



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Marguerite
Wildenhain, 1981 March 14

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service. This interview received support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative Pool.

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions
www.aaa.si.edu/

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Marguerite Friedlaender Wildenhain on March 14, 1981. The interview took place in Guerneville, California, and was conducted by Hazel V. Bray 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. Additional information from the original transcript has been added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution.

Interview

[00:00:03.33]

HAZEL BRAY: I believe this recorder is working now. Today is March 14, 1981, and I am with Marguerite Wildenhain at her home at Pond Farm, Guerneville. Marguerite Wildenhain and I will be talking about her work in pottery. My name is Hazel Bray. Marguerite, since your biography as a potter is so well known, and you have written three publications, I think we will dispense with the usual biographical questions and go to something that will give us a chance to just talk.

[00:00:58.81]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, I think that's a good idea.

[00:01:02.82]

HAZEL BRAY: And so my first question is going to be a general one. At some point in your early life, you had many choices in the arts. What led you into work as a potter?

[00:01:18.99]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, well, I have to start very far back, actually. Because when I was 15 and 16, I thought I'd become a doctor. I had a very good natural history teacher and a book with all the drawings of the innards, and the inside of the ear, and the brain. And that so fascinated me that I could draw those all practically out of memory. And first, I thought this was what I was going to be, a doctor. Then I found out that actually, it was a drawing that interested me, not the ear or the brain.

[00:01:58.66]

HAZEL BRAY: How did you find that out, that it was the drawing that was more—

[00:02:02.04]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, because after a little while, I could draw this all out of memory, and then it stopped being so exciting for me. And I saw it was those shapes that interested me. By the time I was 17, and I was nearly thrown out of the school because I told the teacher that it was unjust that he was punishing a girl who hadn't done anything wrong.

[00:02:28.34]

And so I went out of the school when I was about 17, and went to art school in Berlin. And there, I learned to draw first. And then I learned to sculpt—the first elements of sculpting. And I was then 17, 18, something like that. Then there was a year in England in a boarding school. My parents wanted me also to speak English properly, and my mother was English by birth. And so we all went to England.

[00:03:03.25]

But when I came back from England, which was when the First World War started, I had to decide now what I would do. And then I thought I'd go to art school. And at art school at the Berlin Academy, I learned to draw and to sculpt. And I sculpted after plaster mold, that's a—plaster model, that's how they—

[00:03:28.07]

HAZEL BRAY: Do you remember some of your instructors?

[00:03:31.11]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No.

[00:03:31.96]

HAZEL BRAY: Not anything?

[00:03:32.11]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: They have not made a dent in my brain. No, not one of them can I remember. I also know that I didn't do it terribly long, because I was bored with it. And then I wrote to try to find a job where I could be independent of my parents. I was only about 20, or 19, or something. And I found a job in a porcelain factory in Rudolstadt in Thuringia.

[00:04:02.34]

HAZEL BRAY: Thuringia? How do you spell—

[00:04:04.80]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Rudolstadt? R-U-D-O-L-F-S-T-A-D-T [*sic*], Rudolstadt. That's in my book, too, Rudolstadt. And there, I got—I saw for the first time how the thing was fired in that factory. I made the designs. There were two older girls. And I was, so to say, their apprentice after a while. And then later, I did my own designs. And we made the designs for the factory. That means we painted some "beautiful" things, you know, horror things. [Laughs.]

[00:04:43.59]

HAZEL BRAY: Pretty things?

[00:04:44.49]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Pretty things, pretty things on the plates and things. And then the girls in the factory made a thousand copies of it or whatever it was. And there, for the first time did I see, as I move through the factory, that I would see a man sitting at the wheel, and kicking the wheel, and making models. And I was so fascinated by this that I went into that room and asked him to tell me how that works. And he said, "Well, I can't tell you how it works, but I can show you." And so he threw like this for me. And from then on, I was like, caught. I thought, that's it. That's it. That's not stupid little paintings I'm putting in

there. But that's it, the making of those pots.

[00:05:34.31]

And he showed me a few things. But that was not enough that I could have learned from them, also because he only worked for the factory for the [inaudible]. But I used to go on big hikes every Sunday when we had the day off. And on one of those Sunday hikes, I went to Weimar, where there had been an Academy. And during the war, it had been closed up because the man was a Belgian director, and he had been in the war.

[00:06:04.08]

And when I arrived there at that Weimar Academy, there was Gropius' program there nailed on the wall. And I read it. I stood like hypnotized in front of it. And I thought, well, that's it, you know. And I saw the "Cathedral of the Crafts," and so on. And I have the book here. And that decided me into going into the crafts. Before that, I didn't know craft, or art, or what, you know? I had never really thought about it. And also, what do you know when you're 22? No, it's true, you know? You think you do.

[00:06:47.49]

HAZEL BRAY: There was, as we all know, no other school like the Bauhaus.

[00:06:53.22]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, the Bauhaus had not started.

[00:06:54.97]

HAZEL BRAY: It hadn't.

[00:06:55.80]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It had not started yet. He had only put that big sign up there, the "Cathedral of the Future," and so on, and so on. And I was so fascinated by this proclamation of Gropius that I thought when it starts, I'll be there. And it was maybe three months later.

[00:07:15.53]

HAZEL BRAY: I see. So you were among—

[00:07:18.26]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I was the first potter at the Bauhaus.

[00:07:21.23]

HAZEL BRAY: The first potter there?

[00:07:22.55]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, there were only a few anyway. And there was no class bigger than ten or twelve students at the Bauhaus. There were only sixty students all in all.

[00:07:30.83]

HAZEL BRAY: So you began work at the Gropius school, his program then, about 1918, 1919?

[00:07:40.86]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. 1919, I think.

[00:07:41.57]

HAZEL BRAY: 1919.

[00:07:42.78]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, it's a little while ago.

[00:07:44.84]

HAZEL BRAY: Just a little.

[00:07:45.98]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, when people ask me, "I guess you've done that a few years," I say, "Yeah, sure. I'd say a few years, yeah, I started in 1919." At the Bauhaus, we had to register for the whole course. First of all, you had to go through an examination. That means you were a six-month trial student, so to say, before you were accepted. They didn't accept everybody. And then you were accepted. And then you had another six months in whatever workshop you had chosen you had decided to go.

[00:08:24.87]

HAZEL BRAY: At that time, did they have the basic first year program?

[00:08:28.85]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No.

[00:08:29.73]

HAZEL BRAY: That came in later?

[00:08:31.44]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh, much later. It came when the Bauhaus became known and all the students came from the United States. All at once, we were flooded with American students. They were going to Europe, they were going, you know, like this. And that's when Gropius said, "Hey, we have to do something. We can't just have everybody just come like this."

[00:08:51.93]

And this focus that came, as I say, a year later about—So we were all accepted, more or less, on our good looks. I don't say "good looks" [Hazel laughs], but on our capacity for work, let's say. We had all drawn and sculpted, and done something. And then there were two masters. There was the art teacher, let's say the art master, and the craft master.

[00:09:24.72]

HAZEL BRAY: Who were they at that time?

[00:09:26.58]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, he started that then, and you had to be accepted by both. Every student was on the trial period. And if the craft master said, "Well, he has just absolutely no talent with his hands; he's not a craftsman—" You can see that if a person has some abilities, or if it's only more awkward on him. And if the other master, the art master, would say, "Well, but he has no talent," then he was not accepted. They had both to agree that both the hands, and whatever else it needed.

[00:10:04.79]

HAZEL BRAY: Tell me something—this is an important point, the craft master—was this a person who was a potter, or a weaver, or—

[00:10:16.19]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. That's right.

[00:10:16.88]

HAZEL BRAY: And there was a different craft master—

[00:10:19.57]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: For every workshop. And they were all craft master from outside. Not one was from a college. They were all craftsmen of their own. Krehan, my master— his father, and grandfather, and great-grandfather had all been potters. The workshop in which I learned was marked 1770, and was all potters. You see, the family had all been potters, and the same with the weavers, and so. So there was a background of a craft behind—not art school. This is always what annoys me here. You see the difference?

[00:10:53.71]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes. That's why I think this is a very important point.

[00:10:56.66]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I think so, too.

[00:10:58.77]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, and the master for the arts approval, what kind of person was that?

[00:11:06.45]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Gerhard Marcks for the pottery.

[00:11:07.35]

HAZEL BRAY: For you.

[00:11:08.64]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And Klee was for the weavers. And Feininger was for the glassblowers. And Moholy-Nagy was for the metal, and so on. But we all had to go first through the six-month trial period. And both of those masters, I mean the art and the craft master had to say, "Yeah, he has some talent. We can take a chance on him." But if one of those didn't agree, then he was not accepted.

[00:11:31.62]

HAZEL BRAY: This was a very small school, and deliberately so.

[00:11:35.01]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: There were only sixty students all in all.

[00:11:37.26]

HAZEL BRAY: How many?

[00:11:37.92]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Sixty.

[00:11:38.70]

HAZEL BRAY: Sixty altogether? In multidiscipline?

[00:11:42.81]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, and all of us were actually grown-up men or women, because it was after the First World War, you know. Many of those were fellows who came with their military outfit, that's all they had, completely poor, destitute of anything, you know.

[00:12:00.30]

HAZEL BRAY: But mature beyond their years I would say, by the experience of being in the war.

[00:12:04.29]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: They were also older on the whole, although I was—when was that, 1918? I was 22, you see? But still, I thought [inaudible] when I came to the Bauhaus, maybe. But there were some in their thirties and even near their forties. And the atmosphere was very serious. Though we had a grand time with festivities, too when we let loose, you know?

[00:12:29.76]

HAZEL BRAY: Uh-huh [affirmative]. I know this is beside the point, so I don't want to take too much of this interview with it. But I want to talk with you later on about what it was in Gropius's mind that made him seek out a different form of functional education that was so different than any of the previous academies, and—

[00:12:53.01]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. Well, he had seen that all those academies in Europe or in the United States were on a dead end, because the people started making art, thinking that to paint, and so without knowing the craft behind it. While formerly, they knew their craft, and if they were very good, they became artists.

[00:13:16.11]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes.

[00:13:16.41]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It wasn't the other way around. Here, everybody who goes to art school calls himself an artist. And it's crazy; they aren't, you know? But if they said, "I'm a potter, and sometimes I sculpt," or, "I'm a painter—I'm a wall painter, but sometimes, I paint a picture," or whatever it may be, that's honest. And that's how it was. And Gropius thought this is how it has to come again. We have to go back to the crafts. And he said we have to build the "Cathedral of the Future." That was always his saying, the "Cathedral of the Future," where every craftsman had a part in building that big cathedral. But everyone was a first-class craftsman.

[00:14:02.10]

The master craftsman could say, "You fellas, you make all those capitals on those columns. And you make all those glass windows." And they couldn't make it. Well, we couldn't. You see? And this was the idea of Gropius. And we all went for it with fire, because we thought—I remember, when I read this first announcement of Gropius before the Bauhaus started, as I said, I'd been hiking around, and I came in Weimar. And I saw this big announcement there. I nearly swooned, you know, I was so excited. I thought, well, that's it. And when it starts, I'll be there. And at that time, I was working for the porcelain factory. And I was there when it started, you see? So that's that.

[00:14:47.88]

HAZEL BRAY: It is amazing, these circumstances.

[00:14:51.37]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, exactly. And you see what is so strange is, you or I, we don't have it in the hand. Why did I just walk in that day when that saying—that thing was there on the wall?

[00:15:06.38]

HAZEL BRAY: Amazing.

[00:15:07.52]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah.

[00:15:08.39]

HAZEL BRAY: Amazing. Well, that led you into pottery. But it also led you into—

[00:15:12.90]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Into the Bauhaus.

[00:15:14.47]

HAZEL BRAY: —into sculpture. It was the Bauhaus.

[00:15:15.92]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You see, Marcks is a sculptor. And we used to draw with him once a week. And he would always, like a sculptor, correct from the point of view of form, not color, or anything like that. We're finding out would have been different. But the fact that we were only six or seven there in Dornburg, but we were all potters, that was because we had a sense of form. The potter is the one who goes like that with his hands.

[00:15:45.74]

HAZEL BRAY: So that the Bauhaus was not centralized. You worked in Dornburg where the pottery was?

[00:15:54.24]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, and I'll tell you why, because the other Bauhaus was centralized in Weimar. But when Gropius contacted Krehan, the master potter, he said "I'll leave this place to teach those kids there. They'll all be telling me what to do instead of my telling them what to do." [Hazel laughs.] And so he said no. He said, "I'm not going to Weimar."

[00:16:15.39]

And so Gropius was smart enough. And he said, "Well, if we send the kids to you, what about that?" "All right, then they are my apprentices, and then I'll train them in my shop." And that's what happened. So we five or six potters, we moved to Dornburg, where there was an old building of the Grand Duke of Weimar, who had, during the Revolution, been deposed. And so it was all empty. And there were the stables. And above the stables were the living quarters of the stable boys. There were eight rooms, about like this. And this was just perfect for us. So we all got a room of the stable boys, you know? And the bottom stables were made into workshop. And Krehan, the master, had a kiln built there, and so on. And then that's where I was seven years.

[00:17:09.57]

HAZEL BRAY: And Marcks came there?

[00:17:11.37]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: He was glad not to have to live in the city. And he had a family of a couple of kids. And they could live—we could live free, in a way. And it was very important for all of us, because first of all, we were not dependent on the city. So we all learned something else than city life, you know?

[00:17:34.93]

HAZEL BRAY: That was quite a change for you, having a rather sophisticated—

[00:17:38.82]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. For me, not so much, because I was actually born in the country, although my parents had a house in the city. But I was personally born in the country. They had also a house in the country, and I was born in the country. And both my

parents were very much outdoor people. So I knew quite a bit about nature, but not in the same way as I do now, you know. When I came here, and I didn't know one tree from the other, I felt very uncomfortable because that never happened to me.

[00:18:08.78]

HAZEL BRAY: [Laughs.] All right, so we have you working in—I would call that an ideal circumstance. It's an environment—

[00:18:19.77]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, ideal circumstances are always there, only people don't grab them. I think, I mean, hundreds of people could have been in the same circumstances, but they would say, "Oh, I don't go in that little village." And that was actually the case. When the pottery was first started, it was just a part of the Bauhaus in Weimar. And when it was decided that it would move to Dornburg and that you had to register for three years for that little village, I was the only one who did of twenty students.

[00:18:51.41]

HAZEL BRAY: I see.

[00:18:52.46]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You see? The others didn't want to leave the big town, and go into wilderness, and have nothing, no comfort, or nothing. So you see, that makes it different, too.

[00:19:04.43]

HAZEL BRAY: But the possibilities of working, learning, and staying with clay was your deciding point?

[00:19:14.97]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, I don't think I analyzed it at that time. I just—I am, how shall I say? I'm sort of spontaneous. I mean, I don't analyze the thing and then do it on the whole note. I mean, if I have to write a letter to the government, I do. But not—[laughs] in my living, I do what I think is right, let's say. And at that time, I thought, that's it. That's it, outdoors, and with the master—he's been there for so many hundreds years; learn pottery. And I don't really think I thought too much.

[00:19:51.39]

HAZEL BRAY: When did you begin to feel that you had a way of handling clay? When—

[00:19:58.69]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I think that came already before that, because when I first was at the Academy there in Berlin—or the School of Fine and Applied Arts; it's not exactly the Academy. I was doing woodwork. And for a year and a half, I was a wood carver. I still love to carve wood. I still love it. I pick up wood on the coast all the time, and chisel with a little knife, you know, I have several of those things even here. And so first, I thought wood would be it, you see?

And for about a year and a half, I took a course at the Berlin Arts and Crafts Academy there in wood carving. But then I found that my temperament just wasn't satisfied with that. I mean I analyze it now like this. I didn't analyze it so exactly then. But I realized that I'd be chiseling like this, and the face, and it was—the nose would be cut off. And then I found it'd take me two hours or four hours to replace that little piece of wood, and reglue it, and recut.

[00:21:13.22]

And little by little, I found that it was not my material, although I still love to carve it, you know? And I think it was in that porcelain factory where I saw those men making pots that I decided that was it, because it went fast like this. And somehow, that fitted my temperament, somehow. And also that it wasn't too intellectual. You see, I'm not intellectual.

I mean, it doesn't mean that I'm dumb or that I can't think. But I'm not intellectual by character.

[00:21:52.07]

HAZEL BRAY: You want your hands on.

[00:21:53.78]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, my hands, my feeling, and everything. But my head too, I don't say that. But not—I don't start with the head. I go through the landscape like this and pick up a rock, maybe. And I go like this, or somehow, that's always the hands.

[00:22:14.12]

HAZEL BRAY: In your three years there at the pottery, what kind of process did you go through?

[00:22:24.26]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, well, we first were with Max Krehan—that was the potter. And he was an old-time potter. And we learned like he would have taught an apprentice of his, right from scratch from the beginning. And we have to make hundreds of this sort, and hundred of this sort, and 500 maybe of this sort. And he would go around and say, "Well, we'll keep that one, and that one. The rest, you can throw away." That was a learning process. After a little while, he will say, "Well, we can keep all but those." And after a little while, you were good enough that he said, "Well, we can use them all."

[00:23:02.87]

And then when we were on that set, that meant when we knew our craft well enough that we could do that easily, then we were free to do whatever we wanted. And that's when the real creative part started. And that's when Marcks started coming in. Because before that, he—in the first, he would only draw with us once a week. But he didn't criticize what we are doing, the potter, because there was nothing to criticize from the point of view of art. And I don't have it here; I have it on my traveling show. I have actually—that's the only pot I brought with me from Europe.

[00:23:41.93]

HAZEL BRAY: The one with the inscription?

[00:23:43.85]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes.

[00:23:47.36]

HAZEL BRAY: Was that inscription repeated in the catalog for that exhibition?

[00:23:52.70]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: He wrote it very well in English. And then he looked a little more closely and said, "But make the foot a little stronger." "Fuß etwas kräftiger," make the foot a little bit—and I've always kept that because this is really quite an unusual pot. It could sometimes be a very valuable pot.

[00:24:11.99]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, it has a very important meaning for you. We noticed that in the exhibition.

[00:24:17.93]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, I told my students, and they all looked. They all found it. Because this is also—Marcks had a wonderful way of not hurting our feelings, but saying the truth when he would criticize. He would say, "Yes, all right," he said. "But the leg is too big.

And this could have been a little narrower. And if you had pulled it in a little more, the bend had gone a little higher. And maybe the foot had been—but the way it stands on the table is pretty nice." [They laugh.] So he had torn it all apart, and made us attentive to those different points that were not good. But still, it didn't want to hurt you. So he said whether something we did was pretty nice.

[00:24:59.81]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, he built it back up again. But he didn't leave you totally satisfied.

[00:25:03.83]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: He didn't—we didn't feel hurt. We also—this is also how I criticize. Because if you say it's good, the kid gets so conceited. And if you say it's bad, he gets disappointed. And both are wrong, because there's always something that is not too bad in even the worst pot. No, it's really true. And there's always something that's not too good, even in a good pot.

And if you can explain to the student—and my students see that now, that it is not a personal criticism. I don't say you're stupid, or you don't try, or so. It's a pure criticism, like if you say "two and two is five," we you say, "No, it's four." And since they understand that, I can criticize very hard. And sure, they sometimes are shocked because they think it was good, and it's not that good. But then they learn little by little that there are many different possibilities, you see?

[00:26:07.21]

HAZEL BRAY: Absolutely.

[00:26:07.84]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Between an excellent pot, a very good pot, a good pot, and a passable pot, and a bad one, you know?

[00:26:17.65]

HAZEL BRAY: Let's go back in sequence. Let's go—we'll come on to criticism again in some specific kind of instances. Then you were at the Bauhaus working—

[00:26:33.13]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It was Weimar, not in Dessau, you realize.

[00:26:35.92]

HAZEL BRAY: That's right, this is the first Bauhaus, and before the new buildings, and all of that, and they moved to one.

[00:26:45.16]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: We always thought that was the only Bauhaus. The Bauhaus after that, we thought was a bad imitation.

[00:26:51.85]

HAZEL BRAY: It had too many—was it too diverse? Or what?

[00:26:57.22]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, on the contrary, it became so—Moholy-Nagy, everything mathematical, and everything abstract. Before that, the people were much freer, Klee, Feininger, and so—they did what they wanted. And we, to a degree, we were free to do so. No, we thought the Bauhaus stopped when we moved to Dessau.

[00:27:19.87]

HAZEL BRAY: How much contact did you have with a person such as Klee or with Feininger?

[00:27:25.69]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, we had—how should I say? The Bauhaus students were very divided. Sometimes we fought over the whole night. We'd get together, whether Klee was right, or Feininger, or Kandinsky. There were two main divisions, I would say. On one were all Kandinsky and Moholy-Nagy and sometimes Klee. Klee was sort of in between. That means there were those that were more mathematical and more abstract, and those that weren't. And that was the big division. And that's why we fought sometimes, I'd say the whole night through.

[00:28:08.90]

And Klee was liked, but always remained sort of distanced from the students. He was a very special man, though. And we admired him. But we were not all for his art. Marcks was more naturalistic in that way. So he had more understanding. And Feininger was also in a way more naturalistic, though he was not naturalistic, either. The differences are quite small, actually. It had a lot to do whether it became a theory or not. If the man was free like Klee to let you do what you wanted, we didn't count his theory against him.

But if Moholy wanted everybody to think like Moholy, that we didn't like, because we thought that can't be it. There can't be only one way of doing it, you know? And Moholy was a very kind man. And so if one of the students didn't have a place to sleep, he could always knock at Moholy's door and get a couch to sleep on. In that way, we liked him. But we made fun of him. We didn't take him seriously as an artist. Not a bit, not a bit. It was later after he came here to—but he was—

[00:29:33.88]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, he's considered as a theoretician today, not as an artist, per se.

[00:29:38.20]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. But here, they talk about the Bauhaus, and they always talk about the Chicago Bauhaus. Well, that was never the Bauhaus. After all, the Bauhaus had Feininger, and Klee, and all those people. Not only Moholy—Moholy was only one.

[00:29:53.65]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, the Chicago Bauhaus had an interesting curriculum, though. It was—

[00:30:00.43]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Which Bauhaus?

[00:30:01.81]

HAZEL BRAY: The one in Chicago. The School of Design.

[00:30:03.38]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh yeah, but the—but that had nothing to do with us anymore, you see?

[00:30:09.01]

HAZEL BRAY: No, no.

[00:30:09.67]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It is like, let's say, if you call me the Bauhaus—sure, I've been at the Bauhaus ten years or something, but I'm not the Bauhaus, because meanwhile, you evolve in a certain way. And Marcks says—if you heard Marcks talk about Bauhaus, he's awfully sharp, and awfully critical of it, because he thinks that so much has been spoiled there also. You know, I mean, by forcing it in Dessau like this into one direction, instead of opening it up like it was in the beginning. But I know I can't—I can't tell you—

[00:30:50.69]

HAZEL BRAY: Most people equate—I'll bring it back to pottery for a moment—Bauhaus with design for industry.

[00:30:59.15]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah.

[00:31:00.05]

HAZEL BRAY: And with design, rather than with pottery, or—

[00:31:05.66]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. Well, that, I can talk about if you want, because at that time, there were, in the shop two fellows: Lindig and Bogler. Lindig had been a sculptor before the Bauhaus was the Bauhaus in the old art school in Weimar. And when it became the Bauhaus, he just moved with it. And Bogler had been an officer in the General Staff. And he was tall, and from the Baltic province, and very arrogant, like this. My master was very small—

[END OF TRACK AAA_wilden82_7721_m]

[00:00:03.53]

HAZEL BRAY: [In progress] —didn't care to be looked down upon by a taller man who seemed arrogant.

[00:00:09.15]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, no, it wasn't Marcks. It was the pottery master, Krehan. Krehan was small. Marcks was tall. And Marcks could have given an answer. But Krehan was a simpler man. And he just, he had always [inaudible] like this, and like that. And you can see that a man in his—45, or something, and the other was 25, he didn't like that. Well, but that was a little side remark. What are we—

[00:00:42.44]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, we were talking about the direction of the Bauhaus.

[00:00:47.27]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, well, in the beginning, it was not so abstract. Marcks, Klee, Feininger, they all did what they wanted. And Schlemmer, who was the painter, they're all there. Feininger had only one student. And there was no workshop that had more than ten or twelve. The biggest workshop was the carpentry shop—the carpentry shop where there were about ten, or maybe eleven, twelve, but not more. And the pottery had six or seven. And some had only two or three. But Gropius thought it better to have two or three good ones than a dozen bad ones, you know? And that was his point of view all along. And in the architecture class, there were some years where there was no student. He was the head of the architecture—Gropius. Why? Because they had to go to one of those schools where they learn about putting masonry together—

[00:01:48.75]

HAZEL BRAY: Engineering and—

[00:01:50.07]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, and all that. And so he didn't take them before they had gone through that. Some had already. Then they came to Gropius. And I know there was one year he didn't have any, because there was nobody that had gone through that. So you see, they didn't fill the classes of with students like they do here. And I remember that story that the director of [California College of -Ed.] Arts and Crafts once told me when I first came here of a group—there was a conference of directors of art schools in Berlin somewhere, years back. And the American delegation was the biggest, of course, the biggest country. And there were twelve men. And all other countries had only one representative: the British, the French, you know. And so they came to the Academy in Berlin.

And Liebermann, who was the painter, was the head of the Academy, said, "How many students does a professor like that have?" He said, "Well, this class has only one." He said, "One? And how much do you pay your professor?" And that was pretty high. And he said, "Well, how can you do that? One student and that high salary?" He said, "Well, you know, we're supposed to be the Berlin Academy, the best in Germany. We can't afford a bad master. We have to pay them well. We also can't afford bad students. And if there's only one, we have one." And that was something unbelievable for those American men there. They couldn't understand that you could run a school that way. And in a way, that was at the Bauhaus, too. There were not more than sixty or seventy students, all in all.

[00:03:41.26]

HAZEL BRAY: I suppose that one would be typically American, in question, I mean, not being able to afford a bad student—who decides who is the bad student? The master?

[00:03:55.91]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. Well, the students, how they were chosen, we had to go through the six-month trial period. That was the choice. Whether we came from the street or from the Academy, it didn't make a bit of difference. The difference was what we could do with our hands or with our heads. That was it. Honestly, how shall I say? There was much less red tape. I was astonished how complex it is always here. I mean, if a fellow has talent, why can't he just go and say, "Yeah, I can draw, try me out," and then they take him, without any other—

[00:04:37.88]

HAZEL BRAY: A fair number of people feel that way today. The apprenticeship programs are going back to that.

[00:04:45.74]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, we had to register for three years. And we had to sign that, because the masters were regular craftsmen, craftsmen. And they belonged to the guild. And the guild can't take students. They can only take apprentices. They don't have this idea of "student." And an apprentice is in the care of the master for three years. He's even supposed to take care of his moral behavior [Hazel laughs], which we thought was very funny at that time because we were all grown up, of course. It's made for 14- or 15-year-old kids. But there's something about it, you see? The master is responsible that the student also learns something.

[00:05:33.73]

HAZEL BRAY: So at a certain point, when you were proficient in throwing, in making various pots, bowls, plates, pitchers, and so on, you were actually working on Krehan's production.

[00:05:45.96]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. Then we could do whatever we wanted.

[00:05:47.58]

HAZEL BRAY: And then you did your own work as well?

[00:05:50.05]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. We did our own work. And Krehan didn't bother us. But then we had only to deal with Marcks. You see, every workshop had two masters, the apprentice master was teaching us the craft. And Marcks was teaching us the art, if you want to call it that. And so then our master was Marcks. But the two masters, both Marcks and Krehan, got along very well because they had both a sense of quality. It was not always the case. It was sometimes jealousy, because if the craftsman, let's say of the weavers or whoever it was, was jealous of Feininger, or whoever—it may be Klee—that sometimes gave friction.

[00:06:32.78]

But on the other hand, we were not under the tutelage of the craftsman when we were through our apprenticeship. Then we were completely free to do what we had to do. Our master would come in once a while and pat us on the back for the fun of it, or to see what we were doing. But not because—it was Marcks who was the master. He came every day, you see? He helped us with building the kilns and all those things that required technical knowledge. Marcks knows nothing about [that sort of -Ed.] pottery. Actually, he knows only about sculpture. You see, I mean, he can see whether pot is good or not. But he knows [little -Ed.] about the making of it.

[00:07:16.78]

And I think—you see here, I have not taught any glaze calculation, or anything, because that's the only thing the schools can do. They have all the chemicals and everything. I would spend all my money and all my time for them to try to figure out a few glazes. And that wouldn't help any, because that's just the only thing they learn in the schools. What they don't learn is to make pots.

[00:07:39.18]

HAZEL BRAY: Okay, let's—because we haven't done a biography, we can come on to the school here shortly. But let's—I think it'd be important to have people be aware of what kind of examinations you took to reach—to be called a master.

[00:07:59.04]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, when I got my masters, for instance? Okay, I had been seven years a potter. That was a prerequisite. Three years an apprentice, four years a journeyman. All the Bauhaus people went through it. That was the official requirement. After that, you could apply to become a master. And the master did that for you. If he thought you were fit, he would apply to the guild.

[00:08:28.50]

HAZEL BRAY: Otherwise, you'd stay a journeyman?

[00:08:30.57]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, you remain a journeyman. And you can never get a teaching job—

[00:08:34.95]

HAZEL BRAY: I see.

[00:08:35.52]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: —at the school, if you're not a master. You see, a journeyman is a man who knows his craft, but has not proven yet that he has an idea of his own. That's the master. Yeah, well, that is very true, you see?

[00:08:50.25]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes. I understand.

[00:08:51.05]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, but this is one thing they never tell you. I say it all the time. I say "No, you're all good journeymen; now show me that you can get to your master." I mean, it's like you teach somebody to write. And so, okay, you can write. And he knows all the letters. He can put—but has he got something to say? That's where the man comes who has talent, yeah? Or ideas.

[00:09:15.93]

And so when the time came that we were ready to become a master, my master would apply at the guild for a meeting with the head guild man like this and would introduce you as a future master that was ready to take his master examination. And so I had to go there. And

at that time, I was the first woman who ever became a potter down there. And they just couldn't believe it. In fact, the most offered me his son in marriage, in case!

[00:09:53.36]

HAZEL BRAY: What year was this? Do you recall exactly?

[00:09:55.62]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: '25, I think.

[00:09:57.39]

HAZEL BRAY: 1925.

[00:09:59.19]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, it may be a little later, '26. I don't really remember. I have it somewhere. But I don't know.

[00:10:04.39]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, I think—I'm sure that it's in the publications in your books, too. I think the time is down there somewhere.

[00:10:10.62]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Maybe. I forgot it.

[00:10:11.43]

HAZEL BRAY: Or certainly in some biographies.

[00:10:12.66]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, anyway, so I had to go to that master, guild master. And he said—he interviewed me a little. And then he said, "Well, what do you want to make as a masterpiece?" And I said, "Well, I thought of maybe a dinner set because that's pretty complex. There's so many parts. And you have to do—you can also show what you can do."

[00:10:34.83]

He said, "All right, and how long do you need?" And I said, "Well, I'll fire in the kiln of my master." And I could only fire eight weeks from now or twelve weeks from now. So all right, so we agreed on the time. And then he said, "And then you have to make a calculation of the glazes, and this, and that, and also what it will cost in retail." A very down-to-earth affair.

[00:11:07.43]

HAZEL BRAY: Were you working in stoneware then?

[00:11:10.31]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Was I what?

[00:11:11.30]

HAZEL BRAY: Were you working stoneware then, or what?

[00:11:13.91]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, about the same temperature that we use here.

[00:11:18.71]

HAZEL BRAY: Mid-range?

[00:11:19.16]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Not exactly, because they are quite different kilns. And every kiln always changes the material. Some parts were much higher, and some were lower in that kiln that they had there. But that doesn't matter. Stoneware, that is just like if you ask me, if you're a seamstress, you always only work in silk or something, you know.

[00:11:40.16]

HAZEL BRAY: No, I was curious to know because of the feel of that kind of clay and what—I was trying to visualize what your masterwork turned out to be.

[00:11:53.28]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, I don't have anything that my master did here. But they had—do you remember that jug with that inscription?

[00:12:02.57]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes.

[00:12:02.84]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: That was salt glaze. And my master had a big kiln that was over like that. And the things were fired in capsules and saggars. And on top of the saggars, there were always certain single pieces, like that jug or bottle. And they got that salt blue on there. So he had two different wares. He had ware instead of the saggars, which was like glazed, like for everyday use. And those others, that were more decorative. And he used to make quite a few pots for his own pleasure with figures on it or something. He always put them on the top there. So one never knew exactly how they came out. You asked me about that master, yes?

[00:12:55.49]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes.

[00:12:55.97]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: So, he asked me how long I would take. And I said, "not long," and so on. And when the time came, I bought that all in. And he looked at it, and he turned it round. And he asked me how I made that glaze and all this. And then I got my degree. Not a single question about technique. Of course, a good potter can see that. It doesn't have to be explained. You know, I see a pot somewhere, I can see how it's made. Just like a good seamstress can see where a skirt was cut, or where—and so on, without taking it all apart.

[00:13:34.50]

And then my master invited the master who was the, how shall we say, the judge, for a glass of wine. And so—and I was left standing there. And I could hear what he said. And the master who had given me the degree, he said, "Too bad my boy married that girl six months ago. Shouldn't have married another one than her." [Laughs.] That was the highest praise he could say on me. [They laugh.] I got a kick out of that. But that wasn't my master. That was the other one.

[00:14:22.90]

Well, and then I was master. And then that evening, master invited me for dinner. And he had a bottle of champagne or something, and he said, "Now we call each other by the first name." I had always said "Professor Marcks," or "Mr. Marcks," at least. Now we call each other by first name. And you know, I was so odd at that time. Here they can't understand that we were awed by our masters—Klee, Feininger, and so we thought so highly of them that it took me more than two weeks before I said the first time, "Gerhard" to him. I just couldn't make myself. I always wanted to say "Herr Marcks." [They laugh.]

[00:15:02.96]

HAZEL BRAY: I'm going to break this off here for just a little bit. You've been—

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:15:07.82]

Let's go on now from the time that you became a master, you began to teach.

[00:15:13.97]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. Well, I taught before I was a master, actually, although it was illegal, because when the Bauhaus broke up and went to Dessau, the school in Halle got me as a potter. So I was there. But then I had to get my master, and I got it about maybe six or eight months later. So then I taught there. And I taught from 1925 to 1933. And I taught pottery. And then I made all those models for mass production for the porcelain factory.

[00:15:53.99]

HAZEL BRAY: Was that Royal Berlin?

[00:15:55.70]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, Royal Berlin, Königliche Porzellan, as they called it, you know. And I must have made at least—I can't remember—I would say fifty or sixty different models there.

[00:16:13.28]

HAZEL BRAY: How did you go about making those models?

[00:16:15.74]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, the director of that porcelain factory had been the museum director in Munich before he was called as director to the porcelain factory in Berlin. And as such, he had contacted me years before. He wanted to have some pots for his museum. And that's why he knew of me personally. I mean, of what I had done, otherwise, he might not have known. And the first thing he did when he became head of the porcelain factory in Berlin was to be sure that he could contact me to make designs for the porcelain factory.

And so that's how I started making designs for the industry. And I made many. And I worked quite a few weeks in the factory. And then I had also—they gave me a trained man, a plaster maker. I would design the models, and make the master mold, the master model. And he would do all the other finishing molds that need to—it's a very complex procedure. And we worked sort of together. I'm making the creative part, and he was making the technical part. And I did that for quite a while, 'til the Nazis came into power. And I was thrown out. I had to leave from one day to the other.

[00:17:45.84]

HAZEL BRAY: And your work at the school as a pottery teacher—did you also maintain studio work in addition to this?

[00:17:56.18]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, I didn't have a studio of my own. I taught. At Halle I had about maybe nine or ten students; I can't remember exactly. One of them was my future husband, Frans Wildenhain. And that's where—he had been a few months at the Bauhaus before he came to Halle—three months, I think. And so he had a little bit of the same background that I had.

And then when I started there, he became also my apprentice. And later when I was making pots, he became my helper, and then he became a master of his own. But he was also trained by me. He has never acknowledged that, because men don't like to say that they've been trained by women, especially not European and German men.

[00:18:41.07]

HAZEL BRAY: Maybe not at that time, either.

[00:18:44.79]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. Well, anyway, so I taught. And I made those models for the industry. Well, what else do you need to know? I sometimes was free for weeks in the factory working with them. And I've never forgotten that time when I made my first model on the wheel for the industry, for porcelain. The porcelain—I have some there; I can show you afterwards. The porcelain that Berlin made was very thin—one millimeter thick. So the models had to be exceedingly correct. You can imagine.

[00:19:26.10]

HAZEL BRAY: This was versatile and adaptive on your part to go to what character a machine can do, and what you would do with porcelain, in terms of style and different—

[00:19:41.12]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, it was different. It was different. That's why I went to that factory to learn it. And what I was going to tell you was just this first apprenticeship, I made a model on the wheel, because that's how you have to make the models. You make them upside down. You make them like this because you have to pour the plaster cast on it.

[00:20:01.75]

And I admit that—and I thought it was fine for [inaudible]. And the master of the model workshop there had been out for a while. And he came in and saw me on the wheel. And the wheel was about there, where the pillow is. And he came in and he said, "Can't use that one." I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "Look, it's at least a tenth of a millimeter off." I said "What?" A tenth of a millimeter. You see, if the porcelain is that thin, a tenth of a millimeter is a big part of it. But that fellow could see it.

[00:20:45.55]

HAZEL BRAY: That's amazing.

[00:20:46.60]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, it was amazing. I learned then. So I said, "I don't believe it." And then he took—he had a point, like this, he let the wheel run. And he went like this, you see? And you could just barely—but barely see that there was a teeny, teeny little wheel there. So you see, I learned that way too. And then I made many models. And then the fellow who was with me did all the plaster casting and all that.

[00:21:19.34]

HAZEL BRAY: I think it's not—I think it's important not to confuse the two kinds of ends, purposes, I mean.

[00:21:28.93]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I thought it was very interesting for me to make porcelain, because it was a completely different problem. It's like somebody who has worked always in wood, let's say, a sculptor, all that was having to work only with bronze. He has to change his whole way of making. I, too. And that was very interesting. I learned a great deal. And partly that I'm so able is partly because I have this background, you know. All the others have only—here, they only learn about glazes. But the glaze is just the start over there. Actually, turn it off a minute.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:22:11.68]

Do you see? I knew something about form. And I knew also something about the craft. When the craftsmen there in the plaster workshop told me what was the difficulty, I understood that. Well, generally, the designers in porcelain, they only design on paper. I was one who knew something about the craft. And so they were very helpful to me, too, because they understood that we spoke the same language, really.

[00:22:39.52]

HAZEL BRAY: To leave these forms without a surface decoration was quite a breakthrough in design at the time.

[00:22:48.04]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, well, I decorated some, too. I remember Hindenburg had his 80th birthday or something like that. And they chose my dinner set, or my tea set, or something for a main birthday present of the Academy—of the thing. And it had to be covered with gold, of course. [Laughs.] Well, it was all full of gold lines.

[00:23:10.73]

HAZEL BRAY: For an important—

[00:23:13.83]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You see, those are two cups, those two teacups, look at the profiles, how different they are.

[00:23:21.83]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, this one lifts, and then it—

[00:23:24.71]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And that one is more in one curve, yes. But then also listen to— [chime sound]—the highest porcelain in the world, cone fourteen.

[00:23:40.19]

HAZEL BRAY: Fourteen?

[00:23:43.90]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And that was a little coffee set. I made that for the airport Leipzig-Dresden. They wanted—they had a new very modern airport that was built at that time. And I think—I don't know if Gropius designed it, or Mies van der Rohe, or somebody. Anyway, I was supposed to make all the porcelain for the restaurant. And those small pots that I had on the show, those little—they were made for that airport.

[00:24:15.16]

HAZEL BRAY: I see.

[00:24:15.46]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: One-person coffee pot, you know, or two-person—those little ones like this. So I learned many things that were very down-to-earth. And I think this is the good part. This is why I can also run this place. And this is I think what our schools don't teach here. They are all in a blue moon, all thinking only of glazes. Well, the glaze is like the dressing. You have to put it on something first.

[00:24:48.41]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, okay, I'm going to stop—

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:24:53.84]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You see—

[00:24:54.71]

HAZEL BRAY: In 1933—

[00:24:56.03]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, I went to Holland. That was just when the Nazis were coming into power. And you know, I'm Jewish. And the burgermeister of the city in Halle was very fond of me, and thought highly of me because I had really put that workshop into the public eye. You know, like this. And he came personally to my studio. And he really was in tears when he told me that he thought I had to leave, because the Nazis otherwise would destroy the whole school. That's how it was. So in God's name, I said, "Sure, I'll leave, goodbye," you see? And so I left the next day, just like that.

[00:25:43.84]

HAZEL BRAY: And you went to Holland. But you dropped everything—

[00:25:46.00]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I went—no, I went first to Switzerland, where my parents lived. And I talked things over with my father. My father was a businessman in the silk business. And he had a good head. And I thought he could advise me. Frans was—we were married, and Frans not being Jewish, was not thrown out like I was, see? So we talked about whether I should move to Switzerland, or what? And father said, "No, don't go to Switzerland. Switzerland is too small. It has only four million inhabitants. There's not enough of a market for people like you." And he was probably right.

[00:26:26.32]

And he said, "But Holland has about 14 million inhabitants. It's a progressive country, and has all the colonies as background, 30 million inhabitants. Rotterdam, Amsterdam, the big cities. And there, you can probably make it." So all by myself, I went to Holland. Then I looked around, and I looked around, and I looked around. Everywhere where I thought there might be a possibility to get a place, to rent a place or something, a pot shop somewhere, and then I found one, and after quite a while, I found one in a little town called Putten.

[00:27:08.54]

And there was an old, little old factory there that the man had left because he couldn't make a living. But he was making, of course, purely commercial stuff. And I thought, well, it's near the railroad. It's not far—not too far from the big city, 60 kilometers from Amsterdam. I thought maybe that's a possibility. So I tried to find out how I could get hold of that. But I did it all by myself. And I must say that was just about the worst thing I've done in my life.

[00:27:42.18]

HAZEL BRAY: How so?

[00:27:44.61]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Because first of all, I'm not a businesswoman in that way. It doesn't interest me, that sort of stuff. And also, always alone, that's not so easy in a country that you don't know. Well, I found at last this place, Putten. And I wired to my husband, who was still in Germany at that school, "You can quit, I've got a place." And so that same day, he went to the burgermeister, and he quit his job, and he came over. But you see, I learned pretty early to have to do things on my own. And people come up here and always say, "How did you find a place like that?" I say, "Find? One doesn't find a place. One makes a place." And I always say it takes about two hours before I can tell you the story. So you haven't got the time. [They laugh.]

[00:28:50.97]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, we may just touch upon some of the things about that. I know that we can read *The Invisible Core* and come up with some of the material there.

[00:29:01.63]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, yes, some of it. But *The Invisible Core*, I've tried to be as—how shall I say? Not to make it exciting, too exciting—as low-key—that was the word, as possible. I don't like to show my feelings like this on public—in public. And I could have written quite another *Invisible Core*. But I thought it through, and I thought, no, it's better to make it very, very—as simple as you can. And the people who have understanding will see

what was—what I don't say, will understand. That's namely *The Invisible Core*. You know? And I think that has come out true.

[00:29:49.09]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, let's—since we're moving in sequence, at Putten you had your studio and shop. And what kind of work were you doing there?

[00:30:05.59]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: More or less—first of all, a potter makes thousands of pots, because that's the way it is. It takes only a minute or two to make it when you know how to make it. But you have to make many, because not everyone is a first class. And then if you're a good potter, you eliminate the worst. And you keep only—the bad potter makes them all mediocre. You know? You see what I mean?

And so in Putten, we very quickly got customers, visitors who would come, like to come here, and then find you, like they find me here, or somebody like that—find you, and then support you because they thought you were better than average. And the few good shops in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and so—they very quickly found us out. We went with a carload. We had a car, a carload of pots. And then when it didn't take much time, and we—being a small country, also Holland being accustomed to pots—

[00:31:11.50]

HAZEL BRAY: Oh, yes.

[00:31:11.86]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You see, they have Delft. And the Delft was called the "Porseleinen Fles." That means the "porcelain bottle." And we called ours the "Het Kruikje," which means the "little jug," that brought the things somehow in relation. We right away had the idea, "Kruikje" must be a pot shop, you know? I have somewhere a photograph of it. So there we were seven years, you see, 'til the Nazis again, marched particularly in Holland, and I fled again. And I fled with the last—

[END OF TRACK AAA_wilden82_7722_m]

[00:00:03.00]

HAZEL BRAY: Tape number two. Interview with Marguerite Wildenhain.

[00:00:07.23]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes.

[00:00:08.04]

HAZEL BRAY: Marguerite, we'd come to the point where you were leaving your husband, and your workshop, and your—

[00:00:17.57]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And Holland.

[00:00:18.88]

HAZEL BRAY: —your pottery, and Holland. And that was early in 1940 with the Nazi invasion.

[00:00:25.92]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, 1940.

[00:00:29.73]

HAZEL BRAY: And you say you caught, almost, the last boat?

[00:00:32.94]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, I caught the last boat—Dutch boat, anyway. And we drove—no, what do you do in a boat—you sail. We sailed through the channel, full of mines. And they sailed very slowly, because they had all the officers on deck, because they were afraid they could hit a mine. And they also went without the motors. They just let themselves drift like this, figuring out that if they hit a mine, they would probably be in the same sort of movement, rather than if they went like this. And then, we arrived in New York. And I thought the Statue of Liberty was disappointingly small. [They laugh.] That was my first impression, because I always thought it was big. And when you arrive, it's awfully small, because New York is so high.

[00:01:28.80]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes. But when you get on to the island, it looks fairly large when you're right there.

[00:01:34.01]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, well, that's something else. Yes, well, I had a brother in New York. My brother had come through in the First World War. My father had sent him off because he was 17, and Father was afraid that he might be drafted into the First World War. And he didn't want that. And he sent him off before he was drafted to some friends in New York. So this brother, George, who still exists—he met me when I arrived in New York, so I wasn't quite alone. And I stayed in his house for about three months or so. All this is, though, in my book, you know.

[00:02:14.16]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, it is.

[00:02:14.73]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It's so long.

[00:02:15.97]

HAZEL BRAY: It is. So let's go on to a—first though, I think it'd be interesting—

[00:02:21.84]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I got a job at Arts and Crafts.

[00:02:23.74]

HAZEL BRAY: You were teaching at Arts and Crafts.

[00:02:26.08]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes.

[00:02:26.25]

HAZEL BRAY: And I think that your comments about education would be important. And I'm sure that some of your thinking starts with the experience there.

[00:02:39.78]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, yes. When the professor there said that I could come and teach there, I said, "All right, I'll be there at eight." And he said, "At eight o'clock? You don't have to come at eight. They don't come before nine." But I said, "But I thought the class starts at eight." "Oh, yeah, but they don't come before nine." I said, "They will."

And so I came at eight, and there were four students. And those, I put on the wheel and started teaching them. At around nine and ten, the others dribbled in. And then, they saw those four on the wheels, and working like this, and they wanted to be shown how to do it. I said, "I'm sorry. I showed it at eight o'clock. Those were all here when I showed them. I don't

show it again." The next day, they were all there at eight o'clock.

[00:03:25.45]

HAZEL BRAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was this a summer class, or a regular semester course?

[00:03:29.44]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No. Wait a minute. It was a summer class, yes. But then, afterwards, I was there as a regular teacher when they saw that I knew something. So I taught there. And then—[sighs] it's all so complex. I went to North Carolina, because there was a job offered to me to start a new school, something big, like the Bauhaus. And that very night that I arrived there, the director died, had died that very night.

[00:04:00.94]

HAZEL BRAY: What school was that?

[00:04:02.17]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Banner Elk College, a Presbyterian college, I believe. And they wanted the director of that school had—of Banner Elk, whatever it was—had wanted to start an art school or a craft school built more or less on the idea of the Bauhaus. He had, as a helper, a man who had been in Europe. I have forgotten now his name. And he had not told the trustees anything about it. And when I came, that was sort of a surprise. And that very night, that director had died. And when I arrived there, those trustees didn't know a thing about me, and they were absolutely confused. They didn't know what to do.

[00:04:46.78]

So I roamed around for three or four days, picked up rocks, and things like that, 'til at the end, they said, well, we won't go through with that. You'd better go home. And they paid me my trip there and back, you know? And so I came, and there I was, again, here. And at that time, Jane and Gordon Herr had brought this piece of land. [Pond Farm -Ed.]

And they wanted to start the school here. They had visited us when we lived in Holland, and asked us if we would come if they started a school for the crafts. And we had sort of said, "Oh, sure, we'll be glad to go to America," you know, like one would say. And so when I arrived here by myself, I contacted them, and I stayed with them a little while. And then they bought this piece of land that they were going to start this school. You have probably met Jane or Gordon.

[00:05:39.47]

HAZEL BRAY: No.

[00:05:39.92]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No?

[00:05:40.28]

HAZEL BRAY: No.

[00:05:40.82]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No. Well, Jane died in '52. And that was more or less the end. Trude Guermonprez was later here, and Victor Ries. And Victor couldn't make it here, because it was too far away from the city, the people that wanted that expensive jewelry all over the city. And he was always traveling around. And Trude got married to Elsesser, and that left only me. And that's how it is. You see? What a long story, huh?

[00:06:12.81]

HAZEL BRAY: But how was that school seen? I know that I've seen advertisements for the early pot shop.

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: How it started?

[00:06:22.98]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, what were your goals, and—

[00:06:26.14]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, we all had this idea of the Bauhaus [inaudible] craft. You see, Trude had not been at the Bauhaus, but she had been in Holland, which was sort of the end of the Bauhaus. You see, I was in Holland too at that time, and Frans, and others, too, and Marcks—well, Marcks wasn't here. Yes. But that's how it started.

[00:06:50.79]

She had to escape because she was Jewish, too. She had to escape from the Nazis, and she came to Black Mountain College. And I went to Black Mountain College, not as a teacher, but I once gave a one-week seminar there at the same time that Leach and Hamada were there. They wired me, "Would you be able and willing to stand up to Leach and Hamada?" I said, of course. [They laugh.] And so they got me there, you see.

[00:07:19.80]

HAZEL BRAY: There must have been some fireworks, Marguerite.

[00:07:22.05]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, it was fun. It was fun. It was really fun, because I'm always ready for a fight. Not for a fight, but I believe in what I'm doing. So that that's it. Well, then, what did you ask me?

[00:07:40.11]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, we were thinking about organizing the school—

[00:07:45.57]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. Well, we thought we could organize a school here. We would have, maybe, a potter, a weaver.

[00:07:53.13]

HAZEL BRAY: Okay. I'm going to stop.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:07:56.33]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: [In progress]—or to do the same thing in the way as we had done in Europe, you see, based on crafts. But then, as I say, Victor moved out, and Trude went to San Francisco. And who else was there? That was it. Trude and me. And that broke it up. And then Jane died in '52, and Gordon lost interest. Jane had always been more active than Gordon. Gordon—I mean, he had interest, but he never stuck to anything that he did.

[00:08:40.50]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, he built the—

[00:08:43.11]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: They bought the place.

[00:08:44.58]

HAZEL BRAY: —the other building, and remodeled the barn, didn't he? For the—

[00:08:50.10]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. He put that point on the barn, yes. But of other buildings, he built those chicken houses, because during the war, if you didn't want to be drafted—and he didn't want to be drafted—you had to have 10,000 chickens.

[00:09:06.59]

HAZEL BRAY: Oh! [Laughs.]

[00:09:07.16]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: That was the point. If you were a producer—

[00:09:10.49]

HAZEL BRAY: I see.

[00:09:10.88]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: —a food producer, you could be exempt from military. And so Jane and he put their heads together, and they thought, it's better to have 10,000 chickens and not go into the war. So he built that chicken house there, and later, that became the weaving and the pot shop, in the beginning. And then it was—later, again, he tore that down. After that, Trude left, and Jane had died. Gordon completely forgot about the craft. And he was flimsy, somehow. He was not without talent, and one could like him. But talent is only one thing. We learned that in the Bauhaus, too, that if you didn't have what it takes to use that talent, that was no good. You know?

[00:10:02.05]

HAZEL BRAY: You need this balance.

[00:10:03.80]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Hmm?

[00:10:04.22]

HAZEL BRAY: You need this balance.

[00:10:05.24]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. You need also discipline. The talent alone is not going to do it. And so that ended, just like that. He just gave up one day, and I was left alone here with a pot shop. And since then, I've been alone. And I've rebuilt it in my own way, you know?

[00:10:26.99]

HAZEL BRAY: How did students begin to hear about the school here?

[00:10:31.67]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You'd be astonished. The first year I was here, the Chinese student was the first one to find me. The Chinese know Hui—Hui Ka-Kwong. Hui came one day with a teacher from San Jose, I think, or somewhere like that, where he had stayed overnight, or something. And that teacher wanted to show him what was going on. He had been a student in sculpture and pottery in China. And he came to America when the Chinese Communists took over. They took his land away, and the parents moved out. And he went to America. [Hazel coughing.] Can I help you?

[00:11:17.11]

HAZEL BRAY: No. No, you go right ahead.

[00:11:18.86]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Another glass of water?

[00:11:21.53]

HAZEL BRAY: [Coughing] I'm getting over a cold.

[00:11:23.28]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh.

[00:11:24.05]

HAZEL BRAY: You go right on. [Coughing.] But they found you?

[00:11:34.79]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, they had heard of me. It was maybe two years after I had come here, maybe. Or a year after. Anyway, I did not have any students yet. And Hui is someone able, look—He had been looking all over the country for a place to work, and never did he find anything but the schools. And he didn't want to go to school. He wanted to go to a master, because that's the way one teaches in China. One doesn't go to school. One goes to master as an apprentice. And he came with this other fellow, and before we were through here, oh, they were here perhaps an hour, he said—

[Telephone rings.]

[00:12:22.49]

Excuse me.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:12:25.47]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes. We were talking about the students. So your first student—

[00:12:32.05]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: How they found me. Well, Hui, this Chinese boy, came up with some friends who wanted to show him the pottery, because by then, I had already a little bit of a reputation. And before the end of the talk, he said, "I would like to come here." He said it in broken English. And I said, "Well, you know, I've only been here about two years. I don't really want an apprentice now. Also, I have no place to put you up." "Oh," he said, "Me can sleep on the table. Can sleep on the table. Can sleep anyplace, as long as I can work with you."

[00:13:05.61]

And I thought, well, nobody—no American student had ever said that. They generally said, "You'd be astonished how good I am, and how much are you paying me?" That's what they have said, generally, when they want to work with me. And after I had tried to get him off that idea, he was so persistent, I said, "All right, Hui let's have a try." I had an old little cabin there, which was a sheepherder's thing.

And Hui was there, and he was a marvelous student. Probably the most talented I've ever had. When I had that show at Cornell, he was there, too. And every ten years or so, he comes in here, and always, he doesn't want to leave. He always says—turns around like this, and says, "This is my home. This is my home." And he really means it, you know?

[00:14:00.15]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, you had started, then, to do your own pottery and to produce. And you weren't really going to have students year-round.

[00:14:11.97]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, I've never had students year-round. I have had one student who was here year-round, but never students. And that student—the only one was Hui. And he wasn't there the whole year because of that stupidity of the law. He was on

the visitor's visa.

[00:14:33.43]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes.

[00:14:33.92]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And on a visitor's visa, he was supposed to be in an accredited college. And I was not accredited. He had never said a word about this, not being accredited. He had to go every month or so to the—whatever it is, the department of something.

[00:14:51.71]

HAZEL BRAY: The Immigration Department.

[00:14:52.64]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Immigration Department. And every time, he said, "I'm studying," and so on, it was all right. But then they found out that he was not studying at an accredited college. You know? Whether he learned something or not, that, they didn't care for. And I was not what you call accredited. And so he had to leave. And then he went to San Jose—no. And then I said, "Go to Alfred. If you have to go, go to Alfred. At least there, you can learn something." I didn't think they could learn so much in San Jose, and so on. And so he went to Alfred University, and that was a—

[00:15:31.21]

HAZEL BRAY: That's where you learn technical things?

[00:15:32.52]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, it's more technical. But he was so good with his hands, and he could use a little technique. Also, I figured out he probably could make a living somewhere there, because they need all sorts of people, and some who know something are rare. You know? So he did, and that was it. That was the only student I've ever had, except in the summer. But then I saw that people were coming all over, and writing. Even now, every second day, I get a letter from somebody who wants to come and study with me all the time. Well, I've never made an ad anyplace, you know? But my students are my best recommendation. They prove that they know something, and then that's it.

[00:16:18.99]

HAZEL BRAY: People who've come to your summer programs here have really considered it a unique experience.

[00:16:29.71]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes.

[00:16:30.10]

HAZEL BRAY: Maybe you would tell us, tell me, how you made it different.

[00:16:36.71]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, I think what they always say to me, they say, "It's not only that we learn pottery. We learn something about life and how to live." I say if I can do that, that's the best thing you can say about me, you know? Because that's the point. To be a craftsman is also a way of life. It's not only that you have a job, you know? And if you don't have that in you, then the whole craft is nothing. You understand?

[00:17:07.39]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes.

[00:17:07.84]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And I know that it is always a point on which the good student and the bad student separates. Ever so long, then you have a mediocre student, and he wants to have it clear-cut. "I'm going to have a degree when I'm through, yes?" "No," I said, "You don't get a degree. You just know something. But you don't get a—." "Well, then I can't get a teaching job." I said, "I've never been asked if I had a degree, because I knew something." You know?

[00:17:37.81]

But those who don't know anything, they have to have a teaching job, and they have to have a degree. In fact, that is very funny that all my mediocre students are teachers, while my good students are all on their own. They go on their own. They don't want to teach, especially. They have one student, maybe, you know, as an apprentice or something. And the mediocre ones get a teaching job. San Jose State, or wherever it is. Petaluma, or wherever it may be. So how I get my students—I don't know how I get my students. Because they know my work. I've never made an ad any place—not a single one, my whole life.

[00:18:24.23]

HAZEL BRAY: In working, let's go to the rest of the year, then, other than the summer. Then you're firing, you're potting, you're making sculpture, you're firing week in, week out.

[00:18:38.53]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, true. Well, except, I take, generally a month off in the fall. And generally after that, the fire danger is off here, because when the grass is high like that, and the people come with their car and throw a cigarette out, this sort of thing. I've seen too many fires around here.

[00:18:52.47]

HAZEL BRAY: I see. Yes.

[00:18:53.02]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: So that's why I leave, generally, in November, after we've had four or five inches of rain, or something. But yeah. I'm here all year. And I work—it's not that I work every day ten hours. I work—how shall I say? If I need to work ten hours, I've worked, many times, more than ten hours. Like, a fire, it takes twelve hours. Well, I work twelve hours, you know? And when I used to have the big kiln, it was sometimes twenty hours.

[00:19:24.71]

But then, if I feel like going to the coast tomorrow because I've done my job and I can't do anything, stuff has to cool off, I go to the coast. So this sort of life is also very impressive for the students, because they are all in the school somewhere, where they have to be there at a certain time. I start at seven, or at eight, or at six, depending on how I want to. You know?

[00:19:50.65]

But on the other hand, we start school, when I have my class here, at eight. And I remember one student who was a very talented girl—she arrived, the first day, at twenty past eight. We were all already at work. And I just turned around and said, "We start at eight." And it made such an effect on her, she was never late. [Laughs.] I'm very strict the first week. But once they have the rhythm, then I let go. Then, I don't have to be that way. You see? I also see to it that the workshop is clean, that they don't work in a mess, and all those things—that they put the clay away when they're through, don't let it for me to clean up after, you know?

[00:20:39.46]

HAZEL BRAY: All right. Let's go back to how you, in your approach to pottery, differ so much from what is available in the schools. You've talked about the technical training, making glazes, and all of this sort of thing. But I think it goes farther than that.

[00:21:02.94]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh, well, yes. That's only the beginning. That's only the very

beginning. You see, when they are a little more advanced, we don't talk about that at all. They know that all. It's like if you had a class of advanced writers. I mean, you wouldn't talk about to make the letters. They know that. You wouldn't talk about punctuation. They would know that. And that's with us, too. In the beginning, you have to be strict so that they learn all those things that belong into the craft, just like a doctor has to know how to bandage and all that. You know?

[00:21:36.25]

HAZEL BRAY: Did you take absolutely beginning students?

[00:21:39.46]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, absolutely. I've taken absolute beginners, too. I've not always kept them. I mean, I've not always—yeah, sure. I have taken absolute beginners. They're not the worst. The worst are those who think they know something and don't.

[00:21:55.63]

HAZEL BRAY: I see.

[00:21:56.59]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You see?

[00:21:57.01]

HAZEL BRAY: In what way?

[00:21:57.73]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: If somebody has never touched clay, and said, "But I would love to try it, because I would sort of like to." I say, "All right. Let's see." And sometimes, they're quite good. I mean, they're still beginners, but they're quite good. While I've had some that thought they were very good, and hadn't got one thought in their heads. That means after they knew the craft, they hadn't one thing that they wanted to make.

And also, once, a boy who was terribly good with his fingers—that meant he was skillful—but after he had learned to throw and all this, he would always say, "What should I do now?" I said, "Well, that's up to you. I won't be there in your home tomorrow when you start. It's up to you." "Tell me what to do." I said "No, I won't tell you." And then he didn't know what to do. And he gave up. You see? He gave up being a potter because—

[00:22:52.68]

HAZEL BRAY: He would be a good journeyman.

[00:22:54.84]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. He would have been in an old-fashioned shop where the master would have said to him, "You make 2,000 of those and 500 of those," he would have been perfect. But today, that doesn't exist anymore, because the mass production is made in factories. So that's why it's harder today, actually. If you can't make parts that the factory can't make, then you have no chance. And you know, there are thousands of potters that dabble around. Very few make it. Because—

[00:23:23.61]

HAZEL BRAY: I notice that there are a lot of potters making it, if we want to use that term—

[00:23:28.75]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: But not all of them are good.

[00:23:32.68]

HAZEL BRAY: They're earning their living as craftsmen. And they do a kind of limited production, but it's in fair quantity.

[00:23:42.58]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes.

[00:23:43.03]

HAZEL BRAY: And usually sell out of their own potteries, as well as other things. On the whole, though, it's very seldom the sculptural kind of expressive work that's so much a part of your work.

[00:23:59.02]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. They're not good enough. You see, all those people who are trying to make it like this, they only know how to make a bowl and a cup, and a saucer, and a few other things. But they have no imagination. No craft imagination. That is what we did learn at the Bauhaus, you see? That the craft was only the beginning. It's your handwriting. If you don't have something to say, you might as well stop making it. And that's never said enough in the schools. Everybody can dabble in clay like this, but does it have anything to say that is better than what the other fellow does with his foot, or something?

[00:24:36.46]

And this is the point. You know? You see those old-timers, let's say, like in Peru or so, where they've had beautiful potters since thousands of years. It was generally the women that made the pots. But they started when they were two years old. I've seen little girls of two or three years old making little things. I have here a salt cellar made by a two-year-old. And by the time they were ten, they were skillful craftsmen. Well, if you are a skillful craftsman and you have some talent, you can get around. But if you are only a skillful craftsman and have no talent—I mean, no other talent, creative talent—you can't make it nowadays anymore, because there is no need for that. Factory does that.

[00:25:24.55]

And so there are different problems there. And I'm always very anxious when I have a student—I always tell them, "I think maybe you should do this or that," or "maybe this is not the craft for you." You know? I've told them. And because of that, they also trust me, that I won't hide behind a bush, you know, and fool them. I mean, in school, they are always up to say, "Oh, you're just wonderful." That's so wrong, because we are all not wonderful. You know?

[00:25:54.17]

HAZEL BRAY: That's very true. I'd like to go back to a little point in time, to the post-World War II—the early days that you were here, at Pond Farm. And at the point of time when, in the most American art schools and universities, the pottery programs were just recently introduced.

[00:26:24.22]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. Yes.

[00:26:25.57]

HAZEL BRAY: And were, for the first time, sort of growing up, too.

[00:26:31.69]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes.

[00:26:32.01]

HAZEL BRAY: There must have been an amazing difference to you when you first came here in 1940, between what you—

[00:26:44.73]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. What I was accustomed to, and what I found.

[00:26:47.87]

HAZEL BRAY: In Germany, or in Holland, and—

[00:26:51.53]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. And in France, or any place.

[00:26:52.82]

HAZEL BRAY: —public understanding of pottery here. What did it seem to be to you then?

[00:26:58.13]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, I'll tell you. I thought that they were absolutely lousy.

[00:27:03.05]

HAZEL BRAY: Uh-huh?

[00:27:04.34]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I really thought, because it was always started like a school program, and not like a craft. You see, the Bauhaus was not a school in that way. We were craftsmen. We came every morning at seven to work, and we worked an eight-and-a-half-hour day.

[00:27:22.88]

HAZEL BRAY: And that was a traditional craft program.

[00:27:25.27]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. That was tradition. That's how they do it in China.

[00:27:29.63]

HAZEL BRAY: Is it because of our rootless society?

[00:27:31.28]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, but—

[00:27:31.88]

HAZEL BRAY: We have no traditions in California.

[00:27:34.16]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, in here, they would come in like this, wiggling from the tail, I was going to say. You know? And work for an hour, and think that they'd done a great thing. And I can remember, also, that I used to get so disappointed. That was the reason why I left Arts and Crafts. I just couldn't stand it. Jane and Gordon were already here, and I used to come on weekends, come with the bus. And I every time, I was, like, a nervous wreck. I said, "I just can't teach like that, and I won't teach like that." They come at ten. They go away at eleven. They leave all the mess and all that. I wasn't accustomed to that, you know? And I didn't think that that was the way a craftsman works.

[00:28:22.31]

There never has been a man—like, Michelangelo was also an apprentice first, you know? Or Raphael, or whoever it was. And here, they were always doing anything they wanted. And I couldn't get over that. And that was the reason why I quit Arts and Crafts after I'd been there about two years. I just couldn't take it. And then I said I'd rather starve in my own way in here or anyplace else than go on trying to teach those kids who don't want to learn

[00:28:52.10]

HAZEL BRAY: So actually, you didn't really want to be a teacher at that point.

[00:28:55.85]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No. I've never wanted—

[00:28:59.54]

HAZEL BRAY: It was not a goal of yours to do.

[00:29:01.31]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No. No, the Bauhaus were not training teachers. They were training craftsmen. There was not one that was a teacher. Afterwards, they became teachers because they were so good. You see? Albers was probably the only one who was, by birth, a teacher. But we didn't take him—think of him highly as an artist. We thought he was a very good teacher. And he was a good teacher, because he was so intellectual, he could explain it all. But we never thought his art was anything, right?

[00:29:33.14]

HAZEL BRAY: His art is very intellectual.

[00:29:35.60]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. Only. I mean, he was a year in Mexico, and all he did was—I saw it, because I visited him at the time—he had a paper pad, about that big. And he had put lines horizontal and vertical. Not a single circle, or a curve, or anything. In as many, different ways as he could. You know? And during that whole year in Mexico, of all places, where there's so much that you could see and draw, he had only worked on that theme for a whole year. That was his one year that he had off. And I thought, only somebody who an abstractionist to the core could even conceive that.

[00:30:23.34]

HAZEL BRAY: Okay. All right. Let's a stop for a moment here, because I was—

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:30:29.31]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: [In progress]—on to the first movement of humanity.

[00:30:34.27]

HAZEL BRAY: All right. We've missed part of this. So you say that there's something about pottery that is primary.

[00:30:40.69]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. I said—I mean, primarily human. Or may I say that—

[00:30:46.45]

HAZEL BRAY: Primal?

[00:30:47.89]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Primal, primarily human. A monkey doesn't make—well, he makes all sorts of things. But I don't think he makes pots. And of course, no other animal does, either. But there's something about taking a lump of clay, a lump of earth, and taking it in your hands, like that every child will do at all times, and in every country. You give them a little something. It will go like this. And this is what is the fascination of pottery. You see, if I take a lump of clay, I can squeeze it like this. I can squeeze it like this. I can squeeze it. And if I have any talent, it could be a beautiful pot, without any other help. And in no other material would you need a knife, or a scraper, or something. In metal, you need to—

[END OF TRACK AAA_wilden82_7723_m]

[00:00:02.11]

HAZEL BRAY: [In progress]—tape side, you went on to say that clay is so primary to what a person can do that it's—

[00:00:14.83]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It's very tempting. Let's say you're lying in the grass or something, you take a little clay earth, when you go like this, and you notice that this pressure has made a form there. Well, in metal, you can't do it. You need tools. In wood, you can't do it. In weaving, you can't do it.

[00:00:35.61]

HAZEL BRAY: It's immediate, too.

[00:00:37.02]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah, it's an amazing medium. And if you have any feeling for that, that just fascinates you. And this is why there are so many potters, because it is so—it doesn't need any knowledge. I mean, to make it well, it needs knowledge. But the first reaction is completely primitive. Like a monkey, I would say, goes like that, you know? And there's something very, very fascinating about—especially for the civilized man.

[00:01:13.17]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, but now let's move on to your sculpture, your sculpture—

[00:01:18.87]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. Well, that's because I'm interested not just only pottery, you see? I had a year and a half of wood sculpture before I went into pottery, as I told you. And I've always been interested in sculpture, because pottery is a sculpture—fair. You see? And my master was Gerhard Marcks, a good sculptor, a first-class sculptor. So that even went stronger, maybe, than if I had had maybe a chemical engineer or somebody else. But he wouldn't have had me long. [They laugh.]

[00:01:56.04]

HAZEL BRAY: Have you ever regretted not becoming a physician?

[00:02:00.09]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, although I have taken several—during the war, I've taken several first aid classes. And I know a little bit about things, you know? I used to have first aid courses. And so, no, I've not—no. It interests me. When I go to the doctor, I always ask him questions, and he always looks up like that, because I ask those funny questions.

But no, no. I might have been a doctor. I think I could have been a doctor. But more on maybe on a—I don't mean psychological way, that's just the wrong word, but I am a doctor to my students, too. You'd be astonished how many I've actually saved from a stupid life, you know, just by giving them something worthwhile to live for, to work for. That's being a doctor, to a degree, you know?

[00:02:57.91]

HAZEL BRAY: I have a sense that, to you, clay is a lot more than the making of pottery and sculpture. That it's a way of life. And that—

[00:03:08.59]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh, yes. Yes. This is what they always tell me.

[00:03:10.30]

HAZEL BRAY: It's a humanist experience.

[00:03:12.19]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, well I have—I've had dozens of letters of people who—students who thank me. But I can't keep them all. And so one day, I did—some, I sent to the Smithsonian, because they have a file on me. And I thought, well, maybe I should, after all because that shows why I have this reputation. And this girl who is now here from Vermont, she has been five summers with me. She'd do anything, anything to help me. And my other students, too. I have at least—I have at least six or eight who would just do anything. And I'm grateful. That's all I can say.

[00:04:01.09]

I sometimes get tears in my eyes. I don't cry easily. But I think, how have I deserved all this kindness? But they always say that I've done so much for them that they can never make up. Well, if they feel like that, I'll take it. I'm glad, you know? But there's a couple in Oakland, you probably have met them, they were on my show. The two, Wayne Reynolds and his wife [Caryn -Ed.]

[00:04:28.09]

HAZEL BRAY: With the studio.

[00:04:29.38]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Wayne was here—When he first came, he was 22 years old.

[... -Ed.]

That's now 25 years ago or something, because now I think he's 48. And that fellow has stuck to me through all this. He was in Bolivia, no, no, further south, in Chile. In Chile for quite a few years, and he would write to me twice a year. And he's been all over the world. He started at 17 as—on the ship, you know, Merchant Marine.

[00:05:10.39]

And he comes here once a month and stays two days, stays in the cabin, and does all sorts of chores around the house. He has put those new shakes up. And he's going to paint them the next time I come, and so on. And when I thank them, they always say, "Don't thank—don't thank, Marguerite, you've done so much for me. I can never make up for it." And they mean it. And they mean it. And it often takes me like this because it's so much that—it's so much love and so much gratitude, that I wonder how I can accept that, you know?

[00:05:45.22]

HAZEL BRAY: Do you think that it's possible to work beyond this one-to-one situation in making changes in education? Or no—I think that you—I was asking you that question. Well, I guess—let me stop this.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:06:07.81]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: [In progress]—one-to-one, I have a couple of students who teach in colleges that are pretty good, too. But they all go—the students then all go off afterwards when they're through. And then they become one to one like I am, see? And that is the point, I think, instead of training them to be again teachers, train them to be a potter, or a weaver. So then if they want to teach, that's one thing.

[00:06:36.05]

Like, I have taught also. But I don't depend on my students for salary. I depend on my pots. And I think that is the point. I've sometimes asked in the schools when I used to go to a college, what a student is going to be when he is through. And they said, "Well, I guess I'll get a teaching job." And then I said, "Well, what makes you think you have a right to teach? Do you think you're so good that you have a right to teach?" "No, it's not that, but you can't make a living with your own pots." I said, "Who says that? You can't if you're bad. If you're good, I've always been able to make a living. I am not a millionaire. But I've always made a living."

[00:07:20.83]

And then they say, "Oh, well, but you know, you have to—" I said, "Well, in every job, there are things that one doesn't like to do. Those are the things I do the first." If there's a job that I have to do in my pot shop that I don't like doing, it's first thing I do off my mind. I don't push it off. It's the very first thing I do on Monday morning, get it off my mind, then I'm through. But if I always push it like this and week after week, it's going to bother me for months. Well, they have to learn also to live, you know. This is the point, I think, that here, the students always say, "We learned something about life." They always say that.

[00:08:00.11]

HAZEL BRAY: How do you think you accomplished that?

[00:08:02.78]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: How do I what?

[00:08:03.53]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, how do you think you accomplished that? Because I know that so many people feel this way.

[00:08:09.83]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, they do, you see—well, they see me, I say—I think it is this. They see me as a single woman having accomplished what I have accomplished. And I always say, "Honestly, you're not dumber than I." I said, "If I have made it, surely you can make it, too." I talk like that to them. And I don't beat around the bush, and they don't either, because they understand that. I mean, it's straight. And I say, "And if it doesn't go all right, you've wasted a year, maybe. But then at least you found something out about yourself. And that's probably worth that year that you have given." I talk to them.

[00:08:48.60]

And then I also read to them often, things from van Gogh, or Michelangelo, or somebody, something some artist has written, Delacroix, or something where they talk about problems like that. And they see, well, those problems are not their own. They exist for every artist, whether he is a painter or a sculptor. It doesn't really matter too much the problem, like not to waste your time with having all sorts of relations with people who have power. Otherwise, Rodin says you'll be spending all your time making those public relations. You won't have any time to be an artist. And I read that to them.

[00:09:30.46]

HAZEL BRAY: That's true.

[00:09:31.90]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah.

[00:09:32.26]

HAZEL BRAY: Tell me, where do you find, what's the root, the well, the source for your inspiration in your work?

[00:09:39.28]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: The inspiration for my work? Well, that comes from everything. It can come from something like that. It can come from you sitting there. It can come from a cat, or a flower, it can come from anything. You see, I do a lot of drawing always. I don't know that I have much right here. But you see, when I go on—1978, '79, you see whatever just happens to interest me, and they're all made out of memory because those people—they get so nervous when you look at them and they see that you draw them. So all I do is look—

[00:10:15.33]

HAZEL BRAY: And these are three pencil sketches of women—

[00:10:19.77]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Washing their hair in the lake.

[00:10:21.45]

HAZEL BRAY: Washing their hair, and it's Santiago Atitlán.

[00:10:24.78]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And they're all made out of memory. See, there were two dancing. And whatever, it may be—here was a couple. And you see, but they're all out of memory, because I've learned that if I have a book like that, and I draw like that, the person right away turns away. But if I just sit like that and scratch my head as if I wasn't looking at them, you know, and look with all I can look.

And then when they're gone, do that, then I—it's also good for me because it forces me to see only the essentials. I can't remember every detail, but I can remember the main movement of that person, the main—and this is where it goes quickly into my pottery, because this is how my pots look too, do you see? A figure like this, I can see right away thrown. You see, like this?

[00:11:16.98]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, I was thinking that, too.

[00:11:21.24]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. So this is how it goes.

[00:11:23.37]

HAZEL BRAY: How much time, perhaps, elapses between when you're on this trip—

[00:11:29.88]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Sometimes six months, sometimes a year or more. But meanwhile, I don't forget it. It remains somewhere in the back of my head. And I think it's probably not the right word. But I do think about it. I think those two, I want to make them, or those three, or that whatever that boat going like this over the lake—I close my eyes like this, and I try to revisualize it. And I can.

[00:11:59.16]

HAZEL BRAY: But there's something that's added. It's not just simply finding Indians on visits in South America turn out to be sources. There's more than that.

[00:12:12.87]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, let's say like this, I find those South American, just like I find maybe the French or Italian to me, more conducive to my feeling than, let's say, an Anglo-Saxons, Nordics. It's probably because I was born in France. And I have that background and all that. But I also think those tall Anglo-Saxon that are like this, somehow, they are not good for sculpture. [They laugh.]

You see? While the short ones like this, they're more compact. And so I think that has something to do with it, because then I see it right away like a sculpture. A long-legged like this, how do you make those two legs in clay? That's terrible because they have to be hollow. You see, otherwise, they don't fire. And a compact person, like that woman, or whatever it is, she's like this. You can hollow it out. And so I think that goes all together.

[00:13:22.32]

HAZEL BRAY: So your notebooks go with you. I imagine they're here. And you could draw your trees, your—

[00:13:30.32]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh, yes, well [cross talk]—

[00:13:31.40]

HAZEL BRAY: —plants from the window here. Or from the patio, under the grapes.

[00:13:38.74]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh, I've drawn a lot of things like that too, sure.

[00:13:46.88]

HAZEL BRAY: I remember a series—

[00:13:48.53]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You see, I have this little book there. It's marked "front," so that I know what the front is of the book. I will draw anything that I just happen to see sometimes. A student sits somewhere there, and let's see—And then maybe I made a sculpture actually, afterwards. That boy was one of my students there at coffee break or something. And the form intrigued me. And I thought, aha. And then I don't draw it when they are there, because then they get self-conscious. But I go here, and I draw. Those are all drawn out of memory.

[00:14:25.76]

HAZEL BRAY: But do you include drawing in—

[00:14:31.70]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: In my class? Yeah. And the older the students are, the more the students have been here, the more do they come only for drawing.

[00:14:41.60]

HAZEL BRAY: That's interesting.

[00:14:41.96]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: And many of my students who have come last year, and the year before, and the year—only for drawing, because as they get better and they work in pottery, it's not anymore the craft that is so interesting, it's what you do with it. And then they come, and they would like to draw something on a pot, on a plate. And if they don't know how to draw, they can't do it. It looks corny, you know? And this is why they come. And I have many students who come only for drawing.

[00:15:08.28]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, do you paint?

[00:15:09.63]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, I don't paint. I've never—well, as a child, I've painted. But I don't paint, no. I'm more for form than for color. Actually, that is also why my pottery is not especially on glaze. You see, if I was especially interested in color, I think I would have gone more on glaze. But I'm much more interested in form. I can make beautiful pots without any glaze at all.

[00:15:34.77]

While somebody who was for glaze, I mean, for color, wouldn't do that, and couldn't do it. And you see those people in Peru and all the American Indians have never used a glaze. And they made beautiful pots. And that has always already when I was in Europe, I've always admired those—in Paris, in the Musée de l'Homme. That's where I saw those Peruvian pots for the first time. I was maybe 25 or something, and they made a terrific impression on me.

[00:16:06.99]

We all have only certain types. I'm not a genius. And I have only talent in one—I don't think I could paint, personally. That's not my—I can draw. But I don't think I can—I could paint. It's not my force, you see? But you see, here's a pear, because this is probably here from the garden. I probably picked it. And I just thought it was nice, the way the leaves hung in that great big thing. And there are all sorts of things here.

[00:16:38.83]

HAZEL BRAY: I remember an interesting series in the exhibition, your retrospective show that was on tour—

[00:16:43.30]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, I have those fronds, of the leaves.

[00:16:45.88]

HAZEL BRAY: —you go through the growth cycle and a series on growth, and maturity, and decay.

[00:16:54.13]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. Yes, I have lots of those.

[00:16:57.19]

HAZEL BRAY: I was just saying that there's a further ingredient there than just simply the drawing itself.

[00:17:05.62]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, I'll tell you what interests me, you see, is always if one can see the soul behind the form, you know what I mean? That means, let's say, I see a flaw—I have here somewhere—you see here are leaves. And what interests me are the way those three leaves—those three triangles, not parallel, but somehow related. And there's always this, or that, or something. See here, it was interesting to me, those are all daisy family. But each one has another rhythm. And that interests me. It was somebody who gave me for my birthday, October, you see, they gave me a basket with all sorts of chrysanthemums, and so.

[00:17:55.49]

And as I looked at them, I saw that they were actually all marguerites. That's all the same family. And then I started looking at them and saw, here was only a single leaf. Here were three or four. Here were more. Here were big leaves. Here were tiny leaves. Here were little ones. And so on. I could have gone on forever. So in a way, it is also intellectual. But it always comes from the eyes, though. It doesn't come from the brain. I don't think it over. All at once, I see it. And then I look, and then I see something else, and then I look again.

[00:18:42.21]

HAZEL BRAY: Birds, cats.

[00:18:43.69]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: All sorts of things.

[00:18:44.87]

HAZEL BRAY: You still have your cats here?

[00:18:46.78]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. [Laughs.]

[00:18:48.46]

HAZEL BRAY: Poppies.

[00:18:49.06]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Those are poppies, you see? In fact, I had them here on the table. And as they opened up, well, this is also—you see, I teach the students not only pottery, and I mean, I teach them to look. I remember I told once a student to go out and pick something to draw. They said, "I didn't find anything." I said, "What do you mean? All this right there, and you didn't find anything?" "No, I didn't know what." So I went out, and we just stood like this over a piece of grass. I said, "All right, let's take a piece of grass, ten-inch square. What do you see?" "Nothing." I said, "What do you mean, nothing?" I said, "What's that?" "That's a piece of grass." And I said, "What's that?" "That's a piece of grass." "Is that the same?" "Oh no, wait a minute. No, no, no, no." "Well, what's the difference?"

And then I get them like this. I said, "Well, are they both equal, or broad, or wide, or sharp, or smooth? And what's this?" "It's a piece of grass. Is that the same?" And I get them like that. After a while, the whole class stands around this one square piece and is watching how many fifty or so different pieces of grass they can find. Like this, they open their eyes, you know? And all students have told me, often, that they now can see a hundred times what they could see before. They said formerly they used to just to go like that through the landscape and never see anything. Now, I see every stone.

[00:20:25.50]

HAZEL BRAY: But you don't start out by saying, "All right, students we're going to develop our perceptions."

[00:20:32.07]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, I don't use that word ever.

[00:20:34.35]

HAZEL BRAY: You don't?

[00:20:34.77]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, never. I don't talk abstractly. You see, because abstract, that's up there. That's in the brain. I'm not dumber than those abstractionists, either. But I don't have to put it like that. You see, if I talk in that plain words, I can talk to the garbage man out there, and even understand.

[00:20:54.40]

But if I talk like you just did, he would not understand me. And my students are sometimes completely illiterate. I mean, they've been in college. But they are still completely illiterate, often. And so if I talk like that, down-to-earth, they also realize that there's nothing like a magic about it. That they can get there, too. And well, I don't know why I'm a good teacher. But I know that they think I am. And I guess I get results. And so that's what it is, you know?

[00:21:32.60]

HAZEL BRAY: But up until now, there's more than just teaching. There has been a consistent large body of work that you've done—

[00:21:43.17]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Well, yeah. Sure.

[00:21:44.49]

HAZEL BRAY: —through ten to eleven months out of each year.

[00:21:48.24]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. And also, I've done it for 61 years. You'd better be good, you know? Otherwise, you should have long quit it. [They laugh.]

[00:22:00.59]

HAZEL BRAY: People come here? Or do you send your things somewhere else?

[00:22:06.59]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: You mean to buy?

[00:22:07.37]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes.

[00:22:07.82]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: No, they come here.

[00:22:08.66]

HAZEL BRAY: They come here.

[00:22:09.32]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Oh, I used to sell at Gump's all the time. That's how I first started, he bought my whole production in the beginning. But then I found that people in Chicago, or in Dallas, or somewhere wanted some things, too. And then this whole production affair that I had the arrangement with Gump's, that didn't work because the others wanted something, too. So we canceled that at a certain time. And then I sold in Dallas, and I sold in Houston, and I sold in Chicago, and so on. A few. But never very much, because people quickly found me here. It's not far from San Francisco. And I have a lot of private customers.

And I always tell my students, that's much better than fifty percent. And they deduct another three percent if they pay inside of a week. So you do it practically for nothing. So I've always told that to my students. And as soon as I could go without the shops, I went. And I've always had this showroom upstairs there. And people have come from all over the world. I've had them from Egypt, and South America, from Australia, from everywhere. If you're good, you don't have to worry. They will come.

[00:23:32.93]

It's like with a mousetrap. If you make a better mousetrap, they will come. They don't all come when you want them. Don't misunderstand me. And I've been poor, too. I've been so that I was on my last fifty dollars. And I've filled my station wagon with all the pots that I had, and I've got all around and sold them. But I've always managed to sell them. And I've always managed to live without borrowing and without getting into debt. And I've done what I wanted to do.

[00:24:09.06]

HAZEL BRAY: That's very important.

[00:24:10.47]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: How few people can do that, you know? I've done what I wanted to do the best way I could. Maybe that's the thing. Yeah, and that's what I think my students begin to understand. And we talk, like we talk like this. And they often say, let's—at coffee break, we sometimes we sit together there. They have 20 minutes or something. And sometimes, someone will ask me just a question like that. And then another one say, "Well, let's talk." I say okay, and then we talk for an hour so.

I think that's just as important as to throw a pot. That, they can do when they are alone. And also few people have had—not only the pottery experience that I've had, but also the human experience, from what you've heard from my life, not everybody has gone through that much in their own lives. And that is a point that also impresses them. That not to count on that it will always run smooth.

[00:25:22.06]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, indeed, I can think of—

[00:25:25.08]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I mean, how many times I've had to restart again, always from scratch?

[00:25:28.17]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, your whole world has come to an end several times.

[00:25:35.55]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah.

[00:25:36.57]

HAZEL BRAY: Living here in a remote area—

[00:25:39.75]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It's not as remote as you think.

[00:25:40.32]

HAZEL BRAY: You're certainly—you're certainly not untouched by people coming by the road. And in the summer, there are probably too many people at the state park.

[00:25:52.02]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes. That's why I [inaudible].

[00:25:53.82]

HAZEL BRAY: But is there some connection between a creative life and being able to tolerate a certain amount of isolation, to want and need it?

[00:26:07.38]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: I think all artists need isolation at a certain term. But then some need more people than others. Some feel at home when there are no people around. And some feel at home when there are a lot of people around. That's a matter of character. People always ask me in town if I'm still up there. And so I say, "Yeah." "Aren't you lonesome all by yourself?" "Oh, no." "Well, don't you want to see people?" I said, "Well, the only time I really—" "Oh, aren't you bored?" They always say.

[00:26:41.89]

I said "No, I'm only bored when they invite me to a boring cocktail party. Then I'm bored." [They laugh.] That, they can understand. You see, they thought I'd be bored when I'm alone. But when I'm alone, I have all this beautiful nature. Why should I be bored? I've also seen a lot of the world. That means if I see a map of France, I can visualize—or Holland, or Germany, or even South America. I know a lot of it. And the people—I'm friends to them. And they're friends to me. And if they need something, they write to me. I've had a good life, you know? I had a tough life. But I had a good life. And I will never complain.

[00:27:38.61]

HAZEL BRAY: Fine, let's see—

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:27:42.18]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: [In progress]—true, in Chicago somewhere, the write-up in the newspaper was enormous.

[00:27:48.36]

HAZEL BRAY: I've seen that.

[00:27:49.98]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: All right, and I thought—Mother was still alive. I'll send it to mother. It'll give her pleasure. And mother, [inaudible] said, don't forget the [inaudible] more, always a little [inaudible]. Don't take that so literally. [They laugh.] And I got such a kick out of it, because any other mother would have said it's lovely, or something like that, and would have been proud. No, my mother, you couldn't fool her.

[00:28:16.62]

HAZEL BRAY: Well, I haven't been able to get you to talk about the effect of your work in other ways. But talking about an exhibition is one way to do it. This was just about 1940 or 1941, wasn't it? The first exhibition you had in this country?

[00:28:39.48]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: In this country, it was 1940, I believe. The first—

[00:28:43.88]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes. At the San Francisco Museum of Art?

[00:28:46.92]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes.

[00:28:48.49]

HAZEL BRAY: I've heard other people say that was the first time they ever felt they really saw pottery. Now—

[00:28:54.28]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Who said that?

[00:28:55.42]

HAZEL BRAY: Oh, I've heard other people say that.

[00:28:58.27]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yeah. Well, that's where I met Olive Cowell. I don't know if you knew Olive Cowell. No, she was—she doesn't live anymore. She was a teacher at San Francisco State, but in history or something like that. But she sort of discovered me. She was so excited. And I went there to see how they had set it up a few days after the opening, and there was that woman all excited, and showing everybody around. And when she found out that I was the woman who had made most of that pottery—not all, because much of it was from my husband, Frans.

[00:29:36.88]

She invited me to her house. And she became very cozy. And I was many times in her home. Well, that's not to the point. She's not alive anymore. But it shows how those things go. They are purely accidental. I could have been here five years. Well, Gump's pushed me, you see? Gump's pushed me. Then he took everything I had.

[00:30:00.67]

HAZEL BRAY: But your work—you're not coming to the point. It was quite different than what was going on locally, or even—

[00:30:07.30]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, at that time—

[00:30:08.77]

HAZEL BRAY: —in most other parts of the country.

[00:30:10.76]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Glen Lukens, do remember Lukens?

[00:30:12.92]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes, Lukens. Thank you. He was in Southern California. And his work was different.

[00:30:18.82]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: Yes, mine always was much more diversified. Those people were all only on glaze, and low fire, and things. While we coming from the Bauhaus, were quite other ideas.

[00:30:35.16]

HAZEL BRAY: Yes.

[00:30:35.44]

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN: It was more an art than a craft. It has always remained more an art than a craft. I mean, the craft is just knowing how to write. It's just a craft, too. But then what you have to say with it? And that's what I always tell the students. Last year, I didn't give them anything special to make in pottery. I made them invent all sorts of new things. I made them invent new techniques, and do things that they'd never done before, architectural things, where they would put masses together, just like this because they were all good craftsmen. I have had them all many years.

[00:31:16.54]

And the craft is not the end. It's only the medium with which you can say something. And when they have their craft, they have to get something else. And that's what the schools never understand. You can't do without the craft. And you can't do without the other. You have to have both before it gets something, you see? A fellow who can just paint but has nothing to say with his painting, he's no good. He's just a wall painter, you know?

[END OF TRACK AAA_wilden82_7724_m]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]