, or two, is involved with more than just—you take for granted that the artist understands color and space and form, and all the vital things that go into making a really good painting, so that if you eliminate the other thing, you eliminate, I think, part of what it's all about, in my opinion.

[00:07:04.91]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: How would you describe the course of study at the University of Iowa? Basically conservative?

[00:07:11.03]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Not necessarily. At the time I was there, there were artists who had been to the High School of Music and Art in New York. And I thought they were extremely avant-garde. I knew [inaudible]. And they were into all the advanced modern things at the time. And the head of the department was buying Mirós and Beckmanns, and so on. So it really wasn't that—but the art historical training—and everybody had to take a course called Philosophy and Criticism of Art.

[00:07:46.79]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Who gave that course?

[00:07:47.78]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Lester Longman.

[00:07:48.48]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's what I thought. [Cross talk.]

[00:07:49.07]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And he makes an indelible impression. I've run into people who've had it—not just my generation, but younger ones. And they're constantly referring to what they learned from that particular—

[00:08:00.53]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: He died, didn't he?

[00:08:01.61]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No, he lives in the Palisades. He's very friendly. I'm going to see him tonight.

[00:08:04.76]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, Lester, I'm sorry.

[00:08:05.81]

JOYCE TREIMAN: He's hale and hearty.

[00:08:07.07]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Good.

[00:08:09.41]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And I think probably his attitude towards art, and the openness that he—It wasn't that he—he responded. He knew exactly what was going on in the contemporary—so I don't feel deprived in that sense at all.

[00:08:28.04]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What years were you at the—

[00:08:31.10]

JOYCE TREIMAN: '41 to '43. I got my BFA there.

[00:08:35.21]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So really, the war years.

[00:08:36.77]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yes. They turned out a number of very good painters at that time. A lot of the men went to the army and then came back. But almost any university I go to, if it's art history, "Well, I was at the University of Iowa." It was sort of—at that time, it was sort of the Athens of the Middle West. And it was one of the first departments that was set up the way it was.

[00:09:00.29]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, wasn't Grant Wood teaching—

[00:09:02.30]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No, he fortunately—he wasn't—I think he passed away the year before I came.

[00:09:07.34]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But he was associated, I thought, with the university earlier on.

[00:09:09.37]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yes, but that became kind of a bad situation. Yeah. Lester was not

interested.

[00:09:16.28]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I guess what I'm getting at—and I don't want to force it, I want you to respond—is that one might expect that studying art and painting in the Midwest would then be conditioned by our view of, say, the studies in regionalism, and stronghold of realism—

[00:09:38.48]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That was not there at all at the university, which was very interesting and enlightened because of Lester and the people he brought there, which was very interesting. And I had the addition of the Art Institute.

[00:09:53.06]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah.

[00:09:53.96]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Which was a marvelous teacher. I think people are going to be painters that haven't got paintings to look at are really in trouble—great paintings.

[00:10:05.12]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Were you born in Chicago?

[00:10:06.38]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah.

[00:10:07.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Okay, are you going to tell me when? It's a matter of record.

[00:10:10.82]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well—[clears throat.]

[00:10:11.78]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, come on.

[00:10:12.53]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It hurts. [Laughs.] 1922.

[00:10:16.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's not so long.

[00:10:17.60]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I know. It's a long time.

[00:10:18.86]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And you grew up in Chicago. After university, then did you go back to Chicago?

[00:10:23.45]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, and I had a very practical mother who said, "Now are you going to make a living?"

[00:10:29.81]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Now [inaudible] serious.

[00:10:31.27]

JOYCE TREIMAN: [Laughs.] So I took a couple of months of learning how to do layouts and all that stuff. And then I got a job. And then I got a fellowship, and I quit. So I'd been painting. Then I got married.

[00:10:43.32]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: When did you get the fellowship? And what was it?

[00:10:45.18]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Tiffany Fellowship, quite early on, when they weren't giving very much money. But that gave me license to retire from my job and paint. And that was very helpful.

[00:10:58.87]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And so you were doing that, I assume, in Chicago.

[00:11:01.41]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right.

[00:11:01.98]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And did you travel with the fellowship at all?

[00:11:06.33]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, well, I got to Europe, which was great. I think I've been painting for a hundred years.

[00:11:13.32]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Not quite.

[00:11:13.98]

JOYCE TREIMAN: But I know that in my late twenties and early thirties, I started getting into the Whitney, and the Art Institute, and the American Show, and all that kind of thing. So I really didn't understand the whole thing, but I was delighted.

[00:11:31.11]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No, you were in the middle of it.

[00:11:31.90]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I kept right on painting, and—

[00:11:35.40]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, then how and when did you get to California?

[00:11:40.02]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I came here 20 years ago. I feel like I'm now a native.

[00:11:43.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's 1951. No, '61.

[00:11:47.34]

JOYCE TREIMAN: '60s.

[00:11:47.82]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: See? My God, that shows—

[00:11:49.70]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I can't figure. Art historians can't figure.

[00:11:52.32]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No. And it also shows that the years are passing too quickly.

[00:11:55.71]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Oh, God.

[00:11:58.00]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You came out with your husband, I guess?

[00:11:59.88]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, with Ken. I kept right on painting. Felix Landau wanted to handle my work.

[00:12:09.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So as soon as you arrived, you were able to establish a connection with —

[00:12:12.48]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I didn't have a problem because he was familiar with my work, and I made it—

[00:12:16.96]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That was—

[00:12:17.67]

JOYCE TREIMAN: So that was very helpful.

[00:12:18.78]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —an important gallery.

[00:12:19.65]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yes, I know. And he was more in the figurative tradition too.

[00:12:25.18]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: He would have Schiele shows.

[00:12:26.86]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right, wonderful.

[00:12:28.64]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I remember those. So you set up shop here, presumably.

[00:12:34.90]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And I think at the same time—I don't think I was too much aware. But I think that most of the California painters were involved in the kind of quite abstract, quite—how do I explain it? But I have always been convinced—it didn't bother me that I was never in the "mainstream," quotes.

[00:12:58.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, by that time, the early '60s,

[00:13:01.58]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well—

[00:13:02.54]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —certainly speaking of Southern California there was the—

[00:13:05.72]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Spray painting and all kinds of plastic and—

[00:13:08.21]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right. Group of youngsters.

[00:13:09.20]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That's right.

[00:13:10.64]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: People like Larry Bell and Bob Irwin.

[00:13:13.31]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I can understand it. When I moved here, I was really struck by the change in light and color, and so on. And in the Middle West, you become very introspective and very involved with man's inhumanity to man, and all kinds of things.

[00:13:28.67]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Serious issues.

[00:13:29.12]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Really serious philosophical situations. And it's here, but it's different. I'm still trying to figure out how to solve that one. This isn't all hedonism.

[00:13:46.52]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No, no, it's not.

[00:13:47.71]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And I think the assumption is made that it is.

[00:13:52.50]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, there have been—not to get off the subject—but I don't think it really is. There have been spawned in this area some artists that have to be viewed in terms of dealing with very humanistic issues. I'm thinking within the realist tradition, and maybe we can expand on this a little bit. I think of Rico Lebrun and that group. Then you think—
[Cross talk.]

[00:14:16.93]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, they were sort of in limbo when I arrived.

[00:14:20.02]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But was part of what had been happening here. And then think of Ed Kienholz.

[00:14:24.82]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right. It's that kind of concern with the world and its occupants that motivated me. And I really feel the importance of the individual rather than—this is the thing I objected to, the kind of, what do they call it? Bay Area Figurative School.

[00:14:40.74]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah, I wanted to ask—

[00:14:41.82]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Now, it could be—it was trying to have the best of two worlds, and it didn't work. So you made an oval orange shape and called it a head. But, in my opinion, a head is more than that. It's a kind of searching out the individual, which I think is a very vital one. Everybody's nose isn't alike, and everybody's eyes aren't alike. It's a whole different way of looking.

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: This is an important issue, I think, and it has to do with realism in general in painting and art and which direction it goes, which way it leans, whether it's too formal—

[00:15:25.80]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Particularization or generalization.

[00:15:27.81]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. Abstraction, stylization—

[00:15:29.40]

JOYCE TREIMAN: You can reach the same end, which we hope is good art both ways—I'm not putting anybody down—if it's convincing. But somehow I really loved the change in volume and shape just by someone else's—every face is different, or every body is different. And I think that's the value. For example, we'll get back to life drawing and painting directly from life. See, a photograph won't give you that information.

[00:15:58.41]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Why not?

[00:15:59.90]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Because, when you look at something or somebody and you're painting it, the whole world of forms are there, and specifics are there, that a photograph just makes a general, bland situation out of it. It immobilizes them. It makes them kind of an icon. It makes it—well, a photograph is a photograph. And a painting never—they're two different worlds.

[00:16:30.92]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's right.

[00:16:31.13]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And if people don't understand that—something when you—I know I talk about painting differently from I think a lot of younger people who haven't—you look at, for example, a Rembrandt or an Eakins or a—and the quality of the paint, you see, is so important. And a photograph will never give you that kind of information. Every minute you're painting from a figure, the light changes it. Therefore, it changes the color, changes the variations and the forms. You can start a painting one day and go on, and you discover all kinds of other different things.

[00:17:12.62]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Do you try to then, incorporate—

[00:17:14.12]

JOYCE TREIMAN: With a photograph, it's a static thing. It's like going to a job and making shoes. If you're going to reproduce from a photograph, you sit there, and—it's a job. I want to be able to, as I go, change.

[00:17:28.49]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I gather that you're referring probably to Photorealism then.

[00:17:31.64]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, I don't think that's painting in the sense that I think about painting. Someone else may call it painting.

[00:17:37.04]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: It's reproducing. Well, this is interesting because what you're saying, I think, also flushes you out in that you really are committed to painting, to the painterly tradition.

[00:17:47.96]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Exactly, being an artist and being a painter. All painters are artists, but not all artists are painters. And I think painters are a special breed. And that's—like Picasso is a great artist. But I think his sculpture is better than his painting. That's just a personal opinion. He's not—I mean, somebody like Bonnard is pure painter.

[00:18:19.10]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That is for sure. You said something that interested me, talking about the difference between a photograph and painting, let's say, a nude figure. And one of the things you mentioned had to do with the difference between—

[00:18:38.31]

JOYCE TREIMAN: A photograph is good for information that you need.

[00:18:40.62]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right. But it's one moment. It's the click of the shutter.

[00:18:42.95]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That's right.

[00:18:43.31]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And what I'm trying to get at is this—I gather you're very interested in the changes of light and so forth. And do you feel that then you can incorporate—although you end up with one image—

[00:18:54.72]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, this is a very big problem, you see? Decisions, decisions.

[00:18:58.37]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. We're talking about time, changes in time.

[00:18:59.81]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Exactly, you could take the same figure and probably spend a lifetime painting it always differently. And the most difficult part of painting and making art is making those decisions. There are thousands of ways of doing something. And if you—unfortunately, sometimes I think you're better off not to know very much. [Laughs.]

[00:19:22.22]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Here's what happens, though, Joyce. It's very interesting. You're working from the model. You have the light coming—

[00:19:29.93]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right. Changes.

[00:19:30.35]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You're painting, and it's not a snapshot. In other words, you cannot instantly produce that image on the canvas.

[00:19:35.93]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right.

[00:19:36.02]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: It takes a period of time. Some people are faster than others. But nonetheless, the information is changing as you are creating one image.

[00:19:44.20]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Exactly, can drive you nuts.

[00:19:45.44]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So what do you end up with? You, in fact, end up with a fiction.

[00:19:51.05]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Hopefully.

[00:19:51.77]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah, in that you have perhaps light falling on a leg that is ten o'clock.

[00:19:57.08]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And it changes.

[00:19:58.22]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Light on the, let's say, the cheek, at four o'clock.

[00:20:02.03]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Sure.

[00:20:02.78]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And all of that appears in the same image. Does that interest you? Do you—

[00:20:07.73]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, many times you paint—you start a painting. And by the time the afternoon rolls around, you've changed the whole thing, because—this is what the challenge is. And I think it's a very exciting part of painting. I think just to sit down and grid off something and say, well, I'll just fill it in—I mean, it's like coloring books. If you're working from a photograph, you sit down. Well, I'll do this four inches today. Yeah, it's an attitude, which is completely different from mine. It wouldn't interest me, but that's just another—See, when you think about, say, the Ghent Altarpiece, which is highly, what we would call, microscopically realistic. But somehow you know that it wasn't done from a photograph.

[00:21:08.96]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah, that's right.

[00:21:10.19]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It's a different—see? Like you said, photography snaps one instant in the life of this model, or whatever you're using. They're made up of a multitude of instances.

[00:21:26.56]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Okay, so we have you in the early '60s in Southern California—

[00:21:30.80]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Carrying on with my—

[00:21:32.26]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Carrying on—

[00:21:33.70]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Surrounded by—

[00:21:35.35]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: How did you find the situation in terms of activity within the realist direction? Did you find—you come into contact with colleagues, other painters that were interested—

[00:21:51.85]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Not at the time, not in California. I knew there were other people working. But I think we were all in what I call limbo at the time. And at that time, I really wanted somebody to do a limbo show. But nobody would.

[00:22:03.58]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: We're there not some colleagues that you met here, perhaps—

[00:22:07.06]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, you see Los Angeles, particularly, is very difficult in terms of knowing other artists, because the distance is—in a way, it's a blessing. And in a way—

[00:22:17.14]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: A curse.

[00:22:17.26]

JOYCE TREIMAN: You get very lonesome, because you have nobody to discuss—

[00:22:20.35]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What about, though—you taught at UCLA in the—

[00:22:24.35]

JOYCE TREIMAN: The '60s.

[00:22:25.41]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Early '60s, shortly after you came here. And you must have met people like—after all, UCLA, if you—

[00:22:32.12]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, they had a strong feeling about figurative things.

[00:22:34.49]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right, and I'm thinking of—was Bill Brice teaching there at the time?

[00:22:37.73]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah. Well, I was a guest there. You sort of did—and there's sort of a

problem there because it's a vertical building.

[00:22:44.36]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right.

[00:22:44.72]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And you go up in your slot, and you go back down. And there wasn't a community feeling there. I did, I think, help a lot of young artists learn to see. I hope so. I said, I don't care if you never use it again. But I want you to be able to.

[00:23:02.99]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But you didn't feel that there was established a community of shared interest with other artists.

[00:23:09.65]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No.

[00:23:10.64]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Like Brice, a little later on, of course, Dick Diebenkorn, at that time, in the '60s.

[00:23:13.82]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, he was up there. When he came down here, he started to do his Ocean Park things. No, Dick I know, and we have a nice relationship.

[00:23:21.68]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, he lives right down the street.

[00:23:22.94]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That's right, in this neighborhood.

[00:23:24.81]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's right.

[00:23:26.05]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It's interesting because the street is like the French—when the French painters were all on the French Riviera. This is called the Riviera section. So there were—well, Thomas Mann started it off. He lived here. And there was a whole group of artists that lived—why in this area, I don't know.

[00:23:41.17]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, it's attractive.

[00:23:42.58]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, the light's good.

[00:23:44.38]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: It seems sort of like the Mediterranean too.

[00:23:45.76]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, exactly, exactly. I call it the California Riviera.

[00:23:50.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, they've got Sam Francis lives down in the canyon. Richard

Diebenkorn; you're here. Actually, there are a couple others.

[00:23:58.90]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Isherwood is here.

[00:24:02.47]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: There's some other painters, I think, that live on Amalfi or in there—

[00:24:06.28]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, right.

[00:24:07.71]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But it's interesting, it's not artists or creative people congregating together.

[00:24:15.91]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No, it's just happened.

[00:24:17.29]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Think of in Paris or New York. It just happened. It's more an attraction to a neighborhood.

[00:24:21.16]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I think so too, or the light or the landscape or whatever. It's just a comfortable—it's congenial.

[00:24:26.95]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Which I think points out a difference between Los Angeles and what we expect from some of the older art communities.

[00:24:35.71]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, they kind of groupied. I think New York groupies—and I couldn't stand it if I'm starting on a piece of work and some artist comes in and says, "God, what are you doing that for?" You're finished before you start.

[00:24:47.95]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Why waste my time?

[00:24:48.92]

JOYCE TREIMAN: So in a way, it's a blessing to be, in a sense, your own separate self. I think now, the younger artists are trying to get themselves together sort of downtown, and that kind of thing. But I think they do for a different reason. I think they support each other more in a—

[00:25:12.79]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Social way?

[00:25:13.66]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Social—well, also in a commercial way.

[00:25:16.69]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm. Well, that's important.

[00:25:17.56]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I know. But what I'm saying is the earlier generations used to get together because they wanted to discuss ideas. And I think that was particularly true in New York, in the older—they knew each other. And there was a community feeling other than "what can I do for you today?" It was a discussion of ideas and philosophies and ways of painting, and all that kind of thing. I really haven't run into it. I don't know why. I think—

[00:25:51.25]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, it's probably—

[00:25:52.75]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It's an attitude. That's all.

[00:25:54.34]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think it's endemic to this area, though, that people seem to separate their domestic lives, where they live, in some cases, from where they work. You don't. I mean, you work in the garage of your home.

[00:26:07.77]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah. I would hate the thought of having to get up in the middle of the night, get dressed in order to work on a painting.

[00:26:12.97]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. But it does seem to be the situation here because of distances, I think, is partly right. That you go home, then you have another social life, which doesn't necessarily include—

[00:26:24.91]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Involve artists, yeah. What happens in the Bay Area? Are they kind of groupied up?

[00:26:28.90]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I don't think so. No, I think that, because it's smaller, there may be a little more of a natural contact. But I haven't determined that this kind of thing exists, this groupie, this community, like in Soho—

[00:26:43.78]

JOYCE TREIMAN: People—

[00:26:44.95]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Sure, where rents are cheap, younger artists may get studio space. Speaking of the Bay Area, before we leave, we started on the so-called Bay Area Figurative School, which by the early '60s really wasn't that important. Although, some artists, like Nathan Oliveira continued in this manner and a few others. But Diebenkorn, well, was still working that way, was moving—starting to—

[00:27:12.46]

JOYCE TREIMAN: David Park was really the prime mover.

[00:27:14.72]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right, and what I want to ask you is this. Did you—

[00:27:18.85]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I knew Paul Wonner, because they were with—

[00:27:20.74]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Paul was living here then, wasn't he?

[00:27:22.30]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That's right, he and Bill.

[00:27:23.59]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Bill Brown.

[00:27:24.23]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, and they also were at Landau. And so we would once in a while get together and talk about painting, and that kind of thing.

[00:27:31.19]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But would you think that you were at all affected, reinforced, or felt any affinity—

[00:27:36.50]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I always felt non—

[00:27:37.61]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: with the Bay Area?

[00:27:38.30]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No, they didn't know I was working, probably—

[00:27:41.57]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Even though it seemed—

[00:27:43.82]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Because it was a different attitude about figuration.

[00:27:46.31]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: True, but it seems to me that there might be some points of contact or mutual interest in that. Although, they came—historically, that evolved out of Abstract Expressionism.

[00:28:00.89]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right.

[00:28:01.76]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Sticking the figure back into—

[00:28:03.77]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Into a gestural kind of situation.

[00:28:05.90]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Which, obviously, I think—

[00:28:07.07]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I think, through Paul and Bill, I think we had mutual concerns. And I think they got more and more into what I was concerned with. I think Paul especially began to get much more particular about things.

[00:28:20.38]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah, certainly is now.

[00:28:21.59]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Now, he's become really particularized.

[00:28:25.12]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Nice paintings, by the way.

[00:28:25.99]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And—yeah. And I think they even came to the conclusion themselves. They might have thought I was some kind of a nut at the time. But if you're going to do work figuratively, then go all the way. This half—I shouldn't use the word.

[00:28:42.43]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Half-assed?

[00:28:43.36]

JOYCE TREIMAN: You did it. Thank you. [Laughs.] Either—commit yourself. It's a kind of commitment that you make. I think it's an extremely difficult—figurative art is a very difficult thing. I'm talking about figurative painting, not using photographs, and that kind of thing. And also using ideas, which have been struck out of the art for a long time, or a feeling about something. Now, it's all back in. Everybody's doing their personal autobiography.

[00:29:18.10]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, also realism itself, as we were saying, earlier, all of a sudden has become okay again, which was—

[00:29:28.79]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, what's interesting to me is that people like Bill and Paul and me and—they don't get included in these new realist things because they forgot about us. And it always comes up like it's a brand-new thing. I mean, I think I did see an article called, "Painting is Back." I couldn't believe the title. Where did it go?

[00:29:53.13]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Where did it go? Well, that, of course, is the question. And the—

[00:29:55.61]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It never went away.

[00:29:57.14]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Last month's *Art in America*, which both of us have looked at, was interesting in that—

[00:30:01.79]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I haven't read it yet.

[00:30:01.91]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —a whole issue was devoted to realism, and actually addresses some of these problems. And there's an essay by Alloway, for instance, on realist criticism. Where did that go? Where was the voice for—

[00:30:15.65]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I think that many of the people who were trained for that are—there are a lot of critics who were never trained. Therefore, the resultant was a lot of garbage that was written. But in order to be the kind of critic you're saying Alloway was talking about, you

have to have the kind of background I was talking about. So you have to know from whence it sprung, and how it grew and where—you have to have a whole body of knowledge about figurative painting, which goes all the way back centuries. And if you don't know that, then you can't make judgments about what's happening right now. But it is interesting that suddenly this figurative painting, which was just an anathema—I mean, if you paint it figuratively, you were just nowhere. I know that—

[00:31:11.58]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You weren't serious.

[00:31:12.12]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I was interested in—yeah, you didn't really know what was going on. You were stupid. As though I didn't know what was going. That's ridiculous, exactly what was happening. And I was interested—I got interested in 19th century Americans, for example, long before it suddenly became "in" thing to know about or feel about or even regard with any—

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[00:00:03.49]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Treiman. Tape one. Side two. We were talking about—or you were mentioning your interest in—early interest in 19th century American painting. And—

[00:00:16.38]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, it was really not regarded with much respect at the time I became interested. And then now—I mean, for example, Thomas Eakins, our greatest American painter—I would talk to students, mention the name. And they wouldn't—they'd look at me blankly. I mean, I couldn't believe it. I really couldn't believe it.

[00:00:37.42]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's incredible. Well, that's an appropriate name to bring up, I think, in this context within the American tradition, and then as a realist—and I think, perhaps, the consummate realist of the 19th century, I think, that he stacks up with Courbet—

[00:00:49.56]

JOYCE TREIMAN: With any of the European painters of the time.

[00:00:52.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: In fact, I think in a way, Courbet almost is a romantic compared to Eakins.

[00:00:55.17]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Exactly. And he was the big realist man.

[00:00:58.86]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And you were obviously very much attracted to Eakins as an artist. Do you feel that in some way, you're continuing in that, in his footsteps?

[00:01:10.00]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I think so. I've deviated in the last few years. I did a whole body of work, which was concerned I think with similar things that Eakins was concerned with, except mine were much more psychological, and one figure relating to the other, and that kind of thing. I think the California light has gotten me for a little while.

[00:01:34.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah, you've gone awfully Impressionist—

[00:01:36.64]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And a trip to France, and Giverny, and so forth. But adding—what I really would like to try to do, which I think is maybe almost impossible, to use that kind of color and light and still create a psychological situation. And it's very difficult in using color, much color. I mean, when you think about Eakins, or Chase, or people like this, it has a moody kind of chiaroscuro, which adds that thing I'm talking about. But I'm sure it can be done. And I'm going to keep trying. But it can be done.

[00:02:12.75]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Don't you achieve that, though, through combinations of figures—sometimes very strange? Sometimes unhistorical—

[00:02:21.36]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Or interjecting unexpected things. And I think that added to it. And then with using high color, it makes it even more bizarre. And I think that's a tack that I can maybe pursue.

[00:02:36.57]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, let's get back to the topic, the specific topic at hand, which is the artist and the model. And I'll ask you another question here, following up on from what we were discussing earlier, specifically the importance of the representational mode life drawing and the figure to you. I think, actually, you've answered that.

[00:03:03.87]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yes. I hope so.

[00:03:05.92]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And I think you answered the—

[00:03:09.28]

JOYCE TREIMAN: But I must add that I really much prefer, if I'm doing a figure, to—I mean, to really respond to that particular face or that particular—and I do like to do friends, or people I figure I know a little better than just a professional model. But there has to be a kind of an idiosyncratic thing about the person that I want to paint.

[00:03:40.72]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, this, of course, answers another important question within all of this. So the role of the individual model—that this is not a general—

[00:03:55.39]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It's not a generalization. I mean—

[00:03:57.31]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You're dealing with a specific individual. And I gather you also feel it's important for the personality of that individual to come out. That does, indeed, affect the work of art.

[00:04:10.96]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yes. I mean, that part, I've always been very interested in. Hopefully, I, at this point, have control over my abilities to do as I want in drawing or in painting. And therefore, I don't have to worry so much, "is this arm longer than the other" or all that kind of thing that is just so much a part of my—so that I can concentrate on that particularization of the personality.

[00:04:38.92]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, what about this? You said that you prefer people you know,

friends, perhaps—

[00:04:49.27]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And myself.

[00:04:50.68]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Amateurs, rather than professional models. I think you partly answered that. But maybe you can expand on that. What does the nonprofessional bring to the modeling situation that answers your needs—

[00:05:09.17]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It isn't so much a nonprofessional. But it has to be a face and a personality that interests me. And it isn't so much reproducing their features. It's trying to get another dimension as well, so that if I use a certain color, it has meaning in relation to their personality, or if the contour of the nose is a special way. And I think that that's very important. It's a kind of thing maybe that Lautrec always got.

[00:05:42.33]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You take liberties. Then you mentioned that, perhaps, a color that you select is done so to express an aspect of personality. And so I gather sometimes—

[00:05:52.79]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right. I mean, I'm not eliminating any kind of the so-called abstract. I mean, that, I always feel is basic to any good painting. But it also, to me, has this added dimension of expressing something else. I mean, there's no question. I mean, I've seen terrible figurative paintings and great abstract ones, and vice versa. So I'm not—and I think I can tell the difference. I think there are a lot of figurative painters that just can't make those kinds of judgments.

[00:06:26.46]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Is it important to you or useful to know the model, to know the individual, to have a relationship—

[00:06:34.61]

JOYCE TREIMAN: To have a feeling about them? Yeah.

[00:06:36.24]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But it doesn't necessarily follow that you have to know this person.

[00:06:39.79]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No. I think while you're painting, you discover them, which is always kind of marvelous, because I think that that's the fun of doing a particular person. Maybe I have this idea that everybody, anybody that's in the world is important. It doesn't matter generalizing.

[00:07:05.93]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Were you—of course, I think mainly what you're talking about now, although, I'm not sure, are the portraits.

[00:07:13.79]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And I like to do group figures, too—relationships or non-relationships between people, which always has interest me, why they don't relate to each other, what—that kind of thing that you will see, for example, at a party, where there lots of people together, and nobody's really interested in the other person. Whether it's a contemporary syndrome or whether it's always gone on like that, I don't know.

[00:07:36.99]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: This would be, of course, the psychological element—

[00:07:39.59]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That interests me. Yeah.

[00:07:42.42]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —that you're trying to achieve. Well, how do you choose models? And I'm thinking of nude models now.

[00:07:47.33]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, for example—you mean portraits, particularly or—

[00:07:52.97]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Just for your nude, you've done this series of nude figures. Are they all professionals?

[00:07:55.13]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I did a whole group. I used to go once a week and paint from the model. Yeah. But then I got to know some of them better than others. And sometimes those paintings always turned out—maybe I liked them better than some of the others. So that, in a sense, is something other than doing a portrait of somebody or a—I really have to feel something. I finished a painting called "The Tycoon." And I know this man very well. And I've known him all my life. And I haven't been able to paint him until just recently.

[00:08:33.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: This is your uncle?

[00:08:33.95]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah. And when I did it, I think I said it all. And I guess, it took that long for me to really understand the personality. And he had to get older. Somehow, I find—unlike Mary Cassatt, I prefer people who have lived somewhat.

[00:09:03.41]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What about the—something I'd like to call nude figure portraiture, where you have the opportunity to deal with—

[00:09:15.92]

JOYCE TREIMAN: The body. The entire body.

[00:09:17.66]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: The body, the face, everything. How does that work for you? And what do you feel the body—other than just the face. We know how that works, of course.

[00:09:30.36]

JOYCE TREIMAN: The hands, and the shape of arms, and the legs, and the—that whole thing expresses the personality. It isn't just the face or just the—and I think the way people sit, or the way they stand. It's all those kinds of things that are important to me when I'm trying to do—

[00:09:56.06]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What kind of poses interest you? Are you interested in arranging, or do you like the model to act natural?

[00:10:03.14]

JOYCE TREIMAN: For example—I wait until we talk a while and they fall into something that's

really quite marvelous. And then I say, okay.

[00:10:13.25]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: "That's it. Hold it."

[00:10:14.66]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That's it. I mean, I don't thing you can force people. That's what's wrong with a lot of portraits. They're preplanned and sort of by prescription. And I always warn people that they'll have to grow into my portrait. I mean, they're always surprised that they look the way they do. But eventually, they figure out they do. It is them. And I also take into consideration—I like things like backlighting. All kinds of plastic things come into my thinking, too. It isn't just a literal transcription.

[00:10:56.46]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But it does seem to me, from what you've said, that, again, within the life drawing context, that you're interested in primarily, rather than an arrangement of forms, an exercise, like an academic exercise, art school type thing.

[00:11:17.76]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That, we all go through. Some people never get over it. That's the problem.

[00:11:23.46]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But in getting to the personality that is important to you—this would tie into the humanist ideas—

[00:11:29.19]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Very much so. Right. Exactly.

[00:11:31.38]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And so I would imagine—you can correct me if this is wrong—that the selection of a model, to the extent that you may have something to say about that—the poses, the lighting, all of these things, rather than to solve, rather than—

[00:11:49.92]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Huge, figurative machines or something like that? Yeah. I mean, many times I'm walking down the street, ah, that's for me. That one, I'd love to paint. And I don't really what motivates me. I mean, it's just like a—out of a whole crowd of people, I can tell you [snaps fingers], that's the one I want to paint.

[00:12:10.35]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But what is it, do you suppose?

[00:12:12.33]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It's a kind of life in their faces, that they have lived somehow. I think that's very important to me. I mean, pretty faces don't really say much. I think they have to have a special—one of the openings I had, Lillian Hellman came, I thought, my god. I'd love to paint her. But she's very vain. And I don't think she'd want to—

[00:12:38.34]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Because you'd probably be too honest.

[00:12:39.84]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, that doesn't help much with it. [Laughs.]

[00:12:43.20]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's always been something of a problem. Eakins—

[00:12:44.74]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I mean, you know, Sargent, for example, was the master society painter, and he couldn't stand it after a while. And he wanted to do other things. But Eakins never flinched. I mean, he didn't—of course, it didn't make him too popular. People wouldn't take the paintings.

[00:13:02.76]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No, no, it made people mad. Do you think that they—do think it's a superficial thing that people—

[00:13:06.99]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Vanity?

[00:13:07.62]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah, well, that people don't want to accept the way they may actually look, or at least, be perceived by another individual?

[00:13:15.90]

JOYCE TREIMAN: See, that's the thing. You just hit on something important. I mean, the artist contributes as much to the person as—I mean, it's a kind of—you don't know what percentage is what.

[00:13:28.07]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And it's an exchange.

[00:13:29.15]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, exactly. And if you don't get that, you haven't gotten anything. Like, I tell people, I'm not making a portrait. I'm making a painting. See, there's a difference, which I think many people don't understand what makes a painting and what makes a portrait—I mean, their idea of a portrait. So sometimes, it's hard for them to accept it.

[00:13:52.74]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Do you have preconceptions when you go into—let's imagine a situation where you have—it's just you and a model. In other words, you have then the opportunity.

[00:14:06.68]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Thousands of choices.

[00:14:08.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. Yeah. And you've got—but you you've chosen an individual. And the session is planned, and all that—

[00:14:15.86]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Many times, I will find an extreme point of view in which to paint it, rather than just plunking the model in the middle. It has nothing to do with anything. You've still got to be doing a painting—a painting that works plastically, as well as the other things I've been talking about, so that I may go all the way around to the back and get on the floor. I mean, it's a matter of point of view, and a point of the way the light hits it and all that. But then the other stuff comes in. But I don't want to make a boring painting, I mean, if I can help it.

[00:14:50.71]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, yeah. I'm glad to hear that.

[00:14:52.60]

JOYCE TREIMAN: [Laughs.] It's always not easy. The longer you paint, the more difficult it gets. Everybody thinks, oh, it's going to get easier.

[00:15:00.70]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You had an exhibition relevant to our discussion here, a small show, entitled, "The Model in the Studio," in '76—I gather it traveled.

[00:15:16.06]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yes, it did.

[00:15:16.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But did it start in Palos Verdes?

[00:15:20.47]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right.

[00:15:21.11]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And that was in November/December, '76. You had obviously been working on a particular series.

[00:15:28.85]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, it was actually—what it finally worked out to is I would go down and use a free model. And I'd go every week. And I decided on a format of, like, 12 by 16 because it was always so ridiculous to me. People bring huge canvases and think in three hours, they can really do something. It's kind of nuts. So what I really was after in that whole series was this really zeroing in on looking. And I had found that before that, I was beginning to generalize, and I wanted to renew myself.

[00:16:05.30]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see. You wanted to correct the mistakes you were starting to make, is that—

[00:16:09.08]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, you—as I said earlier, you fall into convenient ways of saying things. And if painting gets too convenient, I'm not interested in this. If isn't difficult—I don't know whether it's the puritan element, or whatever it is, but I needed something that I know is going to be difficult to do, otherwise you can crank out passable paintings. But if you know anything, you know the difference. And it bothers me.

[00:16:42.98]

Sure, maybe over a period of a year, if I'm lucky, I can do a couple of paintings that I really think are great, or near good. And anybody that kids themselves—or even in a lifetime of painting, if you've got four that you're convinced are worth keeping around, you're lucky. But there are a lot of artists that think every mark they put on the paper is hallowed.

[00:17:09.56]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And that's not so.

[00:17:10.85]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No. We know that, except it depends on what kind of commerce it gets involved in.

[00:17:16.40]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, that's of course, a whole other—

[00:17:17.69]

JOYCE TREIMAN: We can get into another thing.

[00:17:19.19]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —topic of discussion. Why is it, then, that within the realist tradition, the nude figure plays such an important part? If you look at this *Art in America*, for instance, which just came out, a lot of the reproductions, illustrations of paintings are nude figures. And that is just a small part of what's available to the realist painter, and yet it seems it takes almost an inordinate—

[00:17:49.88]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Amount of space in the artist's work—the figurative artist's work.

[00:17:55.07]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. Not all artists, of course, but what are your observations on that? What is so special? What is—

[00:18:01.28]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I think we went through that before. I think there was a kind of body language that's important too. And also, the human figure, to some extent, is probably—well, the Greeks—it goes all the way back to that being the most ideal form. And they did create their own ideal situations and so on. So there's a tremendous challenge about doing a nude figure, I think.

[00:18:31.31]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What is the challenge?

[00:18:32.39]

JOYCE TREIMAN: But I think one of the problems that came up with figurative painting is that 20th century clothes were so boring. That's why I like to dress—sometimes I will do kinds of things, and put strange hats on people—strange hats, or strange—I mean, certainly, the '60s helped a lot—

[00:18:53.91]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: More colorful.

[00:18:54.03]

JOYCE TREIMAN: —when we started being more personal about their clothes, and so on. There was a whole period where everybody was in the dark blue suit and white shirt. It made it hard for painters. They had no way of costuming anybody that expressed their body or their—I mean, my god, what fun they must have had in the Renaissance.

[00:19:15.33]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yes. Exactly. Do you feel the clothes then, are used to express—

[00:19:19.31]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I think they are very expressive. Of course.

[00:19:21.66]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:19:25.43]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I think everything that an individual does is expressive of themselves. I think many artists have stopped observing. And I think it's unfortunate. But I think it's still—we're making another circle. I mean, art doesn't progress. It goes in circles, like the circles of

hell, purgatory. It goes maybe up, but around. And I have this theory about the grandfather's law.

[00:20:03.42]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What's this?

[00:20:04.20]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, what your grandfather—his children didn't care for his taste. But the grandchildren like what the grandfather—

[00:20:15.78]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right.

[00:20:16.05]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It takes that amount of space of time for things to come around again. And things have accelerated. I'm talking about generations—

[00:20:23.83]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Of course, that could be an element of nostalgia as well, the phenomenon of—

[00:20:27.57]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, no. I think, for example, it's happening in architecture. I mean, my son went to architecture—I said if you start—keep on making boxes, I'm really going to be angry. And now suddenly, the great guru of modernist architecture, Philip Johnson, is now doing you know Chippendale tops and—

[00:20:46.75]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Neoclassical.

[00:20:47.74]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, and ornament. And all that kind of thing which they had trashed is now—and I think it's similar to what's happening in painting. It's happening in theater. It's happening in all—it's interesting how almost all the arts, these things occur. I mean, imagine the fullness, for example, of putting on a production like *Nicholas Nickleby*, eight hours of this vast period of humanity, the Victorian age, and trying to span this whole period and contemporary audiences responding to that. I think there's a need for, again, feeling about something and a richness that—the modern world was so pared down and plastic, that the human being really needs to be fed emotionally. And I think that may be part of the reason for this return to figuration, that it is possible to do both.

[00:21:49.50]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What about an element of—I was going to say narcissism—an interest in the part of painters in the human figure, in human beings.

[00:22:01.54]

JOYCE TREIMAN: But how else do we really relate to the world but through our own sense of scale, you see? And to deny that is kind of stupid. I mean, sure, you can say there's a huge—we all know intellectually that we're really minuscule on this Earth.

[00:22:19.29]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But we're all we've got.

[00:22:20.19]

JOYCE TREIMAN: But how else do we relate ourselves to the world?

[00:22:23.52]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And it's also a basic humanist notion that the proper study of man—

[00:22:27.84]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Is man.

[00:22:29.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Maybe it's almost that simple.

[00:22:31.65]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And I think this is in an age of great tensions and anxieties, because they're stockpiling bombs. And they talk about it like it's nothing, everybody does.

[00:22:46.63]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: They have to do it, they tell us.

[00:22:47.52]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And so if you think about that, you're in big trouble.

[00:22:55.25]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What about the element of vulnerability with the nude figure?

[00:23:04.41]

JOYCE TREIMAN: What do you mean?

[00:23:04.94]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Vulnerability without protection. You see, without clothes, without protection, certainly in our society, one feels exposed and vulnerable. Does this bring something that's worthwhile to the experience of painting or drawing the nude figure?

[00:23:20.93]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, it's interesting. When you're painting a nude, it becomes another object.

[00:23:28.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: This is your experience? This is what you—

[00:23:29.90]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, yeah, because you're getting so interested in the plastic things and so on, that you just don't think about it in those terms, and being vulnerable in the sense you're talking about.

[00:23:46.28]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm hmm [affirmative]. Unprotected. Exposed.

[00:23:48.29]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah. I mean, it's just a natural thing to be doing. It's really strange.

[00:23:51.78]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But again, of course, it is. But it raises another very interesting question that I don't think has been grappled with. There are notions about the studio situation. And I'm not speaking from direct involvement. I'm learning that it is—there's a painter, a nude model, and that here is a formal exercise, an arrangement of shapes, and that this is thoroughly professional. Now, we all acknowledge that a serious artist—

[00:24:21.00]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It is their attitude.

[00:24:22.83]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But on the other hand, there are plenty of paintings that are charged with eroticism and sexuality.

[00:24:29.58]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Oh, through the whole history of art.

[00:24:31.23]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Some great paintings, as a matter of fact—

[00:24:33.43]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That's right.

[00:24:35.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think of Titian, and so forth.

[00:24:35.10]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Oh, you can think of Boucher and all those people.

[00:24:38.40]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's right. And I think it's absurd to assume that the artist—

[00:24:42.93]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That has nothing to do with it, right?

[00:24:44.52]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. And how do you feel about that? Sometimes, of course, it's intentional. It's that the market—

[00:24:52.73]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Demands it.

[00:24:54.39]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —for like the Rococo period.

[00:24:56.37]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Right.

[00:24:57.84]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: With Philip Pearlstein, of course—

[00:24:59.73]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, he stays immutably mute.

[00:25:01.59]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right, and yet, the images have a capacity. I think through his art, he neutralizes them to a large degree. But they have the capacity with a slight turn, that potential is there for because of what we associate nudity with, which to a large extent, is sex.

[00:25:21.69]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I really can't think of somebody right at the moment that's working in that sensuous situation.

[00:25:28.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, look at the *Art in America*, some of the new realism.

[00:25:31.30]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah. But then it's all—it's very uptight. I mean, when they're doing nude, it's almost descriptive, rather when you look at a Rubens, it's far from descriptive. I mean, it's very sensual.

[00:25:45.72]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right.

[00:25:46.41]

JOYCE TREIMAN: So the attitude is different, at least, contemporary art. I'm not saying what you're saying isn't a valid thing to be maybe reintroduced. Why not?

[00:25:57.03]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, it's an important part of life, so why shouldn't it be incorporated into art?

[00:26:00.27]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Exactly. And it's a kind of an interesting thing you bring up. I may have to think about that.

[00:26:05.43]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, I think that it—

[00:26:06.12]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I think this avoidance of it is kind of strange in this kind of—

[00:26:09.69]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Liberated—

[00:26:11.58]

JOYCE TREIMAN: —open, sexual situation that we've been through, or are going through, or are in, that they have studiously avoided. It's a very interesting thing you bring up.

[00:26:23.26]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's right. Surprisingly, I think, puritanical attitude is to make it okay.

[00:26:27.73]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah, to make it "art," in quotes, what their idea of art is. But for example, Rubens, and Watteau, and Boucher, and all those people, it was just an added dimension to their art. It was art. But they added—this the kind of thing we're talking about. Instead of paring away at art with this minimalist situation, why not put as much in as you can, make it as rich as possible?

[00:26:53.42]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And it was very honest. Is it part of the experience or not? Is an artist a human being or is—

[00:26:57.24]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, it depends if it's a male model or if it's a female. [Laughs.]

[00:27:01.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's true.

[00:27:01.17]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I mean, your responses are different if you're—I don't like to bring the sexes thing in it. But my responses are not going to be the same to a woman's body in that sense, as a male artist.

[00:27:12.72]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right. Exactly so. And it's unavoidable now the extent to which that affects—the final work of art. It may be small. It may be large.

[00:27:21.93]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I would think that the men do have those kinds of responses. I don't know. Maybe not while they're working on it, but then they—I don't know.

[00:27:30.00]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Life goes on. In other words, there is the—

[00:27:32.25]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It's part of living.

[00:27:33.15]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Something before and something afterwards. And my feeling is—and one of the reasons—

[00:27:38.97]

JOYCE TREIMAN: However, we were talking about the Bay Area Figurative—that never entered into their work either. You see? Shapes became the equivalent for bodies.

[00:27:52.92]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Of course, but with the German Expressionists—

[00:27:54.92]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, then you have something else.

[00:27:56.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Something quite different.

[00:27:57.32]

JOYCE TREIMAN: That isn't sensual. That's almost masochistic.

[00:27:59.84]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. I mean, it's weird. [Joyce laughs.] But nonetheless, it was very clear. They'd go off with their wives and mistresses to islands and so forth, and run around—

[00:28:11.04]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yeah. I mean, who's to say—I don't know. But possibly, it's going on now. I don't know what's going on with models and mistresses. Picasso, of course, was a great exponent of—

[00:28:19.92]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: There's an example—

[00:28:21.17]

JOYCE TREIMAN: —the model and the artist.

[00:28:23.39]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Absolutely.

[00:28:23.51]

JOYCE TREIMAN: And it ran through his work constantly. And who he was painting was important to him, obviously.

[00:28:29.21]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think that this has been more—even if it was in the closet, it was more sort of understood in the case of male artists and female models that—But nowadays, certain women artists—I can think of a few, especially in New York—

[00:28:43.15]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Oh, they're doing males.

[00:28:44.06]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah, and doing them in a way—

[00:28:45.77]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, they're doing it from other motivations.

[00:28:47.69]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What do you suppose the motivation is?

[00:28:47.78]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I mean, it's trying to get even.

[00:28:50.00]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Catch up?

[00:28:51.17]

JOYCE TREIMAN: [Laughs.] Let's get even.

[00:28:52.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think you're right.

[00:28:54.35]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Well, I did actually sort of tongue-in-cheek with the Eakins painting I did, where I had Eakins—there was always the woman model. So I thought, well, I'll put him in the other situation.

[00:29:09.39]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: On the other hand, Eakins did a lot of male nudes, not so much in finished works.

[00:29:14.78]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Yes, he did.

[00:29:15.47]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But you've got the—well, when you think of the series of photographs—

[00:29:21.86]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Fantastic.

[00:29:22.04]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That he took, and how he incorporated them into paintings, he—

[00:29:26.90]

JOYCE TREIMAN: But you never had a feeling of sensuality about them.

[00:29:30.87]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No, that's true. But the motivation that led him to do it is—

[00:29:35.78]

JOYCE TREIMAN: He needed male figures in some of his larger compositions. And he used them. But it's always interesting. When I was doing this, going every week to paint from the model, rarely do we have a male. And I kept saying, "How about a male model?" Finally, we get a few, but there was usually clothes. It's interesting how the men reacted to that.

[00:30:00.86]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. Well, that, I think, is a part of the larger question. I see that our tape is just about running out.

[00:30:08.43]

JOYCE TREIMAN: We covered a lot of ground.

[00:30:09.81]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think we have. As far as I'm concerned, we've done pretty well. Is there anything you want to add at this point, in one second or less?

[00:30:19.73]

JOYCE TREIMAN: I'd like to mention that about the great figurative tradition that runs through all of Western art, and the marvelous paintings that have come down through the ages. Certainly the period of negation of figuration is a kind of stupid attitude.

[00:30:38.01]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Kind of an aberration.

[00:30:39.42]

JOYCE TREIMAN: It was. It was kind of an aberration, whether it was a critic's phenomena—I mean, it's much easier to write about something if you don't have to talk in the terms we were talking about. And for example, if you see a red painting with a dot in it, you can use your own philosophy about it, and it'll work. I mean, anybody—

[00:31:00.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No matter what it is.

[00:31:00.94]

JOYCE TREIMAN: No matter what it is. You can read your own thing into it, rather than being forced to look by the artist.

[00:31:08.52]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Sounds good.

[00:31:10.50]

JOYCE TREIMAN: Are we run out?

[00:31:11.74]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think we're about run out on this. Thank you, Joyce.

[00:31:14.70]

JOYCE TREIMAN: You're welcome.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]