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Oral history interview with Marjorie Schick, 2004 April 4-6

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Marjorie Schick on April 4-6, 2004. The interview took place in Pittsburg, Kansas and was conducted by Tacey A. Rosolowski for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Marjorie Schick and Tacey Rosolowski have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose.

Interview

TACEY ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski. I'm interviewing Marjorie Schick at her studio at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. This is the 4th of April and I'm doing this interview for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number one of session one.

Marjorie, let's just start by saying that you've been known since the '80s at least as a maker of very large wearable sculptures that defy categorization, with color, with amazing ranges of materials. You have a very signature approach that everyone recognizes and I was wondering if you would start by telling us about the aesthetic goals that have preoccupied you during all this time, what your aims have been, and what you believe your work is about.

MARJORIE SCHICK: Well, actually, since I finished graduate school at Indiana University with Alma Eikerman, I made up my mind at the end of my program that what I wanted to do was build sculptures to wear because my jewelry was already pretty sculptural; and so actually, I was looking at an *Art in America* issue that was devoted to David Smith at that time. And I, of course, love his work and – but I thought, ooh, how exciting it would be to be able to go put your arm through a hole or your head through a hole or whatever, so that was what helped inspire me to begin building body sculptures.

And I've stayed pretty well focused on that all these years. I build pieces for – that are non-wearable occasionally, but the vast majority of the pieces have been wearable. Now I work at a scale that makes the work – I'm called – I'm in the jewelry field, but a lot of people don't even call it jewelry because it's so large. And so therefore it sometimes is difficult to define and so sometimes instead of calling myself a jeweler, I'll say that I build body sculptures. I think it fits – it fits the idea of what I'm doing better. So I build these large scale forms that are – that I think are wearable, but some of them are – most of them are sort of pushing at the boundaries of wearability and making us question why we wear what we do, why we don't wear these kinds of things, and anyway, so I've stayed focused all these years in that respect – in keeping and continuing to work in that direction.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: When you say that you're pushing the boundaries, because at one point you said you wear them and at one point you say you don't wear them, what does it mean to work in that boundary? What does it mean to put on one of these large sculptures and to have it on your body and to move with it for a while?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, obviously it makes you reconsider how you move in space – how others see you – because it takes a great deal of nerve to wear such a large piece. And then there's the weight of it and you can't move through a doorway maybe. You might have to turn to get through the door. Obviously you couldn't put a coat on over most of these pieces. You couldn't – you couldn't get into the car with a lot of them on, so that means you've got to carry it with you and then put it on when you get there.

So anyway, yeah. And then some of them are quite – mostly they're not so heavy, but I have a new one that is so heavy it verges on that brink of being unwearable. I have a very wonderful, gorgeous model – a young woman who models for me – Kathlene Allie – and she didn't complain, but after the photo session for our new piece called *Ode to Clothespins*, which is about 45 inches long and about 30 inches across and filled with large and small clothespins and they're on lines of – it's on a wooden frame and all the pins – clothespins have been painted and they're on lines of clear plastic and tubing – rubber tubing – and such, and it was heavy.

I mean, she could stand with it and she's quite tall and so she could manage that, but actually we did have it photographed on her sitting. And she said – she was very polite. She never said a word about it being uncomfortable until – until I asked her later. So that piece, I think, is just on that edge of being a bit – toward – it's pretty close to being unwearable, but I still – I still hold fast to making them wearable even if for a very short period of time.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Why is that? Because some people have really gone and disconnected themselves and said, “Okay, I’m going to wear jewelry that really is just to be displayed,” but you want that physical interaction. What’s – why –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, it’s much more exciting to be able to have that because you put the piece on and as I said, you become more conscious of your movement in space, of how you relate to the piece. You set up a dialogue, and there’s a new kind of intimacy that occurs that we’re not used to when wearing a sculpture that doesn’t occur when you wear a smaller piece of jewelry because you might be conscious that you’ve got it on and maybe you’re not conscious at all of it.

Years ago, when I used to lecture – I love to lecture, but when I first started lecturing, I spoke in it about different lengths of time that you could wear jewelry. And like a wedding ring, you hope that you’re going to wear it forever, or 30 years, or 40, or 50, or whatever it might be, and it – it’s a symbolic piece of jewelry and it also is one that normally doesn’t get in the way of your everyday activities. You can drive with it on, you can go to the grocery store, you can fix the car, change diapers and do all those kinds of things.

And then there is – so if we’ve got like – if we call that 30-year jewelry, then we’ve got maybe three-hour jewelry that you might put on, a special watch for scuba diving or things that maybe have function to show what religion you are and there are so many different ways and reasons we wear jewelry. And you might wear it often, but maybe you take it off at night.

And then I think there’s not quite, but almost 30-second jewelry, right? [Laughs.] So mine would be more in that category. These things that you put on and you wear probably for a pretty short period of time and then when you take it off then you’ve got – also you’re left with the memory of how that piece felt, how it affected you, because you’re obviously changed when you put one of these pieces on. It’s not an accessory that you can forget about because you become part of the piece – the piece becomes part of you in a big way. And yeah, so that’s why I’ve stayed with the body. I – as I say, I’ve done some pieces that aren’t body related, but I much prefer doing those that are.

I – you know, my colleagues here at the university, we were all here for a very long period of time and so some have just retired, but when we’d hang faculty shows they’d say, “Oh, Marj, why don’t you just close up those neck holes and those arm holes and admit that you’re a frustrated sculptor.” And so I’d think hard about that – you know, each time we’d do that I’d think about why I was doing this, but I see the body as a challenge, not as a limitation and so I’m intrigued. I love making these things and I’ve got a couple mirrors in my classroom, which is where I make my things. I’ve never set up a studio, so I’ve always built them here in the classroom.

And yeah, I do try them on. I’ve been accused of – I was accused early on of never trying these things on or else I’d know, being a woman, how uncomfortable they were, but that’s not true. I always try them on and then I enjoy seeing others come in and put them on because you get a whole new – obviously – feel and look for the piece when you see somebody else turn with it on or twist it or put it on in a different way even than I might have intended, so that makes it a lot more exciting.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, I think it’s wonderful that you have your eureka moment or ah-hah moment was with David Smith, who is a sculptor – a very large – works on a very, very large scale and you’re really weaving, if you will, threads between the jewelry world and the fine art world, between large scale and between smaller scale, between body and between object – the art object that we usually think is completely independent from the body, so you’re trying to bring all those categories together.

MS. SCHICK: Definitely. And I’ve always, always aimed – I don’t know. I can’t say whether my pieces or whatever would be accepted as fine art, but that’s been a goal of mine all these years. And normally I try – I know some pieces are better than others and that’s going to be true of anybody certainly, but generally I try to make a piece of museum quality if I can; one that I’ll really be proud of and so –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What do you mean by museum quality?

MS. SCHICK: I want it to be the very best it – that I think it can be. I don’t want to sell or stop short and so I’ve got – I’ve had this luxury of being married to Dr. James B. M. Schick, who has supported me all these years in giving me huge amounts of time – letting me be up in the classroom or studio night after night and all days on the weekends, and we’ve given up a lot of time together and I’ve made family sacrifices, obviously, for my work because we have one son [Robert]. And so I couldn’t have done any of this without him, where I’ve been allowed to work on a piece, if necessary, to make it what I thought was going to be museum quality if it took a year or more of time, which some of them have, then I’ve been able to do that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That is quite a luxury. And having an academic position, too, in combination has also helped I’m sure.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, definitely – definitely. I – in fact, now that I'm 62 I don't want to retire for a long time, and why should I? Because here I've got the best of it all, don't I? I live in Pittsburg, Kansas, which is a small community and it's a pretty easy community I think. You know, it's what – ten minutes to get home or 15. And I've got this big classroom where I can store, all around the edges, my cardboard boxes for shipping and fill that table over there up with all my wood – new wood for pieces. And I can clear off the tables and get things into boxes or I can hire, which I've been doing because I've overworked my hands and I need help, so I've been hiring students to work for me and help me both in the constructing as well as the packing of the pieces.

So – and I find being with students really exciting. I think if – obviously, some day I probably will retire, but I don't want to do it until I'm absolutely sure because I can envision that I will miss that interaction with students enormously – just being with them. I love being with young people and people of all ages, so I've already – already talked to people at two schools – two other universities where I might live when we do retire – if I couldn't come and take one hour of credit, if they'd give me space to work so that I could still be around others, because I have been for my whole career.

I haven't – now I enjoy – I must say – you know, Jim had pointed out to me that we all need our private time, and so definitely my work – my work is my private time and mostly I'm alone in the studio – not always. I mean, some nights before a due date, you know, it might be full and I'm having to answer questions of students and that sort of thing, but I've had a lot of quiet time to myself, which I've needed.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What do you think you get from students? What is it that – how do they energize you?

MS. SCHICK: Well, maybe one thing I have to – you know, I love to construct lectures almost – slide lectures almost as much as I love to construct a piece, so I have enjoyed lecturing – come to just love lecturing and it's exciting seeing students sort of change and develop and get their own ideas and I think I get a lot from students. Right, see, somehow it's a wonderful, I think, dialogue back and forth and I teach mostly non-art students, and so sometimes the first day of class I'll bring out pieces I'm working on and because they're so large, I think they're – it's – the work startles them. Yeah, I think "startle" is probably the right word.

Because I think I'm just an ordinary-looking woman in town and older now, but friends came back and I didn't know that they were here and they – a past student and his girlfriend and they were sitting out in the hallway – this was a long time ago – during the first day of class and my class exited, you know, and this girlfriend of my past student said – one girl said, "Boy is she weird." [Laughs.]

So maybe they have a different opinion of me than I do, but I think I'm ordinary and fit in, but I think maybe, and I didn't realize it until recently, it's good for them to get to see what I'm working on, and when I do show them, I like to tell them about my aesthetic problems that I'm having on my work because every piece is a challenge and if it's not – if there's not a huge aesthetic challenge to it – if I don't pass through this period on it when I think I'll never be able to pull this one off, then I don't think it's – it usually works so well. I don't think it's one of those really – one of those pieces I might be really proud of.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Can you describe a piece that was particularly challenging so we can get an idea of what are those aesthetic challenges that make you know you've made it.

MS. SCHICK: Oh. I have to think. Well, I don't know that it was – I'll go back to the clothespin piece and the clothespin piece is part of a new series of autobiographical necklaces I'm starting on and they're about everyday things. I mean, I live in an everyday life, don't I? In an everyday little place in the middle of the U.S. and so they're ordinary things, but all these years I've always thought, you know, our bed sheets smelled better if I would hang them outside and so I've done that all these years. Every week or so Jim says I'm obsessed about whether the weather on the weekend is going to be rainy or sunny.

So – and then in '90 – I think it was '94 I was part of the Winter Olympics in Norway as an artist – part of one of their workshops and I had just this most incredible 10 days there making a piece.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This was where?

MS. SCHICK: It was in Lillehammer. Well, no, we were in Hamar. We were in Hamar.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But it was attached to the Lillehammer Olympics?

MS. SCHICK: Right, and so we – they all rode bicycles. I'm not a bicyclist, so – and they saw me ride the first day or so and they said, "We think you better not ride bicycles here," so everybody else was riding bicycles but me to go to the local grocery store or stationary store to get what supplies you might need – that sort of thing. So I would walk, and there was this wonderful, big grocery store that I'd go to so I bought colored clothespins. So this clothespin necklace is sort of my ode to colored clothespins. The ones I bought were plastic and I used wood ones on this piece.

But my original idea had been to have this huge frame – and it is huge, like 45 inches long and 30 inches across. And then we strung up lines across it leaving an opening that you can get your head through but there's not a circle there, it's – they're all diagonals. And I had intended only to put the clothespins I guess around the borders – make a border of them; never to put them through the middle. And then I put a few on for the heck of it and then a few more and a few more.

And thank goodness we had a big snow and somebody parked us in at home. A car was stuck in the snow in front of our [driveway] – so I couldn't get out that day, so I got to stay home and paint more clothespins because it demanded twice – at least three times more than I thought I was going to need, so I could get it ready for the photo session, and so it's now – the whole interior and – is filled up with clothespins. It's almost – there's hardly much space left, and then – and then of course there's the border.

Now that's where it's been sort of neat working with somebody who helps me because I'd never heard of – isn't there a phrase for – in football about you've been "clothes lined"? Well, that's what my students said. I've never – I don't follow football, so I don't –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Neither do I, so I'm at a disadvantage too.

MS. SCHICK: And it was – I wish it was my idea, but it was my helper's [Jared Webb] idea to make the clothespins around the border go in waves – wave shapes. They're rippled. So I thought, wow, well, let's try it. So I tried it in a timid way and then of course that is the best way to do them, so it wasn't a huge challenge, but I guess I'll say that I changed my mind about the piece, and then I was always working – always having a deadline, so I had my photo session as a deadline. I thought, oh my gosh, I'm not going to get this solved in time, but as I – it worked as I got more and more and more – that's the secret of my work and it – it's always more and more and more. So I got more and more clothespins on it.

Then I began to work with runs of color in the – on the clothespins and it began to develop a whole linear pattern that I think I would have missed if I'd left it just empty except for these lines across the center of the form. Does that make sense?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It makes sense. I'm also struck, as you're describing this, that new problems emerge or issues emerge –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – as you're working and then you – the piece changes so it's –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, definitely.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – a very process-driven kind of evolutionary piece.

MS. SCHICK: Exactly. I don't – I think it's bad, but I don't normally predraw. Recently, I've [done] a few because there was this wonderful young man [Jared Webb] who does the wood for me and so I need – I've got to give him shapes and tell him what I want. So I've been doing more predrawing in the last couple of years than before, just for that reason. But, oh, there are enormous numbers of changes that take place and I've always thought it was interesting because I know that there are so many different ways of working and one is no more right than the other, though sometimes I'll always say, oh, I do it the wrong way, but that's normal for me to think that, isn't it?

But I know others – I know of one jeweler who will predraw all of her ideas and then she makes it to absolutely match those drawings and I've heard her say that if they don't match up with the drawings, then it doesn't – it's not a success for her.

And so also when I was in London as artist-in-residence – this is at the Sir John Cass [Sir John Cass School of Art, London Metropolitan University] one summer – in 1984, I was doing the *Dowel-Stick* [This term refers to a body of work created between 1982 and 1986 using painted dowel sticks. These pieces are part of a larger group referred to as "drawings-to-wear."] pieces and I did not predraw those, but all those students had to predesign all their pieces so I was sitting there with my hands sort of under the table and in that leather apron that's under the table sort of trying to put my things together, hoping that their students aren't seeing how I do it because then of course they would want to ask their tutors if they couldn't also build on the spot rather than having to predesign, so I tried to be secretive. They all found me out. It wasn't such a big secret.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you think there's a difference between jewelers or any kind of craftsperson who predraws as you call it, or design – comes with a preconceived idea and someone who lets the form evolve as you do? Is there a difference in the work as a result?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I've not thought about that. You know, David Smith predesigned and he spent his evenings – I

show a wonderful old filmstrip now – video – I shouldn't call it filmstrip – video sometimes to my graduate students and in it he's shown making three-dimensional models or maquettes with liquor boxes from the liquor store and he's all upset because somebody has put one into the fire.

And of course he would draw – make these incredible drawings at night and I don't know how closely he stuck to those. I – there probably is a difference. I'm sure there is a difference, but I don't know that – I don't know what to say.

I think that – and I don't want to make one way sound more correct than the others, so –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: No, that wasn't really what I was asking. I guess one of the things I thought – think about – and I'm just looking around your studio here and seeing many of the different pieces that are around us right now. It seems you have a real fascination for color and for surface and it seems as though that process – your love of getting into that process of working with the piece and letting the ideas evolve really blossoms in the way that color patterns evolve and surface textures develop.

I mean, is that correct? Is that a correct reading?

MS. SCHICK: No, the color patterns are – that's the most challenging part of the work. I love doing a three-dimensional form and I won't say it's easy, but it's easier than the color, though probably when people look at the finished piece, that the color is what obviously is going to draw them to it.

My work is about the form. The content of my work is the form and also the scale of it, so I work really hard at the aesthetic qualities of the piece. And you can't tell when you see the finished piece, but many of those, even the *Dowel-Stick* pieces, would have three or four layers of paint on them before I had arrived at what I thought was going to, quote, unquote, "work" on the piece.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You mean adding layers of color or –

MS. SCHICK: Experimenting. Experimenting trying to work through various color relationships until I thought I found one that was going to work. So you see just the final result, but – and you don't see – often on the color there's a big struggle and there are a lot of changes of my mind. But I don't think that it's any more right or wrong to predesign and make your work match up to that design than to do it the way I do.

Sometimes I think maybe doing it the way I do there's – you feel more out on a limb maybe and like I might saw that limb right off and fall down, so sometimes I think maybe it's living a little bit more dangerously in this way to make the pieces, but I can't – I don't think I should really say that either because you could live dangerously through your drawings as well.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But you seem to thrive on that kind of living dangerously in ways.

MS. SCHICK: I guess. I hadn't thought about it as thriving, but yeah, obviously I like that. I don't – I hadn't thought about saying I liked that challenge, but yeah, I must.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sort of the private way of going out on a limb.

MS. SCHICK: Well, it is. I always tell my students that, you know, entering shows is a way of gambling, isn't it? And so why not? And I said it's so easy a way because you just send it in. You know, you fill out the forms and send your money and you send it away and then if you're rejected, you know, you might be mad for a moment and then you say, oh well, I'm going to turn around and send it to this one next and keep on. And it is a way of gambling and taking a risk, but the work – yeah, and that's one of the things I want my work to have. I want it to have a sense of risk. Even there's a sense of risk about, I guess, about how safe or comfortable you'll be when you put one on, right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The scale.

MS. SCHICK: So this – the sense of risk that maybe I've had – yeah, I would like that if that sense of risk is still in the piece when it's finished.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I don't think there's much good art that doesn't feel like it has a sense of risk.

MS. SCHICK: No, that's true. You wouldn't get anywhere if you always played it safe. Yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What does it – do you think for your students to be so – have such close proximity to your work, and maybe we should talk a little bit more in detail about the space where you have your studio space because as you mentioned earlier, you don't have a home studio and many people need a very private home studio, but you've taken a very different route. Maybe you can explain a little bit more about that.

MS. SCHICK: It is. It is different, and in fact my office is a mess – you've seen that – because I have more stuff than will fit in there and I'm not good about putting things away, so one semester – I always had –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: More is better. That's the Marjorie Schick way.

MS. SCHICK: Well, it seems to be. So I always kept these tables clear and then one semester I had for some reason – you know, it just changes from semester to semester – really small classes and I started leaving my mess out. So look: the end of this table up here is my mess where I work. My chairman [Dr. Larrie Moody] is an Art Educator and I love it. She referred to it as my "teaching table." Well, that was being very polite. That was putting a very good face on it.

So – but I don't know how much they pay attention. I really don't know. Maybe they do. Now, years ago I had somebody – well all along I've had some amazing students and there was one who Cale Kinne – and I've set up a scholarship fund in his name because he died a few years ago, but I'd asked him to write a recommendation for something I was needing one for – a promotion or something like that – and he very nicely said something about how he thought it was exciting to be able to work in a classroom, you know, next to an artist. And so I don't know. Maybe some have taken more note than others.

And of course I'm begging this incredibly wonderful young man [Jared Webb] who's doing my woodwork for me right now if he'd work for me. He'll be here one more year as a senior and I said, "Oh, I hope you're going to work next year, too," and he said, "Well, it's the difference between me and the construction company" – and so of course I'm sure the – I don't know. You know, he's going into construction.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right.

MS. SCHICK: So I can understand. And that's what he's doing in the summers, but he said this was more fun, and then he did add that he'd probably not have the chance again in his future to work with an artist and he's – he has a wonderful sense of aesthetics and is incredibly creative, and so I'm hoping that I'll win out over the construction company.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Is that part of the energy that you get? I mean, knowing that there's students coming by regularly and just even glancing at your work. You were saying – you were talking earlier about how you get a lot of energy from dealing with young people. Is that part of the appeal of continuing to work in the classroom space – to use that as your studio?

MS. SCHICK: I've just always done it and I – maybe it's been easier. No, maybe it's been harder. I don't know, but in my head I think, oh, probably it was easier to do it this way. I don't know. I think to a large extent they may not pay much attention and I'm lucky to teach where I do because I've got all this stuff sitting out and I mentioned to you I have these 34 rings that were almost all the way painted; each one on a pedestal standing right over here – right out in the classroom and I remember mentioning them to my students the first day of class and I'm just lucky nobody took any of them. Every now and then I'd go over and count to see if I still had 34 there, but aren't I lucky that they don't think so much of it that they want one of those.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's interesting.

MS. SCHICK: And I leave my stuff out while I'm working on it until it's almost finished and then I think, oh, you know, I wouldn't want somebody else to want my piece, so then towards the end when they're enough finished that they look like they're about there, then I put them in my office.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And then they really become private. They become yours.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I don't know if they're private because I've made them out here, but at that point I think – oh, then I get a little more nervous about whether somebody would want it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, I'm wondering if we can talk a little bit about the path that you took to get here because you've had a very long career and very interesting beginnings. Maybe we can talk – start by talking about where you were born and when you were born and how that – your early experiences began to shape your decision to become an artist and the kind of artist that you became.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I was born in 1941 in a small town probably not so different from Pittsburg – they're both mining areas – Taylorville, Illinois. And my mother and father were divorced. I was probably still a baby. I don't know if I was one or two, but I was still pretty young. So my mother raised me and she did it alone on her own and was truly remarkable.

Now, my mother's an artist and so she had to earn money for us so she started teaching and at that point she had gone to the University of Illinois and I think Normal – I'm not sure – Normal, Illinois [Illinois State University,

Normal, Illinois], but yet didn't have her degree. But evidently she was able to teach. I think it was a one-room or small little school and I can remember she had this old coupe that she would drive – little. It would just hold the two of us and then sometimes we must have lived with my grandparents in the early days.

And then when I was of kindergarten age, she took a job in a very small town called Blue Mound [Illinois], teaching second grade and I didn't go to kindergarten, but she would take me with her sometimes for the week. Sometimes I would stay with my grandmother and I remember that the house where she rented a room – this woman had these incredible *Fiestaware* dishes. Oh, and I always loved it if I got to eat on the bright red-orange plate or the dark blue, and they were the bright colored ones. They were great.

And also when I was with – I remember about – I must've been four when my grandmother cut a Brenda Starr paper doll out of the comic strips for me and I did paper dolls for years and years and years – for years. And they were adult, you know, paper dolls, so I designed clothes, cigar boxes full of clothes for my – career clothes for my paper dolls.

But anyway, so my – I've been thinking about how these things might have influenced me, so there was a church – a truly gorgeous church in Taylorville – a Catholic church. I was – my mother was Catholic and I am. And I remember the stained glass windows. It was a new church. I don't know, but it was very modern, especially for a small town like that. And the stained glass windows were very long with clear glass and the only place there would be color in them, there was a little bit of red. And then the figure on the altar – it was all mosaic with very elongated – everything was elongated. And I can remember looking at those, and I don't know that they would have influenced me, but they were certainly ultramodern for a little kid who is four years old sitting in church. My mom was beautiful and she had a blond muskrat fur coat and a purple feathered hat and I can remember, you know stroking the texture of the fur and loving when we'd get home to feel – run my fingers over those short, purple feathers on that hat.

So years later when I was in high school I did a term paper of some sort on stained glass windows and those stained glass windows were in a book. I was so excited. So they must have been designed by somebody – I don't know now, but some quite remarkable designer. So that might have had some influence, but my mother kept changing jobs and then we moved to Decatur, which is a bigger town in Illinois and she taught second grade there and I would take summer school and not remedial, but I remember during the summer school in Decatur we went to places like a potato chip factory and a dairy and neat things like that. I don't remember doing them during the year, but we did them in the summers.

And then she went back for her Master's – oh, I forgot. When I was in first grade she went back to finish up her undergraduate degree and needed money, of course. I look at all our students, so many of them have kids they're raising and are single parents and going to school and working, so my mother was a sorority housemother that – and she just needed one more year to finish up her degree, so when I was seven, in the first grade, it was a glorious year in Charleston, Illinois, because she went to Eastern Illinois University – East – what is it? Eastern – I can't remember the full name. It's a big school now.

So I loved being the little kid in the sorority house. I was on the float at homecoming and all these girls' dates would entertain me while they were waiting for their dates to come out. And I had a big speech impediment. I had always talked – it's hard to believe it now, but too quickly and so there was a – you know, I did a lot of speech classes and then there was at least one girl living in the sorority house who was a speech major so she would work with me. Probably she made it seem like great fun to go through these exercises. So I just – I had a glorious time.

And my mom had this huge dictionary that had endpapers of these Art Deco figures. And my mom was studying art. I mean, she was getting – finishing her degree in art, so she was doing her art things and even working on a big mural then. So then when we moved to Decatur we were there a while; through sixth grade maybe. And I remember in the post office, it was probably a big WPA [Works Progress Administration] mural and now I'm turned on by Art Deco for a new piece I'm doing, so I think that there were Art Deco things in my grandmother's house that – I don't know that they influenced me.

But then my mother decided she needed her Master's so she – during the summers, we would go to Greeley, Colorado. I think that's Northern Colorado State University [University of Northern Colorado] in Greeley. And again I'd go to summer schools to pass the time – the lab schools and she was doing all these – she took it in Art Education, so she was doing all of these amazing art projects and doing color theory and all that – and fell in love with Colorado, so we moved to Colorado.

And I was then in seventh grade and we lived in Longmont and she taught high school there, so when I got into high school I didn't want to take art, though I think that was where my heart was, but I didn't want to take art because my mother was the art teacher, right? So I took home ec and at that time I was starting to learn how to sew. In fact, my mother got me a sewing machine that I simply wore out. And I've got pieces of – you know,

when I made my first thing – a skirt – I had bought this ultramodern pattern. This was the ‘50s.

And then in high school I bought this fabulous fabric. I fell in love with Bates fabric because we had some kind of movie about Bates. I thought it was the best. And it was so wonderful and it was optical a little bit and my – my home ec teacher must have been a little conservative because she said, “Oh, why did you ever buy that?” And when you spread it all out to lay the pattern down, it really just vibrated. I would –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So it’s like op art.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I’ve got a piece of it here and I brought it recently because I’m going to use it in a necklace, and my model, Kathlene, said, “Oh, it looks just like you.” So here that’s from like eighth grade – ninth grade and I was already picking out things.

And the other neat thing that happened in Longmont – my mother was good friends with a woman named Kay Wells, who was living with her parents and her mother was showing me how to quilt and crochet and I was enjoying all of these hand things, but on the weekends Kay Wells, who had studied fashion at Parsons School of Design in New York – they were all from New Jersey – she and my mother and I would do metal enameling, so that was what we’d do on the weekends.

So looking back, I kind of grew up with it. And then also –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: When was it not there?

MS. SCHICK: It was always there. [Laughs.] And also about that time the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis came out with – I don’t know if it was a series of magazines or what, but my mother had one and it was devoted to contemporary jewelry [*Design Quarterly*, no. 33, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1955.]. Now, the jewelry that was shown in this was by Margaret De Patta, Harry Bertoia, and I’d have to find the – I still have that magazine today.

And I didn’t realize probably till I was in graduate school or teaching here the importance in the history of jewelry really of those magazines. And here I’d sort of been looking and studying what I thought then was this really different kind of jewelry, and my mother was making some out of wood and hammered copper wire and that sort of thing, way back as a teenager.

Well, then – well, to be honest salaries were pretty low in Colorado and my mother decided for her pension, she wanted to move back to Illinois, and she got this wonderful job then as Assistant Art Supervisor in Evanston, Illinois. And I was then in ninth grade, so we moved and I went and finished high school at Evanston [Evanston Township High School], which was the most incredible experience any young person could have. At that time in the ‘50s, because I graduated in ’59, it was considered one of the top 10 high schools in the country and all programs were wonderful and it was very much geared – and I always knew I’d go to college – it was very much geared to college prep. And there was a fantastic art department, right, with four teachers in it and the man who headed it was named Frank Tresise and loved fashion and so I took fashion design from him.

We worked on – my mom and I did a – helped me on a huge, big formal that I designed not to wear to a formal, but for the style show that we put on for class. And I couldn’t find a kind of lace I wanted, so we sat for hours cutting all the webbing out of lace for this dress. And then every Saturday I’d go to the Art Institute in Chicago and take classes that were there for high school kids, and through the summers, so here I was always sort of doing things in the summer that were pretty much art related.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So did you only take fashion and jewelry?

MS. SCHICK: I took – well, actually I had a jewelry class in high school, but I didn’t care much for it and it was mostly metal enameling, which I’d been doing as a teenager. And I don’t know, I wasn’t so excited about it, but I – I always thought from the time I was little and I would go to those Esther Williams movies and watch Marge and Gower Champion on screen and those gorgeous long ball gowns that I wanted to be a dress designer. So in high school I was – I knew I would be a teacher. I just knew I’d be a teacher, but dress designer had my heart and so some of the classes I took at the Art Institute for high school kids were fashion illustration and dress design and there was a wonderful dress design class where we were asked to go up into the galleries and take inspiration from something.

I remember doing one, you know, with big puffy sleeves. It has a name. It has a name [puffed sleeves with slashing].

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Is it the leg-o-mutton sleeves?

MS. SCHICK: Maybe, I’m not quite sure. Where they’re – it’s a puff and then it’s pulled in tight and a puff and

slashing and that sort of thing.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's not a leg-o-mutton. I don't know the name for that one.

MS. SCHICK: Well, slashed was part of it, but so those were great and I can remember in the summers if I was going down and coming back by myself I would go down by myself, but then thinking, well, here I am in this great wonderful museum and I'd try to go into the galleries and learn the work of one artist each time. [This is what every high school student could dream of doing.]

But anyway, so I had good art history classes in high school and it was an incredible high school in itself and also the Art Department there, plus the augmentation of the classes at the Art Institute, so it was a rich thing and I had a variety of friends and one girl played cello with the Young Chicago Symphony, so she would go down to the Loop to do that on Saturdays. I'd go to my class at the Art Institute and then we'd meet up for lunch – [audio break, tape change] – and a style show at Fields – Marshall Fields. That was always fun. I always loved it most if she had to have one of her cellos repaired as I'd get to hold one on the subway going home and I'd think, everybody thinks that I'm a cellist. This is pretty neat. [Laughs.]

And then I had another friend who played classical lute and sometimes we would meet in the loop on Saturdays, and – for lunch and go home together, so it was a pretty exciting way of going to high school. And then I searched for what I thought would be the best art education department because I just knew I wasn't going to be a fashion designer. I'd be an art teacher.

So the University of Wisconsin won and so I was four years at Wisconsin, but I should have worked harder. I had good people. I had good instruction, but I should have worked harder.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This was in Madison, Wisconsin?

MS. SCHICK: This was at Madison, right. Four years there in Art Education. And what was great about that Art Education program is that it was part of the Art Department's program and there was no sense of it being any different than the rest, so it was good, and I practice taught in a little town called Watertown and so – but the best part of going to Wisconsin was that I met Jim, who was studying art history – no, he wasn't studying art history. He was studying – well, we did take art history together, so he did, but he was an historian – a history major and we took a few classes together – Shakespeare and I don't remember what all. And so then – and he stayed for a Master's there and then we were married when we finished our undergraduate time.

So I don't know. Did I tell you enough about growing up?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I think – oh, yeah, absolutely. It's all important.

MS. SCHICK: I think –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You're rolling along.

MS. SCHICK: I think it did have a big influence on what I – I mean, even the sewing – learning to sew – in Colorado because I sew – I stitch pieces together today. I think all those things, obviously, helped make me who I am.

And the reason I kept mentioning the summer school is because I think all these years I've been fairly self-disciplined and I'm wondering how much, you know, not just playing in the summer, but being able to take those classes at the Chicago Art Institute or, you know, doing enameling with my mom and her friend on the weekends. I think that surely has had an influence on me today, my thinking, well, the weekends are for working and so are the summers, right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Absolutely. Well, I'm also struck too with the way that you had your mother as this amazing role model. So many artists have – they describe a struggle that they have to go through when they become – in their adolescence, for example, when they decide they want to be an artist and they have so many messages coming from the parents or other members of their family saying, "Well, why do you want to do something foolish like become an artist?"

And you never had that. You always had amazing support and you had your mother as a very strong, independent woman showing you how to move ahead and become your own person as an artist. And that seems to me to be incredibly important as an effect – as an influence.

MS. SCHICK: It's easy to take all that for granted, you know. And I obviously have all these years, but my mother being divorced, all of her friends were single women who were teachers, you know. Those were the ones that I would see. And I didn't think about them as being role models, but obviously they were and my mother's strength in doing all that she did – those step-by-step things – you know, to finish her degree and then get a

Master's and then – you know, each time stepping up in another job was truly remarkable and not easy. Not easy today and certainly not easy when she was doing it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: No. And I'm thinking, too, just what the '50s were all about, which was for many, many women after the war years when women were going out into the workplace and they were very independent because there weren't men around – the 50s were the time when women were going back to the home and they were becoming, you know, domestic goddesses in a sense with all of the perks of this now scientific kitchen and scientific home. You weren't part of that. You sidestepped that very, very beautifully and didn't have to buy into that and had a very different path laid for you by your mother.

Did you ever have contact with your father? I have to ask.

MS. SCHICK: Very little. Very little, and I guess in a way that probably was good because I didn't have – and I think he probably did it partly on purpose, too, so that I wouldn't be torn between the two parents. So when they were divorced, he stepped out of my life. Now, I saw him sometimes. I might be able to count on my 10 fingers the number of times I saw him in my life – maybe it might not even have been 10 – but he always sent me birthday and Christmas cards and often – always a gift I think, or sometimes a gift. And – or a check for $30 or something and so – and then he remarried and had two sons, whom I've met but I don't know them, so we've stayed fairly separate, which I think was probably easier looking back so that I didn't feel torn.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, and it certainly clarified who was the important person for you and made her much more of a central figure in your own development as an artist. What – and her medium was painting?

MS. SCHICK: As an artist, right. She has – she focused more on watercolor, but in first grade when I was – when she was at Charleston and she was [a sorority] housemother, I remember a wonderful pastel she did. I don't have it now, but she called it a *Candle Burning* – candle – she'd say, this is my "Candle Burning at Both Ends." [Laughs.] It was full of – oh, nonobjective shapes except for this one thing in the middle that had a flame on both ends, so I'm always thinking that I should do a piece that's to her –a candle – obviously, she did burn a candle at both ends.

And do you know what my mother did? Evanston Township High School was a tough high school and I worked really hard and I'd stay up really late in high school studying hard, and my mother, with this big hard job – I mean, she would be going in and out of various classrooms presenting art, but also she would present workshops for teachers to teach them how to teach art, so she had – it was a huge job. And she'd say, "Now Marjorie Ann, when you're finished with your paper that needs to be typed – I'm going to bed now, but you come wake me up." So at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning I'd go tap on my mother's shoulder. Can you believe that? And she'd get up and type my paper.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's amazing.

MS. SCHICK: It's incredible.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And that's an amazing, supportive, figure in your life.

MS. SCHICK: That's incredible. She was always supportive for what I wanted – and I mean like having me go down to – having me go down to the Chicago Art Institute. And also, often when I – I mean, it had to have been a big challenge for me to have moved from Longmont – a small high school – into Evanston, which was 4,000. And I wasn't sure I liked it the first year, so I thought – I always wanted to wear a uniform, so we went to the girls' Catholic school and we interviewed there because I thought this was what I wanted to do. I wanted to go there.

Well, it wouldn't have worked and it was so good that I stayed where I was, but she would have supported me through that change if – you know, because she thought that's what I wanted.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you went to college at Madison – UW Madison – for art education.

MS. SCHICK: Uh-huh [affirmative].

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And what made you decide not to do a Master's in art education, but rather to switch to jewelry?

MS. SCHICK: Ah, that's a neat story because it's always Jim, right? And he was going to apply for a Ph.D. program and we didn't know where we would go, so my – his father was a professor of English at Purdue [Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana], so we knew that if we went to some school in Indiana, we could get in-state tuition, and we didn't have much money, right? None really. So we applied to different schools and we applied to IU [Indiana University] and I remember the letter that I was written. It said – of acceptance – said, "Dear Marjorie, Your work is very ordinary, but we will accept you anyway."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.]

MS. SCHICK: I'm so lucky. But how did I apply for that was – well, Jim was going to go for this Ph.D. and I thought, well, I think I'll go for an advanced degree too, so I wrote off also for applications and I was so dumb because on the application it asked you to put a check by whether you wanted an M.A, an M.S., or an M.F.A. And I didn't know the difference, but M.F.A. had three letters in the alphabet. The others had only two, so I put a check by M.F.A.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: More is better.

MS. SCHICK: So then the next question was – I had to focus in one area. I didn't know what I liked better than anything else. I had no clue because I was having – actually, at Wisconsin it was Don Reitz's beginning career as a ceramist and a teacher. So I had Don Reitz for ceramics. Harvey Littleton was there, but he was just starting a glass program, so I didn't take glass, but – and I always missed printmaking because it was always full. It was such a great printmaking school.

But I took jewelry, so – from a man named Arthur Vierthaler and I did very flat, very two-dimensional work and I was a bit timid I think. I think I was, looking back. But anyways, so back to this application. I thought maybe to put a checkmark by painting and I'd had [Santos] Zingale for painting and had really liked painting, but I didn't know where to put the check. Sculpture? Painting? I had a man named [Leo] Steppat for sculpture. And I didn't know what to do, so of course I asked Jim and he said, well, watching me he thought that I liked jewelry better than any of the other subjects. So I put my checkmark by jewelry.

Now, it happened that my roommate at Wisconsin my senior year had studied that last summer with Alma Eikerman, who taught one summer in Madison. And she showed me the jewelry she made, which I thought was unusual. I hadn't seen anything quite like it. And the only other thing I knew, being very naïve, was that this was the woman who would leave the windows open, which were at ground level. The Jewelry Department was sort of half in and half out of the ground – would leave those windows open so the students could sneak in to work extra hours. That's all I knew.

So anyway, I sent off my application and I got my letter back saying – and it wasn't written by Ms. Eikerman. It was somebody else and she said, "Your work is very ordinary, but we'll accept you anyway," so I was happy and not happy, right? [Laughs.] Mostly I was happy.

So we went off to IU and that changed my life. I mean, I'd had a great life so far, hadn't I? It was pretty focused. It was pretty direct.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And very rich.

MS. SCHICK: And rich in its way, yeah. But boy did it change then when I met Alma Eikerman. Jim always helps me with any writing I have to do for a publication and so he helped me write the obituary for her for *American Craft* and he started saying "quaking in my boots" and that's how I was when I met her – quaking in my boots going into her studio to meet her for the first time and I misspelled her name and – you know, I'm sure I was greatly tongue-tied. I obviously felt her presence then, didn't I?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What was she like?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, she's – she was so remarkable and, you know, she taught us aesthetics and I think that's my favorite part of everything, you know, figuring out how to put colors and shapes and lines together – or textures. And somehow – and that's the hardest thing probably of all to teach. She somehow taught us aesthetics by making us really look at things. And for Monday night seminars, which lasted three hours, she would critique our drawings and our drawings were never of jewelry pieces, but we were doing drawings that we would have studied – Max Beckmann or Bonnard or Rembrandt or Vincent Van Gogh and we had to do tracings of these. Sometimes three hours it would take me to do a tracing. We were all in the studio Sunday night doing our drawings for Monday night's seminar.

And she would talk about these drawings for three hours. I cannot imagine today having that ability. She was so incredible – so tuned into aesthetics in everything – everything she did. And she designed her own home, wore these amazing clothes, collected books, collected art. She was a true inspiration in every single way.

She taught us technique and we had – I'd never hammered metal in my life and so – and I had soldered, but always with a different kind of flux, so everything was new to me and I think in the beginning I just did mistake after mistake, but she put up with me.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, and obviously you moved forward.

MS. SCHICK: – put up with me. What happened was it was all so new and I hadn't cooked much before, so here I was just newly married and it might take me three hours to do supper and the dishes and I was so slow. But I started going up to the studio every night and then she was – I was trying my best. I'm not sure I knew what I was doing, but I was sure trying my best to understand this three-dimensional approach. And then she was gone my second semester there. She was on sabbatical. And I also had a teaching assistantship, which was wonderful to have.

So the woman, Terri Illes, a weaver, who was in charge of us who were doing our teaching, had written her – had written to Alma because she was out traveling in New York a couple of times, and I think she'd said some good things about me, so when Miss Eikerman came back, she was ready to see my pieces and she was all fresh from her sabbatical and that was the beginning of it.

And what it did for me – it helped me get a grounding while she was gone on all these things that I'd been learning the first semester that were all brand new – like I just had never thought about jewelry as being a three-dimensional form. I never thought about all these things. So that gave me a chance to begin to then put into practice some of these things that I'd learned and I guess it was the perfect way. Right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: When did you have your David Smith experience?

MS. SCHICK: At the end. At the end of – and I was lucky. We stayed in Bloomington three years and I'm sure I took three summer schools – [Laughs] – even after I'd finished and it was a fabulous – an incredible time and I don't think I – if I had studied with anyone else it would ever have worked. Jim says that somehow she unlocked what was – whatever it is that's come out over these years – that she was able to tap into that. He says that she unlocked it and let me go.

And – but she taught us even more than aesthetics because we each had a bench to sit at and a small top drawer over here like those have. And we had to keep an hourly calendar in there and we had to write down when we would come into the studio and when we would leave and if you had 30 minutes between a class you were enrolled in and one you were teaching and you were in the studio, you wrote that down.

And she would come around anytime she wanted and open that and count up and see if you were spending enough hours in the studio. If you weren't, you heard about it through a friend – through another jewelry student and you'd know you better get your tail in there and get to working. And the other thing – Jim and I had started this routine where he would pick me up at the studio at school like at midnight. I think – it might have been midnight every night or it might have been 10:30 or 11:00 or whatever. But after 10:00, when we would leave the building at IU, we had to sign out with the night guard.

So Miss Eikerman loved music. I mean, she – she probably could have had a degree, or maybe she did have even a degree in music – big, huge interest in music, so she would go to concerts sometimes and come in after the concert in these incredible clothes and spike heels and all of this. We knew that when she would leave – she'd come in to chat – probably she was checking up to see who was there working, but she – and the – where the concert had been was the building next door, so she came in to be pleasant and we were her family, right? But we knew when she would leave the building she was going to check to see how late we'd all been staying.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So she really expected a huge amount of commitment from all of her students.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yes. And that idea that she expected it made us grow. And I mean – and I think now, wasn't I lucky in so many respects, and one of them was that she demanded this huge, as you say, commitment of time and thought and work from us. And she required a lot of work – I mean, a lot of pieces. And she'd say, "Well, you arrive at quality through quantity." And she was full of exciting stories of her experiences. She had all kinds of travels and she'd worked as – for the Red Cross during World War II, and she had all these amazing stories. This gorgeous home. It was always such a treat to go. And she'd designed it and had it built, and at a time when I think the contractors didn't want to listen to a woman telling them how she wanted it.

So I – yeah, I wanted to be like Miss Eikerman, right? Well, I can't be, but she's my mentor. She changed my life. We didn't have a phone at first when we were first married, and then we got one because we just – we needed one, and so Jim would pick me up at midnight or whatever and then I had to walk around to the far side of our bed. We had a little two room apartment and shared the bath with a couple across the hall in this old house. And I had to walk by the dresser where the phone was – or I guess maybe he went that way. I guess he went that way. And the phone wouldn't have rung, but he'd pick it up and he'd say, "Yes, Miss Eikerman. You'd be proud. She put in a good day – or a good night." And so even when we moved here to Pittsburg he'd pick up the phone occasionally – it wouldn't have rung – and he'd say, "Well, Miss Eikerman, she's doing our – you'd be pleased." Or if she did call, because she kept in contact, he'd say, "Marj, you passed the test last night because Alma called and you were at school working." [Laughs.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So she haunts your life.

MS. SCHICK: It's fabulous. Isn't it the best?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's wonderful.

MS. SCHICK: It's so – yeah. Yeah. And you know, I did a piece after she died that's a tribute to her and it's these bumpy things [individual curved shapes] that are all bound together on a big spiral [symbolically bound by her energy] and then it all changes colors and I figured out how all these colors like the yellow in it because she loved yellow roses better than any other flowers, et cetera, et cetera. So – but what she did – she for years, would write these huge, long newsletters to all of her past students who were out in the field working. So although I had not met Lin Stanionis, for instance, for a long time, I knew exactly where Lin was, what she was doing, if she'd received any grants, et cetera, because Eikerman would fill this letter.

It would have information about what her travels had been and what she'd been doing, but then page after page would be about all the things that her past students had done. And she kept us together. We were – we're a family. I go off to SNAG [Society of North American Goldsmiths] now and I think, how many people would I really know if I didn't have this group of friends who were all Eikerman students even if we weren't there at the same time? So again I took all those letters for granted and I've got most of them.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's great to have that.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I've got all her letters. But finally one day, Jim said to me, "Well, do you see me getting letters from my professor at IU?" "Huh-uh." [Meaning no.] "And do I send out letters like that today?" "Huh-uh." [Meaning no.] That was so – and she'd do this once or twice a year and they'd be both sides of the paper, you know, like page – pages of it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So she really created and helped sustain a community that exists even today.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yes. We are still – yeah – a part of that group – that family. We were her family, yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: She was unmarried?

MS. SCHICK: Not married, right. And so I think that's why she enjoyed coming in to see us after a concert. And of course she was working in the studio too and so we knew that we'd better – we had to be there Saturday mornings working because we knew she was upstairs on the third floor or fourth floor in her studio at work. We knew that.

So she was setting a beautiful example. She lived it. It was a total thing. It was not 9:00 to 5:00. It was a total, absolute commitment even in the choices she made for flatware, for – she wore her own jewelry mostly, but the choices she made. Like I didn't know about Marimekko fabric and then she would wear these beautiful dresses made of Marimekko and so ever since I have just – I have collected and absolutely love Marimekko, but it goes back to Eikerman. I am who I am a great deal because of Eikerman, a huge amount because of Jim, who has guided me and supported me and given me so many ideas, helped write things, helped keep me on track. Yeah, and my mom. Yeah, I've had good support, haven't I?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You have. But what is it that – because you were a jewelry major. You were working in metals with Eikerman. What is it that made you turn after graduate school to papier-mâché, to wood, to all of these alternative materials that really helped you make your name as an independent person?

MS. SCHICK: Well, I think I was already at the end of graduate school. In the beginning of the graduate program – it's funny because I used iron in my pieces – iron wire as part of the piece, and at that point, I didn't realize how important – what an importance iron had played in the history of jewelry already, you know. I wasn't the first one to do this, but I didn't know that history and so iron wire is how – what we would use to bind our pieces together when we soldered, but I started using it as part of the material of the piece.

So there was a hint of that already in my metalwork and there was another hint of it because there was a – must have been a junkyard in Bloomington where I could get some metal and I had bought a piece of brass screen wire and I scrunched it all and reshaped it and it became a brooch – was – and then I put these little iron wires coming out from it and that was the first time I'd pushed wires out into space. And it's very small, but it's – I think – one of the most important signals of what I was going to do in the future.

And then at the end of graduate school I started playing with some other, maybe beads, and I hate to admit that. I don't – I didn't go anywhere with that, thank goodness, but this class we would teach as graduate students called Crafts Design, Budd Stalnaker was teaching that, and he was new there and teaching. He's a weaver. And he came to me one day and he gave me one and he said, "I'm having my students make bracelets of papier-mâché." And I think he had them start with a piece of tag board or that sort of thing and put plaster on it and then wrap it with papier-mâché. So he gave me this bracelet and it was painted all in a solid color and I didn't

think much about it.

And then we visited friends that I'd had at – we'd had at IU who were then in Iowa [Judy and Gary Springer] and she said, "Oh, let me show you. I'm making these papier-mâché things and I'm coating them with thread." So all that long drive back from Davenport, Iowa, back to Lawrence – because we taught our first year out of school in Lawrence [the University of Kansas] – I was thinking about Judy's papier-mâché and I don't think I'd ever done papier-mâché but I watched my mother do this enormous thing for her Art Education class out in Greeley [Colorado State University] come to think of it, but I hadn't done it. Well, maybe a little in grade school, but not much.

So when we got back, we had money for the – a little money for the first time having just gotten out of school and our first jobs, and there was this wonderful dress shop in Lawrence and the window was so neat. And I had this new dress with a – it's beige with a very large tiger print in black on it. I still have it. I'm going to use it on a necklace. And so my first papier-mâché pieces were these enormous earrings that had a tiger print on them. And I sort of made up how to do it. I didn't really know.

And the other thing about teaching in Lawrence that year – I taught with Carlyle Smith who is absolutely wonderful, and in fact he lives in Pittsburg, Kansas now. And anyway, I looked into a student's toolbox and she had a little medicine vial – a plastic one – that was painted purple – this lavender color – and I said, "What is that?" And she said, "Oh, it's acrylic paint and I put inside this medicine bottle." I said, "Oh." I didn't know about acrylic paint, so I marched straight to the KU [University of Kansas] bookstore and they had a little starter set. I bought six colors or whatever came in it and then I was on my way, wasn't I?

So I did the earrings and then I thought, oh, well, obviously I'm not an earring kind of maker. I've done some, but I – not a lot. And so I – somehow the idea of bracelets appealed to me. And in the beginning in our little flat there in Lawrence I would design how I would paint on them by cutting colored paper out – solid shapes – and I'd lay those shapes over my forms, but I kind of made up how I was going to do it.

And then when I came to Pittsburg, the man who taught sculpture here [Robert Blunk] suggested that I use Elmer's glue, so for a long time I didn't use any more wheat paste, but when we – when I first started the papier-mâché at the end of that year in Lawrence, Jim was going to do research in New York so we drove and we drove through Bloomington to see Miss Eikerman and I had made six papier-mâché bracelets. And I thought, oh, you know, she's a metals person. She's not going to like these, but I'll show them to her anyway because when we would make trips back to IU I would always take her my new work.

So she loved them and she said to me, "You've got to take these to Paul Smith at the American Craft Museum." I said, "You're kidding. How do I even carry them?" And she said, "Well, get a nice nifty basket," because she had such style – oh, such style. So I don't know if I carried them in a paper bag or what, so when we – and she also said, "Not only will you go to the Museum of American – of Contemporary Crafts [now called the Museum of Arts & Design, New York, New York], but you will also go to the Museum of Modern Art" – I'm 25 years old – because they had just done a jewelry show and the curator's name was Renée Neu [Renée Sabatello Neu, Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, Museum of Modern Art, New York, directed the exhibition "Jewelry by Contemporary Painters and Sculptors."] and she had put together a catalog and they had like a David Smith medal in it and a Louise Nevelson piece and they were all by sculptors and painters, so I cannot imagine doing it today, and I had less nerve when I was 25, but Miss Eikerman told me to do it, so I did it.

So I went probably first to the American Craft Museum and made my appointment and I was – you know, Paul Smith was there on that side of the desk and I was on this side and I pulled out my bracelets and he immediately took some of them in his hands and he was out of the room, and I thought, "Oh, my God. What have I done? Is this – you know, what have I done?" And he came back in and he said, "This is just great because we're planning this huge show called 'Made with Paper'" and he said, I want – I think he chose two and what was great – and so I must thank Paul Smith – he said, "Keep me informed of what you're doing." So on the rest of that trip Jim was doing research then in North Carolina or Virginia, I'm not sure – we went to the hardware store and I bought these big snips and more screen wire and wheat paste and I'd sit in the motel room doing papier-mâché – that was the start of it – while he was doing research in the libraries.

And I also – back to New York – I did make an appointment with Renée Neu at the Museum of Modern Art – can't believe I did that. And she was very polite and very nice about the work, but of course she couldn't take it or use it. And I was – I don't know if I showed the paper pieces, but I went to Betty Parsons [Gallery, New York, NY] and I went to the American Federation of Artists – I'm not sure – and they were – he seemed really intrigued with the work and all he could say was, "You live in Kansas and you make this?" So then we were teaching and we made a trip or two back to New York in those early years and on my own I went to – oh, we bought a Lichtenstein print. We went to Leo Castelli [Gallery, New York, NY]. Can you believe I did that?

Well, I took him my papier-mâché and I – at that time the sculptor here was doing fiberglass, so I had coated one

of my papier-mâché pieces with fiberglass and it was very rough and I remember – I think it was Castelli – saying, “Well, this surface was much too rough.” And he was exactly right, and of course he didn’t take the work, but I don’t regret that I did those things. Yeah.

[Audio break.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski. I’m interviewing Marjorie Schick at her studio at Pittsburg State University, Kansas, that’s located in Pittsburg, Kansas. Today’s date is April 4th, 2004. I’m doing this interview for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number two.

Marjorie, we’ve been talking about how you moved from metals to discovering a love of papier-mâché and working with more, quote, “alternative materials,” which were very new on the scene in the 1960s and ‘70s. And I was wondering how these new kinds of materials allow you to express yourself differently. What did they offer you as an artist?

MS. SCHICK: Well, I for years – until the ‘80s – thought that my important work was my metalwork and I continued all through the ‘80s – the ‘70s up until the early ‘80s to do metalworking, but the other side of me absolutely fell in love with papier-mâché, so whenever we’d hang a faculty show, I’d say to – I was the only woman in the department, so I’d say to the men, well now here – this is my important work right here, which would be the showcases filled with the metal pieces, and I’d – and then they’d say, “Well, how about this over here, Marjorie?” Which would be my papier-mâché and I’d say, “Well, I do that just because I have to do that.”

So it took me a lot of years until I was well into the stick – *Dowel-Stick* pieces in the ‘80s to realize that my serious work had been both of those. Now, in a slide lecture I give I think I can show a relationship in the forms between what I was doing in metalworking and what I was doing in non-metal. And then I have to go back to Jim helping me again because when we came to Pittsburg and it was so great that Paul Smith had said, “Keep me informed of what you’re doing,” so I started doing these big things that would go from your shoulders down to your hips and I sent him maybe just one letter that might have had sketches of this kind of work in it – that I was doing in papier-mâché – and I was always working with planes.

So anyway, I think it was a good thing that Paul Smith had asked me to keep him informed because I obviously had this urge to do larger things than just bracelets, and I felt that his show was going to be a good place for those. They chose just the bracelets, but that’s all right. I started the others anyway.

So what happened is that with the papier-mâché I could make really large forms and not have the weight of metal, so the weight became a factor. And I discovered also that I just loved building a form to receive paint. It’s really important to me to be able to paint that surface. Now there were – I started to mention Jim because in the beginning, all of my papier-mâché things had to do with planes, and I was building them over chicken wire and screen wire and that kind of thing, so I was having curved and also straight planes, but Jim said, “Well, why don’t you look back at your metalwork and in your metalworking.” Right at that point not only was I doing things with planes, but I was doing things with wires, so he said, “Can you do linear? Why can’t you do linear papier-mâché?”

So I said, “I guess I can.” So I went to the Salvation Army and I bought old coat-hangers and I brought them back up to the studio and being a – trained as a metalsmith, I cut them and I hammered them all straight on the anvil and then I used that as the material, and I would silver solder these rods together. It took me several years of approaching it that way before a student clued me in and said, “Why don’t you go to the welding store and buy welding rods Mrs. Schick?”

But anyway, so I started in that way, and then I would wrap the coat-hangers with papier-mâché and I fell in love with working that way. I did a number of linear things and I called them “drawings-to-wear.” I would call them “three-dimensional drawings-to-wear” because, you know, you think of lines as being on a piece of paper, but mine were suddenly surrounding your shoulders or “The Cage” surrounding a larger part of your body, so I simply had a great time in expanding my vocabulary of papier-mâché to do linear pieces as well as the others.

And it was those linear pieces that I say – because I was striping them with paint – became a precursor of what I did in *Dowel-Sticks* 10 years later.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And describe that look. How did that – how did you move into that?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, well, I did papier-mâché and metalwork all through the ‘70s and about mid-‘70s I did a shoulder-to-floor body piece – it took me a year – of scrunched newspaper – my *Tubes* piece. And it came out on a metal armature and we used it for dance performances, so unfortunately it died, but it was – it was a huge piece and after maybe ’75 or so I just grew tired of papier-mâché, so I had – I started – I had this 40-ply cardboard and I did a necklace of trapezoidal kinds of shapes and dowels. Maybe that was one of my first uses of dowels.

And then I did a series of bracelets, and I gave one to Ms. Eikerman, of the cardboard drilled with the dowels holding it – them apart. I did a necktie. I did a series of men's neckties for fun and moved into painted cardboard and dowels.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Now weren't those – some of those pieces were used in some really interesting exhibitions that – in which a choreographer collaborated with you?

MS. SCHICK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Why don't you talk about that? That was at a pretty exciting time.

MS. SCHICK: It was very exciting because a woman named Mary Ann Bransby, who taught jewelry at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, and her husband taught drawing, contacted me [1976], and they – I don't know, maybe we already knew each other, but she asked how I would like to loan my pieces to a group of dancers from UMKC – modern dance students – who would perform with our pieces, so that sounded great. And what she was interested in was both the papier-mâché objects and the large metal pieces like my *Blue Eyes* piece and *Pectoral* and I had a belt that unfortunately has gotten lost, that was a great noisemaker, and they just did great. And the *Slats* piece – I did one that was dress length before the performance started, but when the dancers performed with these things it was so exciting; like the dancer who did the slats piece would – the slats would stand up almost by itself and she would hunker down on the floor inside the slats and then she would rise up through the piece and then she would hit the slats together to make – let it – the piece make the sound.

They did improvisational kinds of performances and *The Tubes* – it took me a year to make that tubes piece, but I never ever had visualized what would happen if you put it on and moved other than for me to walk up the hall to have Jim take a slide of me wearing it. So one of the dancers was a guy – a fellow – and he put *The Tubes* on and he started to spin with it. Well, it was so remarkable. I'd never seen it in motion like that, so, you know, I've also had to teach weaving here and I got interested, once the performance was started, I think – I don't know – remember the dates any longer, but I did – we used my paper – my older papier-mâché pieces, but I also did some woven body pieces made of string – just ordinary string.

And we have a school supplies store in town and I must have absolutely fallen in love with a mop that was for sale. All these great – well, because I was doing linear work – had done linear work for years then – these incredibly crazy lines of this mop that were a little bit stiff. It had never been used, so it was not limp, the way it would be in water. So I took – I bought two of those and took them apart and then I liked doing Rya knotting on the floor looms so I would string up a floor loom with string and did these body pieces.

And I did another – a third one of foam rubber at that point, thinking about how the dancers moved so that this is string – woven string – with foam rubber around the shoulders that I cut on the bandsaw and dyed and so when the dancers would move, this foam rubber would bounce up and down.

Eventually I did another big piece, I've not looked at to know the condition of it after all these years, with a lot of foam rubber down to your knees and cords of all kinds.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How did – oh, excuse me.

MS. SCHICK: No.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I was going to ask, how did the experience of seeing the dancers move in the pieces influence your thinking about other work you were doing at the time and later?

MS. SCHICK: What intrigued me, was that at first I didn't know if I liked it, but they would put a bracelet on it – on their toe. As long as it didn't hurt it, it was all right with me that they did that. And they were beginning to show me that they were interpreting the work in new ways. But the first dance instructor who came with them was an older woman. Her name was Winifred Weidner and she had been a friend of [Isamu] Noguchi's sister – the sculptor. And she was very savvy – very tuned in. And she would say to these young dancers, "Now, really look hard at that piece and make your movements and your body echo the shapes that you see in the piece." So I found that just truly exciting to see what they would do – how they would interpret the work.

Now, how it affected the work I did. Other than the string pieces, I'm not so sure that – unfortunately I'm not sure that it really made me go off other than just in a few pieces, and what I liked about the string pieces, which is something nobody else would have noticed but me, but as the dancers would twirl and spin with these string pieces on, they were – the lint that was coming off the strings was filling up the space of the room – of the floor where they were performing and I thought, oh, is that crazy? I loved how that happened. So the piece would swing out and fill up the space, but then so would this lint that I could see in the bright spotlights, also was coming off.

Also, my tubes piece – sometimes the tubes would fly off, so then I'd think, oh, no. I'd have to go home and repair that piece. Those weren't meant to fly off, although in reality it was not so bad to see these – you know, it was kind of exciting to see these things fly off.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: They're filling negative space in a whole new way.

MS. SCHICK: Yeah.

[Audio break, tape change.]

So that was quite exciting. We took it on the road. They did it here; of course we did it at the Kansas City Art Institute. We did it in a wonderful little school outside of St. Louis – Lindinberg – Lindbergh College, or Lindberg [the Lindenwood Colleges, St. Charles, Missouri]? I can't remember exactly – and we did it at the Bronx Museum [of the Arts] in New York [in 1978] when the College Art Association meeting was meeting New York. That was really not so easy, but it was exciting to do it and Joan Mondale was there, I remember, so you can sort of get the time period of that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right. And wasn't there at least one of these exhibitions that was really a stylized experience for the visitor because –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yes. What we would do – and this was Mary Ann's idea, not mine, and it was a beautiful idea – she said what we would do is we would go in and we would hang all of our work for a show because there would be one dance performance and the exhibition might be up for several weeks, but then sometimes the performance would be in the same room, sometimes not, but if – you know, we would take the pieces down just before the performance, so the performers would do their thing with them and then in the background we were all busily trying to hang them back up so that when the performance was finished, the exhibition was then hung again.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So it was really installation as part – as performance?

MS. SCHICK: It was great.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Performance as installation.

MS. SCHICK: It was great.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, which is exciting.

MS. SCHICK: I guess we also did it north of Kansas City [at the Albrecht Gallery, St. Joseph, Missouri]. I'd have to think of the town, but we – it was wonderful.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, I'm struck, too, about how you were talking earlier about how for the wearer it's so important to put on the piece, to feel the physical challenges of a piece against the body, against the skin. And for the visitors of this particular exhibition, they didn't actually put on the pieces, but they were able to witness someone else wearing – wearing the pieces, perform them, and then take the sculpture off, put it on the wall. Then they had that memory – at least vicariously – of what it meant to be on a body.

MS. SCHICK: They could really take away from that experience a greater understanding of the work, because today I often put a photo of it on a model or a mannequin next to the object in the exhibition, but to have seen those pieces actually performed with and in motion – they weren't designed for that except maybe the string ones might have been. I'd have to check dates, but it was a thrill for me to see them used in that way. Yeah. So they performed with her [Mary Ann's] pieces and with mine and it was a great experience. It was very exciting – a lot of work, but very, very exciting.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And so the – we were talking a little bit earlier about how you moved from that body of work to your "drawings-to-wear."

MS. SCHICK: Okay.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And I'm just wondering how that transition occurred.

MS. SCHICK: Well, at the end of the '70s I think I really floundered, or I was experimenting because I grew tired of doing papier-mâché. I was doing these woven pieces on the loom. For a while I even thought I'd be a crocheter and I was – I crocheted – I threw it away unfortunately and I think it was really kind of neat – a huge mask, but I didn't like the look of the stitches, so crocheting was not going to be for me.

And I audited a ceramics class here at PSU and I did a whole series of ceramic jewelry pieces that only a few

people have seen and they're not bad. I combined metal with some of them and there was a huge one I did that lays on your shoulders like a big, broad collar that was all clay, all tied together. And I also audited or took – no, I enrolled in and took a plastics class here because we have a plastics area in technology [the School of Technology], and plastics was not for me, but I did a whole series of plastic jewelry pieces, and at that time I fell in love with white paper.

And you know, I mentioned I've not had any printmaking classes. And I don't remember just what inspired me to do it, but I did – for instance, I did some cut-out flat bracelets – armlets – big ones. I did a pair of brass ones. I did a pair of sterling ones. And then I took that up to the printmaking studio and I ran them through the printing press, so they embossed the paper. [After the embossings were completed, I then hammered the flat metal shapes into three-dimensional armlets.]

Well, I fell in love with this thick, white paper and I started piercing it and I did what I called drawings of – with pierced holes – I pierce from the back into something soft like felt and then I started looking in antique stores and all around for thread that would come off the spool and in different ways. Sometimes it was wire that had been put around a piece of cardboard so that it would come off at an angle thing. So I did all – a series of large drawings. I used the full-size sheet of paper and – but in the lower half would be this set of dots and then there are all these threads that come out.

Well, I was doing the thread drawings and then I think a year or so later I'm still doing metal pieces and I told myself I would never do non-metal again. I was straight for metal. This was about '80 or '81. And then I thought, hmm, is there a way to make thread and paper jewelry, which of course there was. And I had this idea to use dowel sticks. And there was a man in a community not far from here called Coffeyville and he asked me to show twice [at Coffeyville Community College], and one – the second time I wanted all new work and he had no showcases, so I thought, well, I can do these new paper and thread pieces and mount them on the wall and I can do dowel stick ones and I mounted them on the wall for him. So he had a small show.

And at that same time I saw and had an entry form for a show in London called "Jewelry Redefined" ["Jewelry Redefined: First International Exhibition of Multi-Media Non-Precious Jewellery" at the British Crafts Centre] and it was for alternative materials. So I went ahead and entered the show. It was so exciting because I sent off three paper and wire pieces actually – colored wire from Radio Shack – and three *Dowel-Stick* pieces and of course it takes a long time. It was an international show and it was in London and they fit in a pretty small box for me. Those are small things. And I – that summer Jim called me at school and he said, "Did you order anything from Europe? Somewhere – Amsterdam?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, you've got a packet," so he – I said, "Bring it to school," and our vice president, who is a friend from many years, had looked out his window and later he said, "Boy, why was Marj pacing up and down the street?"

So I was – couldn't wait to find out what this was and it was a letter from Paul Derrez, owner of Galerie RA, in Amsterdam, and he was one of the judges for the "Jewelry Redefined" show, which hadn't yet opened, and he said he was interested in my work and he'd like to see more. Well, my God, I didn't have any more. He was looking at three paper brooches, three *Dowel-Stick*, and I'd only done six of each I think. And I – it just looked too good. I thought I can't write him back and say, "You've seen it all." And so I wrote back and said, well, "I was so excited that he was interested in the work, but I had no slides right now and would he wait – if he could please wait until mid-summer I would send him slides."

So I worked like a dog. I did my first dowel necklace and some other brooches and I sent off slides of them and he wanted them in his gallery. I was just – I couldn't believe it. Plus, of course, I got in the show and we were – we had a sabbatical leave coming up and so I also had just won $500 on a metal piece that's in the Kohler Collection up in Wisconsin called *Art of the Bath* [at the Craft Alliance Gallery, St. Louis], and I had $500 in my pocket, so I thought should I go to London for the opening of the "Jewelry Redefined" or not? So last minute I decided I'd go, so that meant that I could meet Paul Derrez, I could be there for the opening, and I was so thrilled because Lloyd Herman [Director of the Renwick Gallery] was giving a lecture from the Renwick [Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.] in London for this and – oh, there were all kinds of lectures. I was in seventh heaven.

I found – I looked around for flats for us to live in because this was in the fall and we were going to be in London on sabbatical in the spring coming in January – starting in January. So it was pretty wonderful.

So here I had pieces then in the gallery in Amsterdam and also before the show ever opened I had gotten a letter from Sharon Plant, who owned Aspects Gallery in London, and she said she also was interested in my work, and you'd think I was receiving these letters every day. I wrote back and I said, "Well, tell me about your gallery." I can't believe I did it, but I did. So she sent me – she'd just been in a – in a British crafts magazine, so I sent work. And actually, when I went to "Jewelry Redefined" then, I had built some big pieces and took this enormous box that just barely fit in the back of a black cab, but I got it from Joplin, Missouri, to London, delivered my pieces, and we had this great sabbatical and I enrolled as a metals student – to study

metalworking. That was ’83 in London at the Sir John Cass.

And I had also just won an award in a show on my paper pieces in Japan [International Jewellery Art Exhibition, Isetan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Fine Works Award], so things were – I mean, my life was changing. The Japan show was interesting because Americans were going to pool together and send their work abroad to Japan for the show and I thought, okay, but what happened was they had such a high insurance rate on their pieces because they had gold and precious stones and mine was paper and silver – paper and bronze. I think they were brazing rods. I’m not sure. Paper and silver I guess. And I thought, “Oh, I could send them for practically no money at all.” And we were going to have to pay shipping back and I said to Jim, you know, I think what I’ll do is I’ll send them myself and then I’ll tell them to just throw those pieces away rather than return them to me. And he – because I thought I could make more, and he said, “You won’t do that. That makes them think that they’ve put worthless work in their show.” So of course he was right. So I did it the proper way and I won an award on one of those.

So things were great. So we had our great time in London and I was studying metalsmithing. That was what I thought I should be doing was metalsmithing. So our term ended in March or so and Jim planned this wonderful trip for us going – starting in Amsterdam because we hadn’t been there to see the gallery and then going on to – I don’t remember – Rome and maybe Greece then. I don’t remember all the trip – where all we went. But we got to Amsterdam and we found the gallery [Galerie RA] and it had this sign on it – but Jim reads German and so he could make out the Dutch that it said something about having moved and it gave that very day’s date.

We went, we found the new gallery, and he [Paul Derrez] was having this enormous international party that evening for all these jewelers.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What luck.

MS. SCHICK: Can you believe it? And he had sent me an invitation, but it was in our box here in Pittsburg and we were in London, so I had not known about it. So I met Paul and went to this party. I was so intimidated, but all these jewelers were there – mostly Dutch jewelers, but some others too – and I just couldn’t believe what was happening. So then I guess that afternoon when I’d met him he very politely said – and this was just before Easter – he said, “Well, on Monday” – the day following Easter – he said, “Why don’t you come to the gallery and I’d like to talk about your work with you.”

So of course I’m thinking he’s going to critique it and tell me how terrible it is, so we go – our son is with us and we go to the gallery on Monday and Paul said that he had a show that fell through in June. Now, this is March isn’t it? March or April. And we still were going – we still were traveling in Europe until May 10th and so he said would I like to have that show date for a solo show?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: A solo show.

MS. SCHICK: And I said, “Yes,” and I always will remember that we stood and we all drank a little, wonderful glass of sherry to my show and I looked at Paul and I thought, I think he looks a little uneasy. [Laughs.] And he might not have, but who knows? He might have, you know. So I did this show for him and what happened was I started doing some paper pieces on the trip. I couldn’t do dowels while we were traveling. We came home. I worked like a dog. We even went to California and visited Jim’s parents. I set up a card table out there and painted like crazy, came home, and finished up and my mom went with me. We flew back for my opening in Amsterdam in June.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How exciting. So what was that opening like?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, it was wonderful. It was an afternoon opening and I met some wonderful people with whom I’ve stayed friends all these years. Suzanne Esser – I think she had my – came and picked up my mother and me and took us to her home for a beer or a cocktail or something and Eleonoor van Beusekom, and of course Paul. I don’t know. I can’t remember all – well, the other person who came to my opening, but I think he just happened to be there, was Giampaolo Babetto from Italy.

But no, I don’t remember who else I met. Since then, I believe Charon Kransen said that he was – he met me at my opening, but of course I wouldn’t have remembered. I was in this kind of a daze and every name was a foreign name and new to me, so – and I’m not good at names, so that was wonderful, wasn’t it?

So that was validating these *Dowel-Stick* pieces and I had changed my mind about sticking straight with metal, but my last metal pieces had resembled a bit the dowel pieces, so – and Paul had shipped or he had carried them from London – the big necklaces I had taken over in the fall. So I had a show.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You had a show. And so was it at this point – did you begin to think, ah, I think this material – working in wood, working in papier-mâché – is the way we ought to be doing?

MS. SCHICK: I wasn't doing any papier-mâché. I had stopped that at the end of the '70s when I said I was floundering, and I had done ceramic jewelry and that was how I got to the paper and thread pieces. I would do these wrapped Venetian blind and clothesline – cloth clothesline neck forms to hold the ceramic parts and all these embroidery thread ends I would cut off. I loved what I threw away. So that was what inspired me to do the paper pieces and I did paper pieces for a while but I felt maybe Paul had said – and I think it was right – how could one person do these really subtle white paper and thread pieces and turn around and do the real brightly colored sticks? And so finally, I think one person can do it all, and I did do it all, but finally I dropped the sticks – I mean, pardon me, dropped the paper and retained the sticks.

And actually, I fell in love with creating linear forms with dowels and everybody would start to mention my necklaces, so pretty soon I was just doing predominantly neck forms – not entirely.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Now you worked with the stick forms for quite a long period of time.

MS. SCHICK: from the early '80s – probably about '80 – probably I did my first ones in '81 and I – about '86, it was wonderful. I was getting in European shows. Everybody seemed to love them and I thought for all those years preceding that my pieces had been so often rejected from shows and I thought, I think there's something wrong here. This can't be. There's something wrong that everybody likes this work, so maybe it's becoming not enough on the edge. Maybe it – I want my work to have a vitality to it – to – an intensity. I want it to be exciting. If it's on the edge, it makes you uneasy. That's good. And I thought maybe it doesn't have that any more.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: People were getting used to the forms.

MS. SCHICK: And also I felt that I'd had at that point said about all I wanted to say with sticks in that manner, so I started first with introducing into the stick pieces – of a folding body piece for instance – big planes of shapes; semicircles and such. And I was cutting those out of masonite, but I hated masonite. It was so dusty and all. So I could find at that point quarter-inch plywood in town and I thought it was such a thrill to be a jeweler and to go to the hardware store – hardware – yeah – no – a lumberyard and buy my material in four-by-eight foot sheets. I thought that was fabulous.

And by then we had a station wagon, which we always have to have I always say because we have to have a big car so that I can get my necklaces to UPS to ship. So then I didn't know how to work with plywood and even dowels. They're all riveted together because that's a metals technique, so when I turned to plywood I had so many nails and dowels in my pieces to keep them together and the man who teaches – taught sculpture [Robert Blunk] here showed me and proved to me that wood glue was even stronger than the nails were, so I guess I sort of felt my way through the wood pieces – how to make them and –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It comes up again and again that you experiment with a technique or experiment with a material and then explore that for a while and then move on to something else. And would you say that there's an element of play in that for you?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I hope that people see an element of play. In one lecture I used to give I'd refer to a quotation by Giacometti that he made about Alexander Calder and he said, "What do young animals do? They play." And he said, "What's this wonderful element in Calder's work?" He said, "It's that element of serious play that makes it what it is." So I don't want people to think that my work is a fluff or just frivolous or that it's only that I'm having a good time, because the work is – has been a challenge for me and I – it's more – it's not just fun. But if you see an element of play – serious play about it, then that's all right with me.

But certainly the work is experimental. I've – I think it's always been experimental, so I think experimental is a good way to describe it and so I experimented with plywood after the dowels, and still then used dowels, but now in a new way where they would – I would mass them together to create a line of dowels on top of the plywood or I would start to make a drawing with them, but now on plywood.

And so I did the plywood pieces – well, I'm still doing plywood pieces. That's – and I'm still doing dowel pieces, but they're different from before. I haven't totally forgotten. It's still – it's still part of my vocabulary.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: As I look at your work from the very beginning to the work that you're doing now, I see certain shifts over the years and I'm wondering how you would look back and describe changes in the kinds of problems that you're interested in aesthetically, for example, or the weight, the kind of vocabulary that you use.

What are some of the changes that you see over the entire course of your work?

MS. SCHICK: Well, the main one was starting to do – the main one was doing alternative materials in the late '60s, right? Starting with papier-mâché, but thinking it wasn't important. And then the end of the '70s sort of – I say floundering, but it was searching for what I – searching for something new wasn't it? Taking ceramics, taking plastics, trying clay jewelry, trying plastic jewelry, throwing away the threads and falling in love with what I

threw away, doing thread and paper, and then the thread and paper, then the dowels, and then moving into the wood.

And I think that – I hope that my work has changed and developed and I've always wanted the changes. I've hoped that the changes would have occurred naturally and never have been forced – not forced so – you know, so – "well, it's time to change now." It hasn't been that. I've worked through till the end. My color palette changed. You know, I used to do all bright colors, and then I did this piece, because the dowels are all straight and I wanted some curved ones, so I started using reed along with dowels to give them curves.

And I did the quivers that go in the back of a – are inserted into a back sculpture, but I did a lot of short little reed pieces that were ground down to points and I did this armlet – a huge one – that it's like a fetish and it's also a bit architectural. And I painted it grays and blacks and there were a few little hints of blue on it, but copper and it laid in my office and I didn't work on it for a while and a colleague of mine [Alex Barde], whom I'd asked sometimes about my work – I'd say, "Alex, this is so ugly. This piece is so ugly." And he said, "Well, now what is ugliness, Marj? How do you define ugliness and what makes this ugly?"

And actually I think it was – it was a new direction.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, I think so. That's the *Fetish Armlet*, isn't it?

MS. SCHICK: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.], and it wasn't so much that it was ugly; it was new to me and not only was the form a bit new – I had tied it together with threads. The threads coming back from the paper pieces, but I had this new color range with lots of black and lots of dark colors and it – and it just looked different, and then a piece that Paul has in Amsterdam was one that I had done – one of the first ones of plywood and I – and I thought, how am I going to paint this? How will I paint it? Because I'd been painting with stripes and I put some striped sticks on it so that people would recognize that it was my work, and I thought that was the dumbest thing I've ever done in my life, so I obliterated the stripes with texture.

I painted every kind of texture I could think of on the front and back of that piece and so – yeah, all those helped me, but they're difficult steps to make.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I was struck – we were talking a while ago and you were telling me about how most of your pieces go through what you call an ugly phase.

MS. SCHICK: Oh yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And I just was connecting that up with what you said about *Fetish Armlet* when you first looked at it. Oh, it was ugly, but actually you were finding a new direction and it just seems that it's part of that struggle that you go through; always working it out on the piece in process; experimenting your way toward what is right. And often that is very different from what you've done before because you were always taking on new challenges.

MS. SCHICK: I worry that maybe I'm not, at the moment. But what was it, two years ago when I did the shadow for the scoop and the shadow [*Shadowed by the Light of a Full Moon: A Scoop for Moonbeams*] I was starting to explore, and it's not a good material to use. It's not safe I don't think, but fiberglass screen wire – so I stitched – there's the sewing again – I stitched it with colored aluminum wire, which gave it more body and stitched all this thing together and it's painted and it's – it has aluminum wire in it and thread hanging off and it's the shadow for the scoop. And it was this Alex [Barde], who is retired now, but he saw it and he said, "Oh." And I really appreciate it because he said, "Oh." He was pleased to see that I was still experimenting and he thought that was very experimental.

Now at the time, you know, it was a scoop thing, and it was rejected from the show because it wasn't spoon enough – spoon-like enough, but I still think that that soft kind of shadow was an exciting thing to do against the hardness of the scoop.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And it's an example of those companion pieces that you've been doing for quite a while. Maybe you could talk a little bit about that whole phenomenon.

MS. SCHICK: I don't know how far to go back, but probably in the mid '80s when I was doing both dowels and plywood, I did a wall relief that holds an armlet – holds a bracelet. And then when I switched just to plywood, I did these three very flat necklaces that I thought were so dull and I thought, gosh, they just lay there – like I had thought about *Blue Eyes* years before. They just laid there, and I thought, what if I make a painting to support them? It took me six weeks to paint it and the necklace is a reversible. It's like a puzzle. There's a blue side of the work and it fits also on the green side. And I thought – oh, I was so excited. I thought, you know, I've crossed over into somebody else's territory. I don't belong here at all, but I'm going to do it anyway, which was painting [*Painting with Three Necklaces*].

And so that became a structure to hold those necklaces, and I'm still dong that kind of thing; even these new ones I'm working on right now that are inspired by the Chrysler building. You know, I decided Friday that they can't just hang on nails. They've got to have this wood center that's like a tiered – kind of like a cake that will come out from the center of each one that will be the holder.

So I like this idea because the pieces are not going to be worn on the body for very long, right? They're mostly going to be on a wall. I don't want them in a drawer, so if I make the mounting to support the piece, or if it is like in *Dunloe* – if it's the armlet – I loved making that companion and when you have the two on the table, it's the space shape – the negative shape between the armlet and its companion sculpture that for me is the most important part. Now that's not the most important part for everything – everybody else. And that was also an experimental piece, *Dunloe*, which was preceded a year or two before where I took my paper – instead of laying it flat and pushing all the bubbles out to do papier-mâché, I wrinkled it up.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That has an enormous amount of texture in it.

MS. SCHICK: And I –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The piece.

MS. SCHICK: – wrinkled it up on the teapot brooches [1997] that I did that go on a tray – a friend in a presentation. And I don't remember the dates of that. But then when I got to *Dunloe* [2000] I started doing it [the scrunched paper texture] a little and pretty soon I was doing them a lot. In fact, even putting light cardboard in under some of those squiggle forms. I don't know, but that has a very, very built-up surface.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And that's evocative. That's part of your sense of place series, isn't it?

MS. SCHICK: Yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So it's evocative. Maybe you could talk about the inspiration for that particular pair of arm – the armlet and its companion.

MS. SCHICK: Well, that was Jim's idea again, because we've been really fortunate on our sabbatical leaves here at Pittsburg State, but we had a dean, who when our first sabbatical came up said, they're never going to have – because my husband teachers here too. He's in the History Department. "But they're never going to have their sabbatical leaves together." Well, we did and he obviously signed off on it, but that meant that we were always nervous every time we would apply for sabbatical leave because we would always want them together. If we were going to travel, do it together, not one one semester and one the next.

So it came time and Jim said – to apply for sabbatical leave. I guess that was in '98 and he said, you know, he had a great plan and he thought his would go through fine, but he said, "You better have an equally good plan" and he – and we wanted for him, and for me too, to go to Mexico and we had planned this – we went on a tour and we visited eight sites, Uxmal and Palenque and – anyway, eight wonderful historical sites – because his minor field had been – how do I say it? – pre-Columbian and South American history, so we wanted to do that, but we also were going to spend five weeks in California and we were going to go to Europe too. And I had a show in Amsterdam then, so it was his idea. He said, "well, you know we're going to do all this traveling. Why don't you relate your pieces through color, since color is so important to you, to the places we're going to be?"

So it was a great idea and I had just touched on that already when – we take the Sunday *New York Times* and so there had been this amazing photograph of a mud palace all painted bright colors – Yemen. Yemen. So that inspired me to start *Yemen Windows*. It took a long time to do that piece, but then – but then the sabbatical leave – I did a whole series of pieces that were related to our travels and I would refer to that as *A Sense of Place*, so yeah. I did number – a number, because, you know, all those trips down to the Loop when I was in high school, riding (when the train was elevated) by the Mies van der Rohe apartment buildings on North Shore Drive there, that I did a piece – a wearable – long wearable inspired by that, mostly because at night I always love it because you look at a skyscraper of apartments and each one is different, so that's what mine – it's all held together in this structure of black windows, but each – inside each window it was painted differently, so I had a great time doing pieces [*Chicago Windows*].

And that was different for me, too, to be so literal because all those previous years my works were just very much about the formal elements, and as I said before, the content having to do with the scale, but not ever relating them – not very often to places or events. Years ago, there was a show in Wichita at the museum and I was invited to be in that and the theme was "bestiary," but that's just when I was doing the sticks and I said to her – I said, "You know, I don't work with a theme of animals." I said, "The closest I could do would be worms."

So Jim has always loved games and he had a book at home on the history of games and I found Snakes and Ladders, so I did these two ladders, these pieces are for a pair of people. One's four foot-long and they're very

narrow – only a couple of inches wide. And then all these snakes that you put on you as pins to go with it. So that was probably the very first time and that was in the early '80s [1986] that I made such a literal approach in my work.

And then I didn't do it again until I was part of Mobilia [Mobilia Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts] and she has all these theme shows and she was doing a teapot show, and I thought, teapots? I can't do teapots, but that's when I did those brooches that – with the crumpled – crumpled surface and I've really – at first I thought I was being bad by following all these themes. And after doing it now for a number of years, I've loved it and I think I've come up with pieces that I would never have if I hadn't had that theme. So I quite like it. The *Chrysler Building Necklace* is for this show where the theme is Art Deco.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: One of the things I like about the teapot is you did teapot bracelets, you did teapot brooches, you have your *Yellow Ladderback Chair* – is that they really play with the idea of functionality, which is a central issue in craft. And I'm wondering how you see yourself playing with that idea.

I mean, here you are. You're making jewelry, which many people would say it's not functional as jewelry at all.

MS. SCHICK: Uh-huh [Affirmative.].

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But yet you're making an interpretation of a Shaker hang-on-the-wall chair – a Shaker ladderback chair and then you're turning it into a necklace, so you're blending functionalities. You're blending the functionality of the chair with the functionality of jewelry. How about that idea of functionality as you take themes and mix it with jewelry?

MS. SCHICK: I love it. I love it, and it started when Paul Derrez, in a show I had in Holland, set my *Folding Body Sculpture* on side – on its side and stood it up like a folding screen. Well, from that – and I've done very few commissions – like two in my whole life, but I had a commission from a couple in Utrecht to do a folding screen. Well, I thought that was exciting, but I could not get into this folding screen, and pretty soon my time was about to run out, and the piece took me six months to build, and it's three sections that were the biggest I could manage without help to lift it up on the table to build.

The only way I could get into making that folding screen was to have the screen hold jewelry pieces. So the jewelry – that screen holds two necklaces and four bracelets and I had to make sure that it worked both without the jewelry pieces on and with the jewelry pieces off.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And these are jewelry pieces that you made yourself?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yeah. They're sizeable. They're made of plywood and they go on this screen – which is open – of huge dowels and plywood and such, but my colleague Alex [Barde] used to say, "Marj, you expect too much from your work because you want it to be wearable, you want it to work off the body, on the wall, upside down. It's finished on its back. You want it to work from every direction." He said, "Maybe you expect too much." But that's just the way.

So the screen – the screen actually—I have a favorite way for those three sections to go, but I tied it together – going back to tying – so that the owners of it could hang it vertically if they wanted, or that they could rearrange it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So they can make demands, too.

MS. SCHICK: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, and then going to the teapots, I find it much more exciting for me and it's – that there's the play – there's the play aspect. It's sort of playful to have a teapot that the body of it is 10 bracelets [*Teapot with Armlets*, 2001]. Or I was working on the teapot that is a bracelet and I had to talk to high school kids in my room and it wasn't yet painted and it was over in my mess and I was showing them other pieces and I said, "Oh, by the way, would somebody please bring the bracelet from the other table over here and I'll explain it to you." And they looked and they looked and they looked and I said, "Oh, I know why you can't find it. You're – you must bring me the teapot," because they had no idea it was a bracelet, right? [Laughs.]

So I'm having a – I'm having a great time trying to incorporate in these teapots jewelry pieces. Well, one that's not finished and I think it will be kind of neat – it's a huge necklace and a teapot is way out here floating on your shoulder and it's spilling out tea so the rest of the necklace looks like fluid shapes going all around your neck, so sometime in my future I'll finish that.

But I've had a great time doing these teapots. The last one – the – part of the lid comes off and is a brooch [*Pour Vous* teapot with brooch], and the new one I want to do for this year will be – you saw my egg rings upstairs and so I've fallen in love with those little egg shapes, so I have bigger eggs and I'm going to turn them into teapots. They look kind of like people, but then I'll hang an egg ring on the lid of each one.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You said a few times that you've fallen in love with something.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I don't mean to, do I? But I get –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: No, it's just –

MS. SCHICK: I'm just intrigued.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – a nice phrase and I'm just – it – does that – is that what happens? That you work along and then you happen upon something and then suddenly you have this very strong emotional bond to it and can't leave it alone? Is that common in the way you work?

MS. SCHICK: Hmm, never thought of that that way. I know I've been saying that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You have been.

MS. SCHICK: Often, haven't I?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MS. SCHICK: It's funny about my work because some of it's really drudgery – you know, just drudgery. And maybe there'll be a piece I have to finish, but I'd rather be working on this other one. But it doesn't take me long – a few minutes – 15 – 20 minutes and I'm into the one I'm supposed to be working on, so I don't know if that has anything to do with it, but I like the – I really like the idea of the challenges of these teapots and these challenges of meeting the themes – like the chair. I was going to make a real – a chair. And then I thought – it took me a while to come up with the idea, but I thought oh, my God, but of course. It's a – it can be wearable. And that – now that was exciting. That was fun.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's a real paradigm change. You know, you just completely change your way of seeing the world. I mean, it's an interesting inspiration. How did that inspiration come to you? Was it just this flash that – asking the new question?

MS. SCHICK: I don't know exactly how. I don't know how my mind works, and somebody tried to explain to me, which I didn't understand, because I said to her – that was years ago – I said, "You know, I get ideas when I'm driving" and she explained that, "Oh yes, because you're concentrating on this" – your mind. I don't know when they come exactly.

Now, I've never been – I like to stay up late, so that means it's hard to get up, and I find that sometimes I'll lie in bed in the mornings and I'll be thinking about what I'm going to do on the piece or I can sort of – this is recent. It's – I don't think I've done it my whole life, but I sort of worked through some of the problems before I get up. Does that make sense?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, it makes a lot of sense. It makes a lot of sense to me. It does. I sometimes do that myself in my own work with writing. [Laughs.]

MS. SCHICK: I think it's good because I start my – I'm teaching a seminar for graduate students now and I always start them out with those questions of David Smith's for students. Oh, they're fabulous questions, and one of them is: is your art the last thing in your mind before you go to sleep and is it the first when you wake up in the morning? [from *David Smith: Sculpture and Drawings*, edited by Jorn Merkert, Munich: Prestel-Verlag, page 158, "Questions to Students: 1. Do you make art your life, that which always comes first and occupies every moment, the last problem before sleep and the first waking vision?"] So I know if I'm really working, and that's one thing that's been nice – kind of nice. I try not to think about my work when I'm teaching. I don't think that's what I should be doing, but I know when I was building that teapot with 10 armlets on it I was teaching too, but I'd glance over at that teapot and I'd think, how am I going to do this? What will I do next, you know? And I had a due date coming up too – always just sort of figuring out what I was going to do even during class time.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, that's the passion. It's always in your life – you know, it's always there demanding attention and giving something back, hopefully.

MS. SCHICK: It is rewarding. Well, the rewards have been like having this interview, right, which I find absolutely amazing and unbelievable and the rewards – I've had it good because there were so many years – my husband says I've paid my dues – so many years of so many rejections, but – the work would be too big, too unwearable, too this, too that. And then all of a sudden I had this acceptance in Europe in the early '80s from Paul Derrez and Sharon Plant and the "Jewelry Redefined" and then – wow, it's like doors just opened.

And so I was associated with the international "New Jewelry – it's called – Movement" and I think I had seen one of the questions was whether I would be – I felt I'm associated with an international movement or an American.

Well, I have an answer for that, which is both, because definitely my greater acceptance came from what I've done from – you know, from the Europeans and it seemed to me a little bit – and it's probably not true, but once I was accepted there, then people were accepting me here.

But I've made really good, wonderful friends abroad and I know one time when I was in London and I had a show up in Amsterdam and my friend said, "Oh, yes, we saw the poster, Marjorie, and your work is so American." So I said, "Well what do you mean so American?" And they would never answer – never give me an answer. So I just – I'd go back to the hotel. Jim – and I'd say, Jim, "They say my work's so American and I don't understand."

Well, several years after that I had a solo show up in Trondheim, Norway [at the Nordenfjelkske Kunstindustrimuseum], and I was having dinner at the curator's [Mr. Jan-Lauritz Opstad] house with he and his wife and I said – in the course of our discussion I said, "You know, I can do whatever I want to do in whatever I make." And I said, "Nobody in the world really cares what I do; since nobody cares, I can do whatever I want." And he said – and he answered the question – he said, "You know, that's very American." And I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Because sometimes in Europe they have felt that they must adhere to their sense of history – that if you're going to do a bowl or a tankard, it must hold so many ounces or fluid ounces of liquid, et cetera, et cetera." And he said that he thought that my sense of freedom was American.

So I would answer that question that I'm both, aren't I? And I think David Watkins wrote in his book that I have an unfettered sense of self-confidence or something that's very American. [*The Best in Contemporary Jewellery*, London: B.T. Batsford, 1993, pp. 146-7, 218. "Her work inhabits a cross-over area, between jewellery, sculpture and clothing and is intrinsically 'American' in its outgoing, unfettered confidence."] Now, I never thought about being self-confident in my work, but Paul Derrez, when I told him how many years I'd been – all those papier-mâché things had been rejected, his comment was that he felt it took a lot of self-confidence to keep going through those times when I would at the end of the year turn into my chair my report and I'd have eight rejections and two acceptances or whatever, and I never thought of it that way. [Audio break, tape change.] I just was doing what I had to do.

And I also was getting a lot of advice to make the things smaller. "Just cut them down a bit smaller, Marjorie," but I didn't do it, did I? So I don't know why I didn't, but –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, you've been very steadfast and had a lot of strength about what your aims were, what you wanted to do, what your vision was.

MS. SCHICK: Or stubbornness.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, and that's good, too.

MS. SCHICK: Yeah. Okay – [audio break].

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski interviewing Marjorie Schick at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. We're in the Collegiate Room in the Student Union. The date is the 5th of April, 2004. And I'm doing this interview for the Archives of American art, the Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number three.

Marjorie, you've already talked about how you position your work in between European and American Jewelry – how it's kind of a hybrid of what you see as trends in those two traditions, and I'm wondering how do you see or where do you see American jewelry in the international scene now? Where does it rank?

MS. SCHICK: Well, I think we rank really high. At least I hope we do. I believe that we do by what I see and I think that we've begun to influence some European jewelry through our narrative work. And of course that had not been done in Europe at all, but I think it's being done now to a certain extent, although there's a lot of work that's being done that's still not taking that approach, but that would definitely have been an influence from the United States.

So I think also with all the wonderful books that are being written now and there are so many jewelry magazines. Many schools subscribe to German and English magazines having to – especially the German ones with jewelry, and of course I'm assuming that schools in Europe are maybe subscribing to *Metalsmith* and *American Craft*. So I think that there is more and more homogenation – homogenization that's happening.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Let me just stop you quickly and ask you, what are some of the German or overseas magazines that you subscribe to here?

MS. SCHICK: I used to subscribe to *Art Aurea*. A-U-R-E-A I think. And for a while I also for several years subscribed to the British crafts magazine, and at this moment I'm not sure, but I think it's simply called *Crafts*. I'm not certain about that. And then there was another German magazine I think I used to subscribe to, but I'm not certain any longer. There's a nice one called *Silver and Gold*, so there are some wonderful magazines and I – we

don't subscribe to the foreign ones here at my school, but I know at other universities they do.

The other thing that has happened is I used to make a lot of trips abroad and so I would – I was often buying lots of catalogs of European shows and books and that sort of thing, so I've got a fine collection of that, but now – thanks to Charon Kransen selling during SNAG meetings – lots and lots of schools are buying for their university libraries these European books, and so that also added to this greater mix up where the influences – that they're all crossed over now.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What do you think American students and American metalsmiths and jewelers are – what are the messages that they're receiving from the European scene? What are the European traits that they're beginning to embed into their own work?

MS. SCHICK: Well, I think that the European work is very free and I have one catalog [*Jewelry Quake: International Three Schools Jewelry Collaboration*, Hiko-Mizuno College of Jewelry, 1994. Dust Jewelry by Teruo Akatsu, pp. 4-7.] – I don't remember if it's German work or Japanese work – where one student was working with lint and dust and he sees that dust itself is – oh, how shall I say? It's an accumulation of history. I have a lot of that. So I think it's – that's – I thought that was quite exciting. I quite liked that. So I think now that we've – maybe because of the "New Jewelry Movement" and maybe because – that freed things. I think actually just about anything goes, both internationally and in American work.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Was that freedom or that lack of any definite trend always the case or do you look in the past and see that there are – that American jewelry was governed by more definite trends in the past?

MS. SCHICK: I'd say that in the '60s and '70s it was predominantly metal and a lot of casting and a lot of work that I think showed what processes the artists could do – very process-oriented work. And I don't think it's that way now.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: More –

MS. SCHICK: More having to do with narrative work, more having to do with personal kind of content or other issues – gender, AIDS, those kinds of things. And that also there are pieces that deal just with formalism.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And you also label your work as very concept-driven even though it has a very sensual and sensuist quality to it, being so closely related to the body, so your work is becoming concept-driven as well.

MS. SCHICK: My work?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I'm saying in general –

MS. SCHICK: More – in general, yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Are you seeing that around you?

MS. SCHICK: Oh yes, I think so. To a great extent, yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And that's changing, in a sense, art education I imagine – the education of jewelers in –

MS. SCHICK: Yes, and definitely I think you see it in SNAG student exhibitions. Oh, yes. It's very prevalent. You see it everywhere.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: With all of this transformation in the emphasis of American jewelry, the increase of focus on concept – the bringing in of social commentary and these kinds of issues – how has the craft market responded to that? Do you think over – how have you seen those changes over the course of your career?

MS. SCHICK: The craft market is just expanded like by thousands of percentages and I think that we owe a lot to the SOFA [Sculpture Objects & Functional Art Exposition] meetings, which are – probably were developed for collectors, but you know, before SOFA probably there were a number of galleries and I imagine they were doing well – some better than others – but, gosh, when you go to SOFA, which is so exciting and so wonderful, there are a lot of red dots on the objects, so I think a lot of work is selling.

And often when I call Mobilia, "oh, they're with – Libby's with a client right now." Now, whether that – whether she's going to sell or not I don't know, but I know the economy has a huge play in whether people are buying jewelry or other craft items, so it's been down for the last – a bit, but in comparison with 20 years ago there's an – I think a much larger market now.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And do you think that the work that's being purchased is cutting edge or are collectors as adventurous as they were say 10 years ago or 15 years ago – 20 years ago?

MS. SCHICK: I'd like to say yes. Now, an interesting comment I had from Paul Derrez, who owns Galerie RA in Amsterdam, recently e-mailed me that, you know, in London they did a "Collect" event much like SOFA – a take-off on SOFA and he had attended it. He hadn't put up a booth, but he attended it and he said he felt that there was not so much cutting edge work – that it was mostly toned down for collectors, so I think that when you attend SOFA here in the States I'd like to think that there's some of both of that there. There's a lot that collectors would feel would be safer and they might feel easier about purchasing, but I think that they're also – I've seen some things that seem more cutting edge too. Whether they're selling, I don't know that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's also a process, I think, of educating collectors – that they have to see a spectrum of work. I mean, maybe they're not ready to jump in and buy an enormous 36-inch-in-diameter Marjorie Schick neckpiece, but they are ready to buy something that deals with color and issues of form on a smaller scale that they'll feel comfortable wearing in their own life. So you have to have stages and take the hand of the collector. And even somebody who isn't a serious collector, but someone who's just interested in craft, taking them by the hand and leading them along into increasingly complex issues.

Have you found that to be the case?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I think that's definitely true. I still have a huge collection of my own work, right? And I think very much because of that. And –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Meaning that it's too cutting-edge for some people?

MS. SCHICK: I don't think anybody wants to buy a 45-by-30-inch necklace. Right. Maybe for the wall, but not to wear. And I know that Libby and JoAnne Cooper of Mobilia Gallery are always happy if I send them something that seems more wearable, but of course I've got to understand that that's a business and that they want to sell, so yeah, obviously those things that are more easily worn are going to sell a lot more easily than the others, but I have this luxury of being able to teach and get my salary that way, so I therefore do pretty much what I want. I do some more wearable things, but my heart is with the others.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I want to talk about that whole phenomenon of being in academia and the safety it provides you, but you've mentioned Libby and JoAnne Cooper at Mobilia Gallery, and they've represented you for a number of years, as has Paul Derrez at Galerie RA in Amsterdam and I'm wondering if you can comment a bit on your relationships with dealers – these dealers and others – over the years and what that's been like having long-term, short-term relationships with galleries.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I've been lucky. I never – you know, when I started this I never anticipated that I'd be in a gallery and I mentioned yesterday that Paul had written me and Sharon Plant had written from London and I showed for a while with Aspects until it closed. Now I show also in London at Electrum and I also show with Helen Drutt. So I'd have to think – Mobilia, Helen Drutt, Electrum, and Galerie RA are the galleries where I show. And the one where I've shown the longest has been with Paul in Amsterdam since 1983.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: In Galerie RA.

MS. SCHICK: Or Galerie RA – I mean, actually 1982, so that's a good longstanding relationship and I must say it's enriched my life enormously to have been part of that gallery scene. It's something I never, ever would have dreamed of. And getting to meet other jewelers – I made friends with people abroad. Jim and I have gone for most of his [Paul's] celebrations, because he'll have a celebration kind of show – an event – for like 10 – once he was in business for 10 years and then when he was in business for 15 and for 20. And I haven't made it for every single one. I didn't make the last one, but I've been for several of those and they're wonderful events. So that has just been fantastic. I have loved it.

And he's given me – I think I've had three solo shows there. Yes, the last one was in 1998 [1983, 1988, and 1998]. And then I also showed with Joke van Ommen in Washington, DC, at VO Galerie a long time ago. It's now Jewelers' Werk. And I had a show there in '85 I think it was – a solo show – of my paper pieces at the same time I had a solo show with Helen Drutt. That was hard – having two solo shows at the same time. And I've been showing with Mobilia maybe for the last eight years. I'm not sure just how long [since 1995].

I've liked showing with the galleries. I always think I'd like to be in a certain number of shows each year – whatever, try for a number, some that are juried, et cetera. And it's always really a treat if a gallery puts together a show and you don't have to do anything. You don't have to send the work in or whatever. They take the work they have and suddenly there's a new show.

But the thing I've liked best about being with these galleries is when they've invited me to be in a theme show. And Electrum [Barbara Cartlidge, owner/director] called one day from London and she was having an earring show "From Classical to Wild" ["Earrings: Classic and Wild," 1996]. Well, obviously she wasn't asking me to do the classical earrings, so I had a great time doing earrings and mountings for that show. And Helen Drutt is

preparing a chatelaine show, so that's my *Tool Belt for Sonia Delaunay* that got out of hand, didn't it? It's a whole skirt, not just a chatelaine –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And a scarf.

MS. SCHICK: – and a scarf. [Laughs.] And then Mobilia has theme show after theme show and I really liked doing it. I wouldn't have done a wearable chair – I doubt I would have done a wearable chair if they hadn't had a chair show. And now I'm working on a second one because we've got a wire Bertoia chair at home and so I'm doing a new piece that's a take-off on the Bertoia diamond-shaped chair.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: A partner piece to the *Yellow Ladderback Chair* –

MS. SCHICK: Well, a short series, right.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MS. SCHICK: So I really like that. I wouldn't have done jewelry pieces that looked like teapots with wearable parts if it hadn't been for all these teapot shows, so I've liked that a lot.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And it's really shaped your work.

MS. SCHICK: Recently – I'd say recently because in the beginning there weren't so many theme shows. Right. And I think the Coopers – the Libby and JoAnne – do more theme shows – keep us busy – hopping – keeping us busy with all these theme shows. Right now the one for Art Deco and there's a new one coming up around the color blue and they did one around – centered around work inspired by paintings. Oh, and then they did one – the book art show and I worked an entire year on a necklace – it's not finished yet – that's a book. And it's got over 100 canvas – painted canvas pages with stitching and found objects and they're all painted on it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And you can turn the pages too?

MS. SCHICK: You can turn the pages and I call it *Connections* so that you see one page in relationship to another one. They're some transparent pages. Some are plastic. Some are see through fabrics and it's all kinds of things, but obviously I missed the show, didn't I? So about six weeks before the show I thought, yipes, I'd spent – I'd worked maybe not every day, but most days for a year on that one and then I thought, yipes, I've got to do a shorter one so I did a quicker one. I did a version of a folded – accordion folding book, which is wearable. It's a necklace or a sash. And I had a great time doing that. In fact for a while I wanted to do – for the next year or so focus just on the theme of the book as jewelry.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Why did that capture your attention so much?

MS. SCHICK: Why? Oh, I don't know. I think I mentioned yesterday, maybe when the machine wasn't on, that it doesn't take me long to get into something, you know? Even the drudgery of the work and I'll be really into one piece but I've got to finish up this other one and I don't want to work on it, you know, within 20 minutes – 30 minutes I'm into the one I didn't want to work on, so I don't know what struck me about the book theme. It certainly did.

Well, maybe one thing is that I'd been working so hard on the *Sense of Place* pieces for two exhibitions. I'd had a solo show during sabbatical leave in Amsterdam and then I came back and I had another solo show at Mobilia and I had all these due dates coming one right after the other and I – there was no pause ever between pieces. And part of it might have been I could turn such full attention to the book and at that point, you know, I must have had a due date far away that I could spend a whole year. I didn't do many other pieces. I just focused on that one that year and that was quite luxurious. It was quite amazing to do that, so it might also have had something to do with the time factor, but I just really got into all these small pages [3 3/8" x 3 ¾"]and I was using canvas – I'd already been using canvas, but I was using it in a slightly different way – flatter way than I had before.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's a very interesting piece and – because of the density of the pages. There are so many pages and you just turn page after page after page as you go around it and I think that's the first time I've ever seen anything like that in your work. I mean, you often have very many tiny parts, you may have many threads, but this piece somehow layering and layering and layering individual elements that you can manipulate to that degree. That book – that piece is unusual in the way that you've done that – the intensity with which you've done that.

MS. SCHICK: There's a thing I like about that piece that's on the underneath side, and that is I just kept letting the black thread that I was using hang from the bottom and I'd always intended to cut it off rather short and evenly, but every time I picked this up, these threads – I don't know, they might be maybe up to a foot long.

They're really dense now, now that I've got at least 100 of these pages on. There's so many of these threads that it's almost like black rain and so I would love, now, to do – and I don't keep a notebook of these ideas, but I'd love to do another piece that would just come out from the shoulder and it would be a mass of these fine threads to the floor. So it would be like walking in your own kind of weather.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Black rain: that's a wonderful phrase. It reminds me of your *De la Luna/Del Sol* brooches that you've done that were streaks of sunlight – streaks of moonlight that could be hung from the ceiling as well as more into the – again you're carrying your own different kinds of light with you or hanging them in a gallery space or even in your home. That a wonderful, sort of atmospheric thing.

MS. SCHICK: When I did the large necklace, *De la Luna/Del Sol*, half blue and half yellow with these long stitched attenuated forms that come out to points, my idea then was to continue making those brooches and fill up the space with like 100 of those and it's almost like talking yesterday about filling up, during the dance performance the space of the stage with lint, only this wouldn't be lint. These would be these pieces.

But I had made quite a few for the necklace. At one point I finally counted like 144. I don't know how many. It's better not to count. And I'm now up to probably more than 24 as brooches, but I always get interested in a new piece and so therefore I would – I'm not quite ready to go up to 100, but I still like that idea of all these sort of hanging around that necklace making its own kind of environment.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: There's a word that's often used to describe Maori tattooing –

MS. SCHICK: Yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The *horror vacui* or the horror of empty space.

MS. SCHICK: Yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And I just – we had talked about filling up the space with raindrops and the black rain and then the lint and I thought, oh, yeah. I think Marjorie Schick has that – has that sensibility as well. Everything has to be full. Everything has to be ornamented and decorated.

MS. SCHICK: Seems that way, doesn't it. There's an intensity to the work and I'm not sure I understand it. I want the work to have vitality to it. I want it to seem energetic. It's a transference, I guess, of my energy into the work, but – and I want it to seem alive, but there are – yeah, it's like I don't know when to stop. [Laughs.] So maybe I go beyond intensity. I don't know.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Beyond intensity. I think that's good. That's a good – maybe you ought to write that into a piece sometime: beyond intensity.

You've talked a number of times when you mentioned Alma Eikerman and her newsletters and the way she kept people connected over the years. And now with the Paul Derrez anniversary exhibitions that you said you attended and kept contact with people – you've mentioned these situations in which you've been able to go out and meet other jewelers and keep linked with individuals in your field – the friends and colleagues that you've made. I'm wondering, what kinds of communities have been important to you as an artist? Obviously that community of colleagues is one, but how has that been important and what are the other communities that have been of significance to you?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I think that you have your finger on the community that I enjoyed so much and I've really been bad in the last number of years in not keeping up through e-mail or letters with friends, but I always assume that that's all right. We can pick up when we start again.

But for instance, there was a young artist from London, Cathy Harris, whose work I loved and it was always being shown at Aspects – plastic pieces. And there was something about her aesthetic sensitivity and sensibility that appealed to me. I have a nice small collection of Cathy's work and I finally got to meet her, I think, at a Paul Derrez event – maybe his 10-year one – in Holland. We had such a good time. And she must have sent me – we started – we started writing back and forth and I guess when we met she talked about liking – oh, she made small collages for Amsterdam shows with trash, so I started saving can labels and candy bar wrappers and I'd send her small packets of these so she could put them in her collages, and then I thought, why am I sending her empty candy bar wrappers? Why don't I send her the candy?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.]

MS. SCHICK: So I started sending her candy and she knew that we love Sainsbury's bourbon biscuits, so she would sent back biscuits and we had this little thing going. Her husband's name was Henry, so I bought O' Henry candy bars. Oh, they were so thrilled because – she said, "We couldn't eat those. We put those on the wall." So I

quite loved that, and I would visit Cathy when I'd be in London and we would do galleries together – do the gallery scene together and I loved that so much. And she would say, "You're so American. You are so American." And finally I said – well, I never knew what she meant. Finally I said, "Do you know any other Americans, Cathy?" And she said, "No." [Laughs.]

Oh, but she was fabulous. She died young of leukemia and I saw her not at the very end, but she wrote me when she was dying and I had been abroad wanting – I called her and had seen her when she was sick and sent her a scarf and we just had a fabulous friendship. I loved her, and then when she did die and Wendy Ramshaw had been with her and had been close to her at the end, Wendy called me to tell me when she did die.

But that was such a grand friendship, you know? How can I say? And that's part of the community. I loved her work and when I met her I said – or I guess at Aspects I said to Juliana [Barrett], the girl who worked there, I said, "Do you think – does this Cathy Harris know that she has an American groupie?" And she said, "I've told her. She knows." So I loved that. That was so wonderful. I don't know if you call that community, but I've had, I think, just great experiences with my European friends and American friends.

And the community I mentioned yesterday of being a graduate of IU and being kept together through Alma's letters and we still all get together when we're at SNAG and that sort of thing – that's another community.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Now, I was going to ask you about those kinds of organizations: SNAG and I think you're also part of the Kansas Artist Craftsman Association.

MS. SCHICK: Yes. Yes, I'm part of that. I really like going to that meeting. I try to support that. I took students to it this past year in Lawrence and we just had a grand – we had an absolutely gloriously good time. And one girl's [Annie Pennington's] grandparents made it – they drove from Albuquerque, New Mexico and saw the show in Kansas on their way home to St. Charles, Missouri. And anyway, we just had a wonderful time. But often, recently, the Kansas meetings have been about the same time as SOFA in Chicago and I've been going to SOFA, so I don't always make it to the Kansas meetings, but I've liked that association as well, and I think it's been important for me to be a part of that too – I've enjoyed their support and I like supporting the organization.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What has it given you? I mean, not just the Kansas Association, but all of these communities. Is it validation? Is it a feeling –

MS. SCHICK: Yes. Yes. I'd say validation, but I'd say it's great to be – to have that sense of community as if you belong, and that's what the Eikerman letters did. You belonged to a group whether you knew it – whether I thought about it much or not. I belonged to that group and I guess I belonged to a certain group of friends in Europe, you know, and oh, I've just had amazing times – good times – and belonging to the group here.

And again, the United States is such a huge country that subscribing to *American Craft* has meant a great deal to me because that's another way of feeling that you're part of this group, and oh how I wanted to be in that magazine all those years ago and it's been such a thrill to finally be in. Each time I've been in it's – oh, it's just – it's worth celebrating, so yeah, it was something to strive for, right? A goal to set, but also it gave me a sense that I belonged to something where there were – and you knew – you know that there are others everywhere – large and small cities across the U.S. getting that magazine who are feeling – having the same feelings I have.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I know I'm struck when I go to SNAG, and SOFA to a lesser extent, but certainly at SNAG when you walk into the room on the opening day of reception I almost feel – I mean, I feel excitement in the room, but I also feel almost sense of relief. Like everyone knows a few – you know, I'm back among my own tribe.

MS. SCHICK: Uh-huh [affirmative.].

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: These are the people who share my values. These are the people who understand who I am and why I do the kind of work I do. And I think a lot of people are either teaching or working in contexts where they don't have that understanding from the people around them. Have you had that experience as well? Does the organization serve that kind of purpose for you?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, definitely yeah. Because my job is just great here, but I'm the only jeweler, right? So if I want to talk to another jeweler – I've gotten along with – you know, but if I wanted to talk to another jeweler about something, I need to do it by phone or travel a distance to go see someone else. But you're right. Then you're all together at one time. So that's been fantastic.

But also I've really enjoyed the community – I guess it's another kind of community of being in this Art Department. I mentioned yesterday I was the only woman for many, many years, but – so I was always striving to have all the men really respect me. I never wanted them to think that I got by with any less work than anybody else and I have admired my colleagues enormously. And I've thought back about – you know, now that

I'm older I thought about my past and I could have been at some places where I might not have had such high respect, but I enormously respected my colleagues here and that – so that also was a wonderful sense of community. Oh, we had our differences, but we were all very individual from each other.

But as I've said, I could go to Alex [Barde], who taught printmaking and photography and did amazingly incredible work, and say, "Now I know that this necklace that I'm working on – *Purple Rays* or whatever – works as a necklace. I don't – don't – you know, you don't need to tell me about that. I've got that base covered, but how is the painting on this working as a painting aside from a jewelry piece – just as a painting?"

And I could go to our painter Bob Russell and ask the same, or if I'd be in trouble with a color combination he'd say, "Well, Marj, you need to somehow unify these colors, like with that Acra gold color," so on one necklace – so I tried Acra gold all over everything [*Acra Gold*]. I was glad he suggested what one to do, and it worked. It worked. A transparent color that then began to bring all these separate colors together, so I used those as learning experiences, but I've really enjoyed – and it's been a huge help to me, to be able to go and ask a colleague about an aesthetic problem I'm having.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, an artistic community as well as just a working community at a college or university. That's rare, I think. It's hard to find.

MS. SCHICK: But that's been good.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's been great. Yeah. What comments can you make about what it's been to be an academic jeweler and what differences do you see between a person who has the kind of position that you do in the university making work and also teaching and someone who is a studio jeweler who freelances and doesn't have – makes their living exclusively by the work that they sell?

MS. SCHICK: Well, I think that they're – I don't – I can't speak to the training. I think that you could learn your processes and techniques – your trade more or less – it doesn't have to be learned in a university. It could be learned in any other way. And I think that you could do great things. If you have to earn your living by the selling of your work – and we touched on that a few minutes ago – you might – if you have wild and crazy things like I want to do, you may not be able to do those because they don't sell. I wouldn't be able to live – oh, wow. One piece might sell a year or so for me. I couldn't live on that. I spend more each year on my materials, my photography bills, my shipping bills, now hiring students to help me with the pieces, the taxes and unemployment and Social Security I'm paying on all that. That's a lot more than I ever make on the selling of work.

So if you have to devote your – and it would be exciting too, but if you devote your whole life to making work that you've got to sell so that you can put food on the table, then you might have to make other compromises.

But I look at Tom Joyce. I am so excited that he's received this MacArthur "genius" award [MacArthur Foundation Fellowship]. It is such a thrill for me that he was given that and also that he was made a Fellow of the American Craft Council. Now I – from what reading I've done, I believe he apprenticed with other blacksmiths and has come that route and look at what he's done. So I can't say that one way is necessarily any better than the other. They're different.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Different kinds of challenges and different kinds of choices one has to make, certainly.

Do you feel particularly protected in your position artistically? I mean, I'm thinking you don't have to make market kinds of decisions, but do you think that you would have been able to – certainly your work would have been different if you had to respond to a market, but do you think that your essential aesthetic values would have been different?

MS. SCHICK: It's very possible. I think I've been fortunate to be here at Pitt State where I can do what I want, you know? They're not going to – they don't say, "Oh, why are you making things like that?" They're not going to say that and they've never complained about me running the lights every night till really late in the studio or up there on the weekends when our budgets are short and obviously I've cost them some extra money for the hours that I keep working in the studio. No, there's never been a complaint, so they've left me alone completely to teach my classes the way I wish and, you know, to do what I want in my own work, you know? So yes, I have been protected. Yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The crafts in the U.S. have increasingly been – become part of institutions since the 1960s and I'm wondering how you see that influencing the craft movement and the jewelry movement in the U.S. – the increasing importance of the university.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I think that it's – it plays a big role and I think that maybe through seminars and conversations and assignments maybe there's even been a greater interest in narrative and content-driven work through the

university systems. I don't know for sure about that, but possibly so. But I think it's had a huge, huge impact.

Also, it's really exciting to go to SNAG and see how many students are attending those meetings and I'm impressed. Like, they're there. They've got their slides to show people. They're – wow. I wasn't ready to do that at that age.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you think in general students are becoming professionalized earlier or –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I think so. I think so. Maybe it's the demand of the field, too. And yeah, you've got to have really good slides if you want to get in – get – not to mention that the work has to be good, but the presentation now of the slides, they have to be great to get into a show. That's terribly important. So I think – yeah, and you look at those student shows – slide images at SNAG – they're fabulous. Yes. Oh yeah. So I'd say, "Yes." Maybe more is expected and more is happening.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You've taught in a lot of other programs through workshops, guest artist positions. You've taught all over the world. Can you describe some of those experiences for us – some of the places that you've been and the experiences you've had there?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I've had good experiences. I've given workshops. Once for a couple of days, James Evans, who is a Canadian jeweler who now lives in London, but he was going to be in Norway for a while and so he invited me to come to Norway and give a workshop [in 1985 at the National College of Art, Crafts, and Design] and that was such a glorious experience. It was a couple of days and at the end the students gave me a big dinner. I can't remember. It was a special kind of Norwegian food with lots of peas in it – kind of a stew-like thing, but they had no lights on in this big room and they'd invited a curator from Trondheim [Mr. Jan Lauritz Opstad] and there were special people that came for this and it was all by candlelight and it was winter.

And then I gave a workshop up in Nova Scotia [in 1987 at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, Canada] and that was winter too and it was – it was great. And I've given them – given workshops all over – one in Thailand [in 1991 at Silapakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand]. I don't know if I should put this on. And it was a great experience, too. I gave a lecture and of course it was being translated and I was at the front. There were 280 some students all in white shirts with navy blue pants or skirts and sitting very properly with their eyes focused on me, and I had lectured previously in Japan and in Korea, so I knew that you weren't supposed to speak in very many sentences at a time to make it easier for the translator to remember what you said. So I probably spoke in a few too many sentences, but whatever. I went through my lecture showing the development of my work and all and I sat down and then – and then this very – well, very interesting man stood who was a professor there and I'd met him before my lecture – stood and he spoke to the audience in Thai language for a very long time and then he turned to me, and I'm on the stage sitting there and he said, "I've just told them that what you do is entirely wrong."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.]

MS. SCHICK: He said, "Well, you know, jewelry is supposed to beautify the body" and he said, "Yours doesn't do that." He said, "What you do is absolutely wrong." So here I've got 280 pairs of beautiful black eyes, right, staring at me wondering what I was going to do and I was sitting there. You can't cry.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I'm wondering what you did.

MS. SCHICK: You can't cry in front of – but you want to down deep inside and – what am I going to do? And they're all waiting for a response and my husband is way at the back of the auditorium also wondering what I'm going to do. Well, I had – I've collected jewelry – the jewelry of the '80s predominantly of non-precious materials – and I usually take my collection with me and that's what I love to do is talk about aesthetics and idea development when I give workshops and take my collection.

And so I had this one piece done by a Dutch jeweler that's made up of tubes of black and white painted metal and each tube must be about 15 inches long and it's all strung on rubber. So it's great for traveling because I can fold it up. It's collapsible. So I looked at what I had and thought, what am I going to do, so I stood up and I held that necklace up and then it unfolded and opened out into its full size, but it's very wearable and I put it on and showed them and I said, "Oh, you mean this is what it should look like?" So then I tried to show some pieces from my collection.

I think Jim said I really should have defended my work, but at that moment I couldn't think. I'd just shown an hour's worth of slides, which is in a sense a defense of your work – a presentation of it, so I didn't know, and as I recall, one of the professors of painting or whatever came up and quietly said, "I like what you do."

But – and then it was several days before I was going to see the students, so I thought, oh, my gosh. How is this going to work? How will they receive me because they've been told that what I do is absolutely the worst thing

to ever do. Don't you ever do that. So I walked into the room where the students were. There must have been 25 or 30, and loaded up with more pieces to show of other people's work and slide lectures to give and they all stood and gave me the Wai and they were happy. They had bought me dolls and I gave them the Wai and it turned out to be great and we had dinner.

The professor who had said all those things asked if he could take us to dinner, and was very gracious. We had a lovely dinner with him and things went on as if everything was just normal, so I was normal, too. [Laughs.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I don't think anything can prepare you for –

MS. SCHICK: That was the most unusual kind of thing that caught me totally off guard, but I mean what I make isn't easily accepted, so I can understand his point of view. It's just, I didn't know for a few seconds there, or minutes, how I was going to react, but it all turned out all right. Yes.

So – and I've loved also my times teaching here in the States. I've taught four times at Arrowmont [Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, Tennessee]. I love it there. And once at Penland [Penland School of Crafts, Penland, North Carolina] and once at Haystack [Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, Maine]. And sometimes the same students will come and when I taught at Arrowmont one of the summers I was there – I'd previously been in Korea and one of the instructors that I'd sat with on our bus trip in Korea [Yu Jin Cho] brought six female students from her university in Korea and they were all enrolled in my class. They didn't speak any English – just very little English, but the instructor spoke and I already knew her so that was exciting.

But I must have been traveling a lot just before I got to – traveling abroad a lot before I made it to Arrowmont because I can remember waking up in the middle of the night, because here I had six out of 20 students who spoke no English, and I'm thinking where am I? Am I abroad or where am I right now? And sometimes if you've been traveling and you've been in a lot of different places – I have that experience of waking up and thinking well, now, actually where am I right now?

But anyways, I remember waking up at Arrowmont when I had – they were wonderful and one of the girls then came to Pittsburg State and started her Master's here – one of the Korean students.

So my world is incredibly small.

[Audio break, tape change.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But spread out all over the place.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, it's spread out, but it's wonderfully small and the connections between one person and another are great, and my Japanese friend [Reiko Ichimura] whom I have known all these years from graduate school at IU. One time when I saw her, she came and she said, "I have something to give you from Roar." Well, Roar [Roar Hoyland] was head of the Jewelry Department and maybe head of the Art Department at this art school in Oslo, Norway [National College of Arts, Crafts, and Design], where I had lectured and she had been there, so she gave me a big hug and she said, "This is from Roar." So yes, It's – I've loved this international kind of approach that I never expected to have.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And your travels have really fed that. You've traveled really widely. What other ways has your travel influenced your work do you think?

MS. SCHICK: With Jim's suggestion of doing the *Sense of Place*, then I thought more seriously about what I was looking at and how it would influence me and I did a series of necklaces for Holland and I was having a show in Amsterdam anyway. And I remembered back to the first time we'd gone to Amsterdam, which was like in 1969 when we were first teaching here at PSU, and I was so struck by the lace curtains on the long windows, so I did a lace curtain necklace. I did three necklaces that were windows and the first – the largest was of windows with lace. I had this old piece of kind of a lace curtain that was left in the house when we bought it, and I'm not a lace person, but I put this in and it worked.

And then I did one – a take off on *Starry Night* [1889], of Vincent Van Gogh's. And then the third one, which has to be part – and is so much an important part of Amsterdam obviously, is Mondrian. So those three – actually, the piece as it exists now – because the – I think the lace curtain one was sold, but then I did a wall relief called *Double Dutch Artists*, which is for the Van Gogh and then the Mondrian necklace.

So it's enriched my life enormously, and Jim has also – we've traveled a lot for him as well and he edits *The Midwest Quarterly Review, A Journal of Contemporary Thought* here at Pittsburg State University, but he wrote a book in addition to teaching American history – but he wrote a book several years ago on teaching history with a computer; not doing research, but teaching history to college students – with a computer [*Teaching History With a Computer: A Complete Guide*, Chicago: Lyceum, 1990.]. So – and he also started his own international journal –

History Computer Review [on computer-assisted history education for college and secondary teachers] and through all of that he was invited to give a workshop in Singapore, so we did an around-the-world trip that once where we flew to – first to Hong Kong. Our son was with us and then Bangkok and on to Singapore, and then to Egypt, where we were in Cairo and Luxor. And then I was in that American craft show ["Craft Today USA," 1989] that was traveling in Europe, so we saw it in Paris and then home.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How exciting.

MS. SCHICK: It was a great trip.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah. You also carry work along with you and describe work – describe that. I'm always so tickled when I hear these stories.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I can't remember exactly when it started, but, you know, I'm a last-minute, disorganized person and wow – I don't always – I'm not always getting it finished easily by the due date, so I don't know when it started, but I can remember there's a big, old, papier-mâché armlet that was chosen for the "Good as Gold" show ["Good as Gold: Alternative Materials in American Jewelry," 1981] that was at the Renwick many, many years ago, but I had to repaint it and we were traveling to California to see Jim's parents and we probably didn't have air conditioning, so we would get up really early to go through the desert, and then we'd quit early and that's great because I was having to paint my armlet in the motels, which never have good light, you know, so if we quit at 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon I could sit by the window and continue to paint, you know.

So I tell you, I've painted in hotels and motels by the windows in Florence and Berlin and across the U.S. I have painted in a lot of motel rooms and I've also worked on slide lectures on bathroom floors in hotels, you know, and written letters of recommendation when kids have called me and needed them right away.

Well, I say bathroom because if Jim and our son Rob are sleeping in the other room and I'm up later than they are – because one summer we – I was Artist-in-Residence at the Sir John Cass School of Art in London. I'd been there as a student on sabbatical in '83 and then I went back as Artist-in-Residence in '84 and I was doing my *Dowel-Stick* pieces then, and if Jim and Rob were – had gone to bed and our son – we had a small flat – was sleeping in the living room and the light in the kitchen was really bad, the best light, and where I wouldn't wake them up would be painting in the bathroom, so it's sort of funny, isn't it?

I – and the best time, though, that I painted in a motel was in Washington, DC, and I was working on this suite of pieces for a show in – group show in Finland and instead of just doing one or two, I had five parts and we'd been in Los Angeles – out in Los Angeles with our son – suburb out there – and then we flew to see the Vermeer show in Washington, DC, and we got to see it just before it closed for the government closing. And then the big snow came and Jim had said now don't bring your work on this trip; just go and enjoy, but I – I was so thrilled. I took this necklace and it was all black and white, so I only had to take a tube of black and a tube of white with me, and we were snowed in for several days. It was so glorious and we were staying in a place where we had a tiny little living room and a TV and a microwave and a refrigerator and we would trudge out to – it was Woolworth's I think – where we could get sandwiches and microwave popcorn. It was great.

He had his work – he always – he always has his work. Even if he drives me someplace and is going to wait for me in the car, he's got his work with him. It's the way we are, isn't it?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Mm-hmm. And that piece that you were working on in DC was –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yeah. Right. Is – I called it *LA/DC* no, *DC/LA – LA/DC Suite* because for many years I didn't title my pieces, and that gets confusing after a while. Necklace, necklace, necklace. So I started naming them. And for a while I would name them where we might be, like we were in Northern California near Bodega Bay, so that armlet was called *Bodega Bay* and *LA/DC Suite* [Titled *LA/DC Suite* because I painted on it in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. in addition to Kansas.], or if it would be for a show in Finland or in Norway it would be just *For Norway*, so it's an identification for me.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Has the fact that you enjoy taking work along with you when you travel affected at all what the work looks like? In other words, you need to have small pieces – packable pieces and paints. Has that ever influenced actually the final result – visual result of the work?

MS. SCHICK: I don't think so much. I don't think. Often I need to get back to really look at it for the final time or change it. I can get some done on it on the trip, but I'm always surprised because I think, well, you know, I ought to be able to make as many decisions out on the road – on the road in a motel or bathroom or – that motel bathroom or wherever it is I'm painting. Sounds funny doesn't it? But I think I've really – have to be back in my own classroom. Somehow under those lights – I'm just used to it, aren't I? To really look at it the final time to make sure that everything is okay. Yeah, so I might do parts – I might do parts on the road. Yeah. Or sometimes it's the whole piece, but maybe not the final version. Does that make sense?

[Audio break.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So all of this traveling between LA and DC and all around the country – all around the world is a culmination of an entire career which has been built on really wonderful work. And as you look back, how has your work been received over time? How has that changed?

MS. SCHICK: Well, as a graduate student, Ms. Eikerman had us enter shows and I was really thrilled to get pieces in, and in fact I won an award in the "Wichita National" [The "18th National Decorative Arts and Ceramics Exhibition," Wichita Art Association (now the Wichita Art Center), 1964, 2nd prize.]. Oh, gosh, it was back in '63 or '64 or '66 maybe. I don't know which year. And that was so exciting, so I was on my way to enter – doing entered shows – juried shows, but you know, you get in some and you don't get in others. And I won very few awards; like maybe $50 for the awards over the years. And once I started entering the papier-mâché pieces, they were most often rejected and so then I would send them off to – I had a few invitations and I'd send them off to those shows, but they weren't always accepted at all.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Was there – were the kinds of exhibitions that you could legitimately enter work into – were they pretty infrequent since the interest in alternative materials was just starting at the time? There just weren't a lot of shows?

MS. SCHICK: I don't remember how many I would enter. I tried to enter as many as I could, and I'm thinking back in the early '70s maybe about eight a year. And I would – the only place I knew to find out about shows to enter was through the back of *American Craft* or *Craft Horizons* in those days. Oh, that was a godsend to have that; otherwise how would I know?

So I'd say that the work – the metalwork was most – usually got in shows. As I remember, the papier-mâché pieces didn't for a very long time and it's interesting, you know, that now that, you know, there's been a new interest in those, but then when I entered the "Jewelry Redefined" with the paper and wire pieces and the *Dowel-Stick* pieces – wow. That started a whole new thing for me – whole new life basically. And then I was in far more European shows than I'd ever dreamed I'd be in before.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What do you think the work – why do you think the work struck a chord with Europeans?

MS. SCHICK: I think we were sort of touching on it a little bit before that European work at that point and still greatly today is very formal and those *Dowel-Stick* pieces are formal in that way and they seemed more pared down maybe than what I do now. And I didn't realize it, but the time was right. Somehow it was perfect timing because this whole thing was just starting with alternative materials and I had no idea – just always doing my own thing – that it was right on the verge of this whole movement. I had no clue about that at all – didn't know. I was just doing what I was doing. But it was good timing I guess. Yeah, good timing and I think that, again, because of the look of the work it really appealed to Europeans. I had good success with it – good success. Yeah.

And then once I had good success in Europe, then I, you know, was being, I think, accepted more frequently in the U.S. That sort of validated it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Mm-hmm.

MS. SCHICK: And I had good slides.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Always important. And how since the '80s has the reception of your work changed, if at all?

MS. SCHICK: I – you know, I don't think I've noticed much of a decline. Oh, yeah, I have – like last year I think I was rejected from four shows. Yeah. And you just move on, you know, but it's probably good for me.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Mm-hmm. Well, you've been talking exclusively about shows, but I'm also thinking acceptance amongst peers, how you think maybe your work is reflecting or even inaugurated certain kinds of approaches or visual vocabularies that have become more similar now – more common now.

MS. SCHICK: I did notice that when my work was being accepted more – in the '80s – that – I don't want to think about it too much, but I think I did have a bit more acceptance among friends at SNAG. Yeah, I think I did. And I was – I was always amazed that this person would speak to me or that person would come up and speak to me. I'd think, oh man. But I didn't – maybe I'm naïve; I wasn't always associating it, but a little bit with the jewelry.

Also, I think it was beginning to give me more confidence. Obviously I'd had enough confidence in my work to keep doing it, but I became more interested – I always – you know, I wanted to be a fashion designer, so I was always interested in clothes, but – you know, I got spiffier eyeglasses. I think I started to take – have more interest even than I'd had before – and I had plenty then, but even more interested in how I dressed; wearing these new pieces of jewelry I was buying, you know, in Amsterdam or London, you know. Yeah, it gave me more

confidence too. I don't know if that makes sense.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Mm-hmm.

MS. SCHICK: But I don't think I've noticed a huge decline in the acceptance since then. I mean, some years I might have more invitations to shows than others. I don't know, I always think this'll be the last. I'll have no more. And then there's – there are a couple more coming up, so life goes on. And I'm going to do what I'm going to do at this point anyway.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: On the one hand there are the shows that keep coming in and the invitations, but on the other hand there are still plenty of people who still need to be educated about what – the kind of work that you're doing, why it's important to think about the issues that you're framing, what it means to bring large sculptural forms to the body and have some kind of physical understanding for them. I think different communities probably respond differently to your work.

MS. SCHICK: Oh yes. I know. Not everybody's going to – I know not everybody accepts it and I don't know if I said the – told the story about the show at the University of Tulsa on this tape, and it was all my *Dowel-Stick* work and I'd just installed a show and we titled my show "Jewelry" – "Marjorie Schick Jewelry" ["Jewelry: Marjorie Schick," Alexander Hogue Gallery, University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1987]. And this man came and he took a nice amount of time, and he looked carefully at everything and he came up to me and he said, "Well, where's the jewelry? I came to see the jewelry show." So I know that today even with a lot of people accepting it, I know there are huge numbers who don't. I know that. That's the way it is.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But you've kept yourself – you've tried to keep yourself pretty cutting edge all along.

MS. SCHICK: I don't know if I try to do that. Maybe – you know, like I hope I don't try to make the work change. That the points in the past when I have changed materials or changed approach or my painting became less about stripes and I started exploring other ways of applying the paint in more featherly kinds of ways and layered and I'd like to think that it happened naturally and wasn't forced, so I'd like to think that still today that what I do is just what I do and I'm not trying to really be cutting edge. I think it's – it's neat if it is. I worry that I'm getting conservative, but I don't know that I – I'm thinking, well, I've got to make this cutting edge. More often I'm usually thinking, well, I've got to make something wearable on this one. So I think I'm going the other way.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So the moments in the past when you've changed techniques or changed your approach, you haven't really had – you've not set out to intentionally do that?

MS. SCHICK: No. No. I think it's happened. You know, I did *Dowel-Sticks* from maybe 1981 through probably around '86 and loved it, but – and I don't want to repeat myself on the tape, but they were so accepted by everybody and I thought, oh, what am I doing? I'm not used to having my – everybody like my work this much. It must not be right. So – and I needed – I had a need for curved lines, so I introduced reed into the work. I had a need to make some solid shapes, so out of that need then I found plywood, right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And the work has become more massive over time.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, much more –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Much denser.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, indeed. Yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah. Taken on sort of more surfaces to put color on, more surfaces to put texture on. It just seems that it's become in a sense less like David Smith ethereal and more massive, chunky.

MS. SCHICK: It is right now, isn't it?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MS. SCHICK: I think my metalwork was always pretty chunky and I think it is. Just that – I don't know how to answer.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Have there been any significant changes in the way you work over time?

MS. SCHICK: I don't predraw.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right. You mentioned that.

MS. SCHICK: I start with an idea and we talked yesterday about the idea – about playfulness. Well, the playfulness, I think, is not so much in my aesthetic approach, but it's in the idea. Like wearing a chair or making a propeller rotate on the top of your head, so I start with the idea and then work out the form through the materials, and often it will be the materials that will – I really have to be hands on. I don't – can't predesign very much. Sometimes a little, but mostly I'm hands-on. And a lot of things, as we talked about yesterday, change through the working of it.

And when I – I kept not wanting to ever buy a glue gun because all these crafts students would turn in these projects with glue everywhere, so I thought I'm never going to have one. Well, I finally broke down and bought one and I did a whole series of things that that helped me a great deal on. Rather than just sewing cardboard to cardboard, I glued it and so the *Ring of Fire* necklace was put together – there's some stitching on that that you don't see under the papier-mâché, but there's glue gun work on that. And –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And that piece was in the Victoria and Albert [Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Permanent Collection].

MS. SCHICK: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And *Golden Frost* necklace probably was the first one. And I started with a Styrofoam ring from Wal-Mart. I mean, you know where I live, so I buy things that I can get easily. And then there are cardboard shapes that I cut and curved and such and attached with a glue gun onto this Styrofoam ring and worked it and worked it until you can't tell at this point that there's this – ever was a ring under that. But that was made possible with that glue gun, so I think the glue gun helped me on a number of pieces.

And then I wouldn't say I grew tired – oh, then I came back to papier-mâché [in 1991]. We were on sabbatical in London and I was artist-in-resident out at Middlesex [Polytechnic] and there were days when I couldn't get there. It was a long commute on the trains and couldn't get there because of packages found they thought might be suspect bombs and then the snow and so I thought I couldn't hammer and do wood in the flat, so I thought what could I do in the flat? Plus spring break was coming there, so I thought, well, I'll go back to papier-mâché.

Well, when I returned to papier-mâché, then in the '90s – you know, I still did it in the same way, but my painting on them was different. It was more layered. I began to explore more with letting a surface of the paper show through. I don't know, it just became – it was different than when I had done it the first time in the '60s and '70s, but I kind of liked that idea of coming full circle. And then now that I'm – you know, at this stage I've introduced painted canvas because that's the material painters use and I can stitch it. I can iron it with Stitch Witchery and use it flat like the pages of the book [necklace *Connections*]. There are a number of ways that I can work it. There are a lot of ways that I should explore.

So now I do papier-mâché if it's the right thing or I do wood. Right now I'm doing more wood than anything else, but it doesn't mean that I won't go back to papier-mâché or back more to canvas.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What has sparked your recent interest in autobiographical pieces when for so long you had not participated at all in the important American trend of narrative jewelry, which talks about memory and uses imagery? You had steadfastly stayed – kept apart from that trend. What has made you come now to investigate memories?

MS. SCHICK: I can't say exactly how I got the idea, but I just started that huge, huge series of necklaces I call *Progression* and I had my helper [David Ingram] cut me out a square and then I made a square for the inside and I said, just rotate that inside square. Well, I was so dumb about it I didn't realize that when he would cut that neck hole out and it was rotating that that was making a spiraling motion on the interior or if they're all hung – all these slats of wood are hung – squares of wood are hung on a rod, then the rotation happens on the outside.

And for some reason – and I don't remember how I got the idea – I said – I think I was maybe 60 then. It was a couple years ago. Maybe 59. And I said, "Well, cut me out 60" and I said, "No, no. Go to 75. I want to live at least that long." So I've got 75 of those and I've got 30 of them – up to 30 of them are covered with painted paper. Well, I'm referring to the color wheel, so that sequence is of 12 and I'm making just slight references to my life.

Like I take it to black and white the year – I was 29 when our son was born, so that's an incredible change to your life and such a wonderful change, so I turned number 29 totally black and white and from now on because a relationship of three people is very different and much – very exciting, but different than just two, and then all the colors from now on – from 29 on will have black and white in addition to the colors, so it doesn't refer much to my life, but in a very subtle way. Because I kept thinking I've got to change these some.

And I think it was from doing that series that I got the idea, why don't I do it a little more seriously? So I actually started – and I want to show you while you're here because they're on the bulletin board, but they're hidden right now – I started with window screen wire of the fiberglass kind and I started doing transfers of old photos of my mother and me, you know, she had taken at Woolworth's. And I have written out where I was born and the year. And then safety pins are how you wear your clothes in the beginning, so I've got borders of safety pins and

all this.

But I've stopped that. I was going to go that route a year or two ago. I'd spent a large part of a semester exploring this layering, because life is about layering and you could wear a decade of necklaces at once, right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Because they were all very light, being on screen, sure.

MS. SCHICK: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I was going to make one for each year. And then I don't remember just how I changed or what happened, but I thought, well, I'm going to jump around, so I started thinking about other things. I got maybe bored thinking about what am I going to do for year three, year four, et cetera, so maybe out of that sort of boredom I started to jump around, and I was going to the Salvation Army to help spur my memory and I found these eyes for teddy bears or something. I don't know. They don't move, but they definitely are eyes – a lot of them. Maybe I've got 50, so I'm going to do them on a necklace just as a – you know at the point of a grid.

And then when I was like in eighth grade I wrote an autobiography about – I don't know, various things and one of them is going to a restaurant to meet my mother, but I got there first and I had no money and the waitress gave me money and – to pay for my lunch until my mother got there and I thought everybody in the place was staring at me – one of those things. So it in a vague way 50 eyes on a necklace would relate to that.

And then I thought about the clothespins. And I thought, you know, I've been buying little wood parts that are already made like trees, so we used to always go for a fresh Christmas tree outside of town, so I'm going to have one just all of trees. And I paid a student [Annie Pennington] to cover one for when my son was born, totally making a herringbone pattern out of – on the screen – window screen of safety pins. It's really kind of neat.

Now, I don't know if I'm going to put that onto wood or what, but I've had – I'm having a great time. When Rob was little we used to have this naming game of dinosaurs before dinosaurs were really big, so I've got to do a dinosaur one. I've got to do an Easter egg one. So just everyday things are what are – what – you know, that's what my life is. But I want to make some – do some necklaces that refer to my work. Like I'm going to do one of all dowels. I'm going to do one of – I don't know how I want to put it together crudely, but of all plywood, and now I'm thinking about since I've got scraps of this fabric when I learned how to sew I want to incorporate that. And maybe learning to sew, you know.

Oh, and then paper dolls are so important in my – when we moved my mom here, I found an old paper doll book, so I made color Xeroxes of all those. These are kid paper dolls and they're a good size. They must be eight, 10 inches tall. A boy and two girls and my helper [Jared Webb] would – he's glued these black and white and color Xeroxes onto plywood and he's cut all those out for me, so I'm going to have a paper doll one and I'm going to add scissors as if they're being cut.

I don't know. I don't know how I got turned on, but I'm excited about them. They're just kind of crazy and they're personal things.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Is it helping you remember things that you didn't know you remembered?

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I'm having a good time. I'm having a good time thinking, and of course, I've got to think about throwing my life away – you know, all my stuff away, but now I bought recently that book on the quilters of Gee's Bend [John Beardsley; *The Quilts of Gee's Bend*, Atlanta, Ga.: Tinwood Books, 2002]. Well, I'm going to take my old clothes and I've got wonderful ones from the '70s – great patterns and all. I'm going to hire somebody else now to start stitching those together for me in little pieces. I'm going to do a couple necklaces of my old clothes; not quilts, but the inspiration came from that idea. I think I want mine stuffed and all. So I don't know. Yeah, it is kind of a memory walk, isn't it?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, or preserving your life – making a wearable scrapbook and –

MS. SCHICK: It is like that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MS. SCHICK: Yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah. Do you think that it has to do with being the age that you are?

MS. SCHICK: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, I think definitely. I think definitely, yeah. I'm kind of excited about it, but I've got other things to work on too, so I don't want to put it completely on the back burner, but – oh yeah, and getting married. I've got this really beautiful necklace that the fellows have built for me of flat circles on a big square, and my current fellow, Jared, who is working for me, he is the best knot tier in the world and he tied these wonderful knots on the clothespin necklace, so I can buy lots and lots of this clear tubing in Pittsburg and

I'm going to have him tie these knots and these knots of clear tubing are going to come out every circle and go to the floor and it'll refer to "tying the knot" when you get married right? I mean, they're corny. I think they're absolutely corny, but I'm having a great time doing them.

I'm trying to think what others I've got going. Yeah, I don't know. I've just – I've got ideas. Not one for every single year at this point. They're ongoing.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, you've mentioned a number of times that you have a lot of people helping you – that you hire folks – and you've never really worked collaboratively, have you?

MS. SCHICK: Not collaboratively, and the reason I have help – years ago I started having somebody [Craig Krug] help me build my boxes because – oh, I build boxes, cardboard double boxes for each piece I'm about to ship – and that's a lot of time and I'd rather be finishing my work than building the boxes, and sometimes as soon as I finish, I'm packing up the work. And then years ago when I was doing the *Dowel-Stick* pieces, I got tendonitis really badly. I couldn't even cut paper with a pair of scissors, so I had to lay off, but I didn't want to stop.

So the fellow [Craig Krug] who was building my boxes for me [a long body sculpture of wood] put together a piece for me and then I didn't have anybody help me for a long time and then my hand got really bad again a few years ago and I've sort of deformed my thumbs from pushing and arthritis has happened because I've worked really hard. I'd work until it hurt and then I'd think, oh well, by morning – and usually by morning it didn't hurt anymore so everything would be fine, but I reached a limit. You know, you can't keep doing that. I didn't know, but you can't keep doing that, so I'd hire people to help me build these things that I want built and – but now it's a real luxury and I love it because I can go faster, right? So they can tie knots for me, they can put these things together, construct them, and it's just great.

And I must say I like a give and take. I've always enjoyed that in discussing and critiquing my work – a little bit critiquing or asking opinions of my students about what I'm doing because I respect their opinions and so these kids who are working for me have great ideas too. So it's a nice give and take I think, and it's helped me a lot. And I hope maybe it does something for them too.
[Audio break.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski interviewing Marjorie Schick. We're in the Varsity Room at the Student Union at Pitt State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. It is the 6th of April and I'm doing this interview for the Archives of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution. This is disk number four.

Marjorie, you have challenged yourself over your career to manipulate many, many different kinds of materials: papier-mâché, plywood, string – I mean, there's just an enormous list. What has been the role of craftsmanship in your work as you look back on this time and this career of yours?

MS. SCHICK: Well, I – in the beginning I didn't think much about craftsmanship. I was just putting things together and not so much worrying about removing the solder or polishing to such a high degree.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you're talking here about your early work.

MS. SCHICK: About metalwork. About metalworking and also I was doing papier-mâché, but obviously I was sort of finding my own way through that. I didn't know how to do it, so I'd sort of made up my own way of doing it, but it was so wonderful that Alma Eikerman kept in contact. I mean, we wrote to each other through all the years and in addition to the newsletters that I mentioned previously, and Jim and I visited her and she visited us in Lawrence and was a speaker here in Pittsburg at a Kansas Artist Craftsman Association Conference, so we stayed close all those years. I don't know when it was, but maybe probably in the very early 70s she wrote that she'd seen my work somewhere in a show and she said to the effect, and I don't know the exact words anymore, but my craftsmanship needed a lot of attention. It was not good. And she added that other people were not ready to accept my lack of craftsmanship. And I don't know why, but it hit me like a ton of bricks.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It must have. She was your role model and your mentor.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, my gosh. It was like God had spoken to me. And I mean, I should have been – had broader shoulders to take this, but the other reason it hit like a ton of bricks is because it hit home. Obviously it was – it had hit a nerve because my craftsmanship wasn't good. Oh, so I took it to heart much too seriously and my husband reminds me that I didn't work much for a year after that – just let it slide.

And I can remember – it probably was when we had a faculty show around and the other faculty members – the other men commenting that I didn't have as many pieces as usual, and I think I – I don't know what I said, but I can remember being defensive about it. Well, ta da, ta da, ta da. Whatever. And I'm not sure all of the reasons that I was able to get back into my work, but one very important thing happened and that was that I came home from school one night after doing some work. I don't think I stopped completely but I must have come pretty

close to it. And my husband had written a letter to me and left it, and he said that, in essence – in his very nice way of saying it, but in essence that if I didn't get back to work he was going to leave.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Wow. Wow.

MS. SCHICK: Wow is right. And I've been mentioning him throughout the tapes giving me ideas, even carrying my pieces, older pieces up to the car from the house on Sunday, coming home to do that; carrying my work, taking slides. Oh, the list is infinite, but to think that somebody else had so much confidence in me and my work is truly remarkable.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MS. SCHICK: Truly remarkable. So he's an incredibly – I think you used the word unique individual. I don't know if many people have been as fortunate to have a partner – a spouse, a partner, a friend, whatever – as I've had who has done all of this for me. We both have our own careers but yet we teach at the same university. That's amazing.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's an amazing kind of respect and support for a – it seems to me for a man of his generation to just say, "Your work is so important to me and so much a part of you that you're not the same person if you don't do it; you're not the same person I married if you don't do it anymore," basically.

MS. SCHICK: That's right. That's right.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So here on the one hand you've got Alma Eikerman telling you – giving you the hand you've got this other really important person in your life saying, you'd better get back to doing it.

MS. SCHICK: Uh-huh. So somehow I did, and I know, without going through my files, that there was a period of time in my metalworking when I made the pieces much, much simpler. They had been so very complex – piece layered-on piece. Then I simplified them – and I think I know that the reason I simplified was to improve my craftsmanship. So, whether the pieces lost a sense of energy, I don't know. Obviously I was still paying a lot of attention to the aesthetics and the forms of them, but I did start paying better attention to the craftsmanship. But, yeah, I needed to be told that. It wasn't a bad thing; it was just my problem that I obviously didn't want to deal with it.

So she was remarkable in helping me – and so was Jim – helping me keep on track, right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But, you know, if mentors can deal cruel blows, even if on the other hand they also uplift you at certain times, it can be tough. I mean, that's pretty rough to have a year of downtime in your work and a year of pain, of reevaluation.

So you said you got out of it and you made your pieces simpler –

MS. SCHICK: Got out of it in terms of the metalwork, and that's what she was talking about. She wasn't talking about it in terms of the papier-mâché. But, you know, having taught here I would always listen hard to the other faculty members' questions of graduate students in orals, and I remember one oral when this sculptor here [Robert Blunk] said to the student something about, well, "If you find your own kind of way of working with a material that other people aren't using so much, you just have to meet your own standards of craftsmanship. There aren't others set as there are in the metals field."

And so I thought that was quite an interesting approach, but I've gotten much better, I think, in terms of my craftsmanship in the papier-mâché. So the other day when I was looking at my old pieces I was saying, oh, gosh, I need to sand those edges and take care of those corners. And so it was just a learning process, but I certainly took everything she had to say too hard in a big way.

Now, that really got me, but about the same time – maybe it was near the same time – she wrote, again being helpful, that perhaps I ought to scale my work down by about three-quarters.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: By about three-quarters?

MS. SCHICK: Now, I always thought she meant scale it down one quarter to be three-quarters of its size.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Okay.

MS. SCHICK: And I think she meant that in terms of the papier-mâché. And I don't know that she had at that time, and others, felt the audience would be able to accept it more easily or not. But that one didn't bother me, did it, and somehow I, for the most part, kept on with the large scale.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you didn't scale down at all?

MS. SCHICK: Well, you know, when we spread the pieces out, the papier-mâché ones on the table the other day, I know there was a later bracelet that – if they're smaller I call them bracelets; if they're huge I call them armlets. [Laughs.] So there was one from the early '70s with all the dots on it that was smaller, but overall – I mean, gosh, after that I did a shoulder-to-floor piece, so I don't think, I didn't take that to heart.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, it seems like you had found your inner compass, if you will, as an artist in those alternative materials, and you just had a really clear vision of what you wanted to do, and other people's standards and values didn't matter. You knew that path that you were traveling down. Is that how you see it as you look back?

MS. SCHICK: As I look back I don't know that I – I don't know exactly what I was feeling then, but whether I admitted it then or not, I felt I had to do them. As I mentioned earlier, I'd say to the other faculty members when the faculty shows would come that while my metalwork was my really serious – that was my proper, good, serious work and the other pieces I was doing just because I had to do them.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Had to do them meaning for yourself you had to do them.

MS. SCHICK: I guess so.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So when did that balance shift, because –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, that balance didn't shift until – well, I kept doing alternative materials. As I mentioned the other day, I floundered at the end of the '70s after I quit papier-mâché and did some clay pieces and thread and did some plastic and finally evolved into the *Dowel-Sticks*. And even when I was first starting the dowels in the early '80s I was telling myself, because I'd already made up my resolve that I was not going to do alternative materials again; it would be straight metals, I told myself that in the early '80s. And then I started with the dowel sticks, and well obviously I was on my way to something that I had a passion for doing. And maybe '82, '83 I was still telling myself and others that, oh, yes, I was doing these for a while but I would return to metal.

And probably by '86, '87 I knew I wasn't returning to metal. I knew that this was my direction. But it took me a while to face up to it. And others necessarily didn't like it. There was a past student here, she'd done an undergraduate and a master's degree with me, and I was standing in the middle of the gallery at school surrounded by stick pieces at either a sabbatical or a faculty show and she said, "Well, you know, if you'd return to metal I'd come back and study with you again."

So there were those kinds of comments and there were other comments like – I can't remember specifically of people who seemed disappointed that I wasn't still doing metalwork.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, it strikes me that those kinds of comments really speak a lot about the assumptions people were bringing to jewelry at the time. As I've listened to you speak, both on this interview and in other conversations that we've had, I'm always struck by what you say about your childhood experiences and the experiences that you had particularly when you were in Chicago and the variety of exposures to art that you had – I mean, the variety of art forms that you were exposed to, the variety of art forms that you enjoyed making yourself. You talked about fashion and painting. You did jewelry, did a lot of different kinds of media, and you liked all of them equally, and in fact, as you said, had difficulty saying, "Well, what do I do when I go to graduate school and want to get an MFA?"

So to me, it's very interesting that you've gone through this painful process of, "Here I'm in a field that venerates metal and I took the important revolutionary step in the '60s to say, I'm going to do something different," and you stuck to that. In a sense you've created a niche for yourself that was so perfect for you because your forms are about those spectacles that you loved to watch when you were a kid. They encased the body like the clothing, with colors that you enjoyed from fashion. They have a lot of – they have painting, like the paintings that you did. They really synthesize all of the artistic impulses that you've described as so important to your young experiences that you bring to your mature career.

MS. SCHICK: I was lucky to find the direction, wasn't I?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You were.

MS. SCHICK: And also, I've stayed focused mostly on things that are wearable. You know, I diverge. The first time we had a big party here in Pittsburg when we moved here [in 1967] I made a huge bowl of papier-mâché for holding potato chips and later kind of a neat one with legs on it that was to hold those fat orange puffy corn kernels. So, I've diverged. I've had – you know, like doing recently this *Scoop* and the shadow to go with it. So I don't stick 100 percent but we'll say 98 percent –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Pretty much, yeah.

MS. SCHICK: – 98 percent stick to doing wearables. But I tried still to be focused, even though I might be changing materials. I've always – and when I show my slides I'll show my metalwork of the early '80s next to the new *Dowel-Stick* pieces I was doing, and I see and I can point out a really close relationship between the linear quality of the one and the other.

So I used to always feel that there were crossovers in terms of aesthetic concerns, even though the materials were different and the scale of the metalwork for the most part was smaller, being hand sculptures and huge arm – large armlets in metal would still be smaller for the most part than the ones in papier-mâché.

But I'd learned from Alma to have this concern for edges. We hammered edges, and still today, even on a wood piece, you know, I've got to make sure that it's angled the right way or painted the right way. The edges to me are just as important as the planes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And the backs.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, and that was another thing. Who am I without Alma and without Jim? Yeah, because she had given as an example that she had studied abroad in Scandinavia, and I think also for a while in Germany learning how to do gold granulation, and she mentioned meeting a German jeweler there who put diamonds and rubies on the backs of his pieces. Now, that would never show to the viewer of the piece when that brooch would be on your shoulder, but his point was as you pick it up from the bureau or chest of drawers or whatever and put it on, it's there for the owner of the piece to appreciate this wonderful back and the sparkles.

So she required that we finished and paid just as much attention to the backs and the edges as what we call the front, and I think probably over the years, because I like to play with the forms – not play but rotate the forms as I'm building them, look at them on the floor, hang it on the bulletin board, and I'll turn them around and look at them from all sides. And I'm sure that I've changed my mind in the making of something from what I thought was eventually going to be the front, and maybe it turns into the back and the back turns into the front. So that was a wonderful approach – a wonderful lesson to have learned again from Alma.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Mm-hmm. And you paint the backs even of wall reliefs –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – when they may never really be seen except under quite ritualistic circumstances where someone will take it off the wall and say, "Here, look at the back of this; it has been finished."

MS. SCHICK: Exactly. We mentioned yesterday that wall painting that holds – the big one I did that holds three necklaces. And I didn't know how, when I got to the edges, what I would do, so I went again to Alex [Barde] and said, "What am I going to do?" And he said, "Well, if you put a" – I said, "What kind of a frame will I put on this wood painting?" He said, "If you frame it you're going to make it like a window, like a Renaissance painting looking through a window at this scene." And he said, "Is that what you want?" And I said, "I don't think so. I don't think so."

So I must've just started – I don't know what I had on it. It was built, as I remember, when I started painting it, so then I painted the edges as I would a piece and then obviously the back was probably gessoed and I couldn't just leave it white. There was no way. So, yeah, I painted the back, just as I'd been – it was large but just as I was finishing the backs of the jewelry pieces, then I did on those as well, so you're right.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's a really consistent way of crossing boundaries, when you're turning sculpture into jewelry and jewelry into sculpture. You're turning painting into sculpture and sculpture into painting, so you're really always blending those boundaries.

I wanted to mention because we hadn't really touched on a plan – I don't mean to digress here, derail you, but you had described to me the kinds of lectures that you give your students and how you really enjoy showing different kinds of work next to it. Maybe you could just talk about that a little bit and what you give to them from your experience of making these connections.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I teach usually several craft classes each semester, and they're mostly not art students – there might be two or three art majors in it – and I love to show slides because I just – I like to look at these images and I think they've got to be looking at these too. But I don't show only craft things. I show some but I think they've got to be looking at contemporary painting, but then, oh, there's one I show – I don't know what century it's from – of walnuts and oranges that's in the National Gallery in London. Oh, you can – and there's a pitcher in it of thrown ceramic and it's on a wooden table, and the textures are so alive it's like you can smell the walnuts and the oranges. And I regret this morning I can't think of the artist's name [Luis Meléndez, 1716-80,

Still Life with Oranges and Walnuts].

So I show them predominantly contemporary things, but then I show them others as well, and I want them to get from this wide array of sculpture and ceramics and jewelry and painting, glass, I want them to get a broader picture of what it's really like out there, how exciting it is that we've got all these different areas, so we don't look just at one thing. And even when I buy books – I love buying books; I've got a pretty large library – I don't buy only jewelry books because I love to look at forms, so I have a few ceramic books, contemporary ceramics, because I love those forms – and I think it's [Robert] Turner, a contemporary ceramicist; I have a pamphlet ["5 x 7: Seven Ceramic Artists each Acknowledge Five Sources of Inspiration," New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University," c. 1993, p. 45] and he had written about the importance of an ancient Anasazi bowl and the importance of that interior of the bowl to the rim and the exterior. And he wrote so eloquently about it, and I love looking at his interpretation of that work, which then gives me a new appreciation.

Because I tell my students, art should change us – change how we see things. So I hope that my work makes us change, and it's exciting to think about how all these various things that we see have changed us. I might not always notice it in my students, but sometimes – I require that they do written critiques, and they hate doing them and I don't like to grade them, but by the end of the semester I think that they're much better able to then turn around and write or discuss a work using the terms.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sure. Well, I was struck even by the example that you just gave of the Anasazi bowl and what was pointed out about the rim and the interior and the exterior. These are the same problems that you work out in your own work. So you're pointing out these different aesthetic environments or aesthetic contexts in which very similar problems are being worked out, in different ways, but to train the eye, your own and other people's, to say, "Oh, yeah, here's another place where someone is working out these kinds of conceptual and technical problems." That's a real gift to give someone else, and certainly to train your own skills in it, it's kind of a constant process of the craftsperson, I think.

MS. SCHICK: It all comes back to Alma, however. For years I always called her Miss Eikerman, and a couple of times she'd say – I was long out of school and still calling her Miss Eikerman, and she'd say, "You know, you can call me Alma." And it was as if I couldn't hear her say that. Now I do, but here I've referred to her in both ways. But she used to talk about a sense of energy, especially in organic form: an orange, and she'd have us draw these shapes, and radishes, and these green peppers we drew all the time, both insides – we'd break them open and draw the seeds, but the exterior. And so I think my appreciation today is from her honing our skills at looking that she required of us. That's what I said the other day. She somehow taught us aesthetics.

And years ago when I was on that first trip out of high school abroad with my friend and her parents [1959], we were talking to people – their friends in Portugal – and being polite to me this young 17-year-old girl, they asked what I was going to do and I said, "I want to be an art teacher." And for some reason this woman didn't know quite what that meant, so my friend's mother said, "Well, she means she'll just teach how to paint, the process, because she's not good enough to teach the other part."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, my goodness.

MS. SCHICK: But it's those other parts – I don't think I'm so great at teaching my students the "how to," the technique, but it's those other parts that I got from Alma that are the challenges in my work that I concentrate on that I'd like to point out to my students. It's about that kind of energy, or I love to show – oh, now that her name has gone from my head this morning, but the artist who does the "moon pots," teaches at Princeton, and would write poetry and drop it down into the pot, and then of course in the firing it would turn to ash but the words would still be in there [Toshiko Takaezu].

So I know it's such a poetic idea that my students like to think of that. And the first day I start them with cups, and I show them – because I love Steak 'n Shake, so I have a Steak 'n Shake mug and I have a hand-thrown mug. Well, and I asked them which is better. So they go around and usually they think that the ceramic one is better because it's handmade. So then I say at the end when we finish, "Well, actually I'm going to vote for the Steak 'n Shake because let's look at how that handle is connected to the mug part that holds the coffee." And I said, "This one is not going to break off, but look at this handmade one. It's about to break off on the bottom connection, isn't it," and then I point out where he lost his concentration as he was pulling it up on the wheel. So it's sort of neat to try to sensitize them to those things that they might not have thought of, or ever thought about.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, I'm also interested that you've veered away from a purely aesthetic way of establishing the value of an object and you've begun to say, "Well, this object is aesthetic because it functions well; it's something we can pick up and it can actually sustain, you know, the grip of a hand and simultaneously the weight of liquid in it." And that's actually a revolutionary idea for a lot of people who have been taught to go to museums and say, okay, a painting is good because it's a certain kind of composition, but with craft objects,

with functional objects, you do at a certain point have to factor in, how does this actually work in the world? How does it work with the body?

MS. SCHICK: And on my own things, right, you might not be able to wear it for very long, as I mentioned the other day, but still, I require of the work that it has to be able to still be carried or worn by the body, because that's just me but if it doesn't then I have to call it by another name, I think. It can't be what I would term jewelry. Again, mine might not really be jewelry but –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, and I think a lot of people do argue that your work cannot be called jewelry. I know that your work – I've read – I'm sorry, I don't remember the quotation precisely and where I got it, but in one of the books about the New Jewelry [Peter Dormer and Ralph Turner; *The New Jewelry: Trends and Traditions*, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994; page 148.] I think the author said that your work is not jewelry but it's sculptural abstract work that has conceptual roots in jewelry. And there is some merit to that statement. I, however, would add that maybe we can think a little bit differently about the function of jewelry; that all jewelry makes us aware somehow of our bodies and you have perhaps purified that particular function and have said, "All right, I'm going to make this – the function of this jewelry is purely to create a very dramatic physical experience. And we may not be able to have that experience for very long, but it's going to be very spectacular, very brief, and we're going to remember it for a long time."

MS. SCHICK: That's right, because obviously you can't wear them to Wal-Mart. [Laughs.] You can't use them in your everyday life, but when you're not putting it on, hopefully it's on your wall or on your table; it's not away in a drawer. They're too big for that.

Well, you know, once I referred to myself as being quietly revolutionary, or rebellious – I guess rebellious would be the word – and maybe I shouldn't say this but I missed the opening to the new American Craft Museum [Museum of Arts & Design] when the inauguration – I wasn't there but I had a piece in it, and when I did go, when the show was still up – in fact they had closed off the jewelry room for heating problems so these girls ahead of me, I said, "Oh, I'm a jeweler, I've come all the way from Kansas, I'm in this show," and they turned around and they said, "Who are you, and let's hang around with you, and we're going to get in that room" – because they had heating problems they were fixing that day. So we had a great day altogether. They were jewelry students from a school in the East.

So anyway, but when I saw the room – and I apologize about this, but they are moving to a new museum – I thought, oh, it seemed to me to be like a period at the end of a sentence. It's a little room, which is appropriate for jewelry, I understand that – beautiful cases on the wall and they come out this way, but I had already – I guess I – I don't know if I had the invitation for Crafts USA, the big one that was going to travel, but when I did get that invitation I thought – and I hesitate to say this on this tape, but I thought, I'm going to make my piece too big for that room, for those showcases, and I did. [Laughs.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Excellent.

MS. SCHICK: Well, it might fit but it's a big necklace. I think my model had big red marks on her after that photo session, and it's now in the American Craft Museum collection, but it's a big piece.

So, when Jim and I did that trip around the world when he was doing the Singapore workshop and we ended in Paris, it was so that we could see this exhibition. Well, I did myself in. I just had not planned that one right at all because all the jewelry pieces were in these gorgeous display cases. They were well lighted. They looked absolutely exquisite, elegant, fantastic. Now, my piece being too big for those showcases, was just in – in front of a wonderful artist's quilt with lots of pattern in it. Well, my gigantic necklace was therefore then lost against the scale of a quilt.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Gosh, either that or the necklace is something that you back up into when you're looking at a quilt, as they say about sculpture, right: sculpture is what you back into when you're looking at painting. [Laughs.]

MS. SCHICK: So I think it was kind of funny. So I think right now I need to think more in those terms. I think I've been a little too conservative so I'll have to think more like that again.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What other challenges or obstacles have you faced in your career? I mean, you've talked about the craft issue and –

MS. SCHICK: Well, I've talked about all these wonderful – I've had just a wonderful time but there have been times it's been difficult, I must say, and my husband has been nice in that he's sometimes said that he thinks it's probably been harder for me to exhibit from Pittsburg, Kansas. Well, obviously I know all the size limits and exactly how many minutes it can take me to get from here to the post office before it closes, and I used to walk in with these boxes going abroad and all these papers they've have to fill out like a minute before they'd close,

and they'd say, oh – they got to know me – "Yep, yep, she's here and she's one minute early" – [Laughs.] – or whatever. And I know UPS, the same way. So obviously I've got to ship it out – everybody does today.

But anyway, there have been some problems. We talked yesterday about how I've been protected by the University, and certainly I have, but there's been a bit of chauvinism years ago with – we all were able to teach summer school. In the beginning I was teaching summer school too and then maybe I laid off – it's great to spend summers on your own work – and then I decided, well, again, I wanted to teach summer school. And when I asked my Chairman at that time he said, "No, no, Marj" – because summer school was extra pay. "No, no, Marj," he said. At that time we didn't have a child yet and he said, "You don't know what it's like to have a family to have to borrow money in August." Well, that's true, but that shouldn't have held me back. That shouldn't have been the reason given to me –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Certainly.

MS. SCHICK: For not teaching summer school. So that doesn't happen anymore, but, you know, there have been a few instances like that and then comments on the big *Blue Eyes* head sculpture. It was in a show in Wichita. I don't know if it was in the "Wichita National" or not, but we went out and a man who worked at the Art Center – I guess he'd helped install these. He said, "Well, this is some horse collar." He said, "I just didn't know how to deal with this piece." He didn't add, but he might have, "What were you thinking?" And he did this. So there have been plenty of comments like that and we had an exchange exhibit years ago – Pittsburg State with Fort Hays State – and our shows traveled around and back and forth and Fort Hayes was bringing our show back and my Chair hadn't told me till the very end when they were bringing back the last pieces of the show that a big armlet, which I never had photographed, of mine had been stolen.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, my gosh.

MS. SCHICK: So I got on the truck bed with my baby – wonderful baby boy in my arms and these guys are unloading the truck and I said, "Oh, why didn't you tell me my piece was stolen? And don't I get some kind of money for that or whatever?" And the guy – he was an instructor in printmaking at Fort Hays. I don't know his name and it's good I don't. He turned to me and he said, well – he said, "That was just papier-mâché" and he said, "You know, somebody took it to decorate a dormitory room." I said, "Oh." And I said, "Now I have this baby and my time is shorter and it's harder for me." And he said, "Yeah." He said, "Too bad your Chair can't give you the afternoon off so you can go make another."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, my God. Talk about diminishing your work.

MS. SCHICK: So every now and then there have been those kinds of things and – but those didn't affect me as much – oh, I was mad about that. Obviously I remembered that all these years, but – the arrogance of him, but, you know, if I'm going to make work like I do, that – there are going to be some –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sure.

MS. SCHICK: – some comments one way or the other, and it's interesting to me too that maybe somebody who rejected my work years ago today is really interested in it – big time. So we all change and it's good, right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right. Well –

MS. SCHICK: It's nice to see that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Absolutely. Well, it's certainly – the limitations on jewelry have changed dramatically since the '60s and you've been a large part of making those changes because of your insistence on making work and then slowly, but surely the acceptance of the work. And in addition to that, it seems like you've had these comments said to you, but you've gotten mad and it hasn't – you haven't shrunk away and said, "Oh, well maybe I ought to reevaluate the direction I'm going in to make it more acceptable." I mean, like the thing with the American Craft Museum. You got sort of, well, I'm going to show them and – [laughs] – make it even larger. I mean, maybe even more Marjorie Schick than Marjorie Schick just to spite them.

So, you know, I think that's the strength of an artist to – that's an artist's strength to have a response like that.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I guess I hadn't thought so much about it except that craftsmanship one. That really got me, but thanks to Jim and whatever, I pulled through that one too and it was good in the end.

And I think you asked about other challenges. Well, I've lost pieces. Oh, they hurt. I lost two coming back from a show in Europe – two big 30-year old metal pieces that I can't do again. My belt – I did this belt when I – when we came to Pittsburg and it has enormous hinges and opens up, and my idea was to make metal pockets in it and then I was going to fill up the metal pockets with small metal sculptures and I hung all these parts on it – all of

metal – and it's a real clanking thing and so that one's gone.

The dance performances with the University of Missouri, Kansas City, students didn't even have to have music when they danced with that one – they just let that one make all the sound. So I regret – fortunately, I've only lost two to shipping, but dealing with galleries and exhibiting in other places I've lost over the years I think about 25 pieces that I haven't been paid for or haven't been returned or that sort of thing. That's enough to have a whole show.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's also a year and a half's salary depending on how you're pricing your pieces.

MS. SCHICK: Well, my prices used to be really low. They're not so low now but they used to be low and that's difficult. I know the gallery in London – the – where I was showing – not Electrum. This is not Electrum. This was Aspects – closed and I asked to get some pieces back and I think she said she didn't have some, but later my friend Cathy Harris sent me this beautiful magazine article about this new place Sharon Plant had actually in her home, but was selling work and there's my big necklace right on the top of her beautiful glass-top table. So I think I tried to get money later, but I wasn't successful.

So – and it's been bad. We talked yesterday – I really didn't say much about jewelers who earn their living at their work and those of us who are protected by the university and having a salary. And because I haven't pursued through the courts – or small claims courts or whatever – trying to get my money, therefore I've made it rougher on those who have to have their money, so I regret that – those people listening to this tape years from now, but I should have fought harder but it's perhaps not in my personality. But that's a good number of pieces –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It absolutely is.

MS. SCHICK: – to have lost.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you have any insights into why dealers can be as maybe cavalier, to use a polite word, in these instances? Not returning work, not paying you for work?

MS. SCHICK: Busy. This woman – maybe she'd had financial difficulties. I don't know and was trying to get out of it and maybe loved some of the pieces and didn't want to give them all back. I can't – I don't know what the reasons are.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's always a – it's a charged relationship between an artist and a gallery and I think it's – I had a couple of anecdotes, if I can, add from my own. I recently learned about a gallery owner who rewrote the gallery's contract stating that not only would this gallery take 50 percent commission on whatever was sold within the gallery, but the gallery would take 50 percent commission of anything that the artist sold anywhere in the state. And that's a rather amazing addition to put into a contract. There were some artists who decided to not work with this gallery anymore and others who, treated it like a real contract and they wrote in their changes and initialed it and have continued the relationship with the gallery.

But – and I remember a couple of years ago at SNAG there was a discussion in one of the professional practices sections about what is the role of the gallery with the artist – what do we do about commissions? How can artists be properly compensated for their time, for their work, for these valuable objects that they're putting into the public domain and what is their value in relation to the value of the gallery who does the promotion, who puts on the solo shows, who is essentially the PR voice, if you will?

So it's not an easy relationship and, you know, there's a symbiosis: each needs the other, but at least – perhaps I'm looking from a limited perspective, but I kind of see a lot of artists getting exploited, and that's upsetting.

MS. SCHICK: You know, I – SNAG has done an absolutely wonderful thing, maybe spearheaded a lot by Harriete Estel Berman – a good friend of mine. And she has worked intensely for the last few years on the Professional Practices papers and presentations at SNAG.

And in San Francisco, I went to several of those, and there was a lawyer. I can't remember his name [Marc David Paisin]. I'd heard him speak at the previous San Francisco meeting years ago dealing with crafts, so I think that these Professional Practices – and I've got copies and I am handing them out to my students here – are very important for all of us to have and to know about. And Harriete is one who I believe is trying to strengthen those contracts between the gallery and the artist so that they're not just verbal anymore and if something is written down – yeah, to make it better. So I think it should get better in the future.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, to have the relationship clarified, to have both parties protected. I mean, it's interesting, artists – Lewis Hyde wrote a book many years ago – he's an anthropologist – called *The Gift* [New York: Vintage Books, 1983], and he's looking at the role of gifts in many cultures, and he makes the interesting point that in many ways people think of art objects a little bit like a gift. I mean, here the artist gives of him or

herself, you know, pours out personality and talent and time into this object, and as a culture we really haven't quite figured out how to put a monetary value on all of that.

And I know a lot of artists who are approached to donate work time and time and time again, you know, give, give, give, give. As a writer I'm approached to do things for free, and there is this sort of attitude of, well, we're in a kind of quasi-altruistic space here where we're really not going to talk all about money; but it is a marketplace and people want to be paid in value. Money is the way, one very important way, in which this culture says you are doing something that is important in this cultural landscape. And of course there are many, many discussions recently about the lamentable fact that there is so little public support for the arts, and that is telling of where the arts sit in terms of the hierarchy of values and priorities in the nation.

So I think it is very important to iron out these relationships between artists and those who represent them, those who bring their work into the commercial sphere – those who bring their work into the public sphere for the national trust, if you will.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, it's a quite a situation. I think universities now, and it's a good thing, more and more are having professional practices sorts of classes. I'm teaching a Senior Seminar and touch on that, and also in a Graduate Seminar, and they're about other things too but they're also to be about preparing that young person to go out into the world and the kinds of things – because when I tell them that I've lost 25 pieces, mostly to galleries and exhibitions over the years, not through mailing – it wasn't through mailing lost – they're shocked. It's like their mouths fall open, like they have no idea that this could be ahead of them.

So I like to talk to them about the importance of keeping records and – now, I should emphasize more of this idea of having a contract with your gallery.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And there's also issues of copyright protection that you have to think about.

MS. SCHICK: Yes, it's getting much more complicated.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And certainly with the Internet too. I know when I curated an exhibition a couple of years ago we did a website to go along with it, and I was very pleased – and we were careful to get written permission from all of the artists to have images of their work on the Net, and I was very pleased that one savvy artist called me up and said, "You know, I'm really concerned; do I have any protection about what happens to my images if I put this work on the Net?" And I had to say to her, "Well, we run a phrase that says, 'All of these images are reproduced by permission of the artist and they are the property of the artist,'" but you can do nothing – or we couldn't in this particular website – to prevent someone from downloading those images. And of course how are you going to discover if somebody is knocking off your work?

So I was pleased that she was thinking in these terms because she made the decision to put the work on the Net because you get something from it, you get exposure, but on the other hand she's thinking ahead about issues of self-protection and how to keep her work hers. I think it will become increasingly complicated.

MS. SCHICK: I think I'm quite old-fashioned that way. I don't have a website and I don't, at this point, want one. And I know you can find images of my work on the Net but I much prefer that people see it in a book. And when my students do their written critiques, I want them to go to the library and find it in *American Craft* or *Metalsmith* or *Ornament*, some magazine where they can open it and look at it in detail. To look at a Victor Vasarely two-by-two inches on your screen is not the same as to open it up in a book, plus if it's a beautiful art book there's the aesthetic experience of that as well. So I have – I'm not sure about all of that but, yes, there are lots of things that we've got to think about today in terms of protection, and certainly that's another challenge.

And the other thing with working with galleries that's been a challenge for me – you know, I always want to please. In the beginning I think I wanted obviously – still want to please Miss Eikerman. Still I'm working for Alma –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.] She's your role model.

MS. SCHICK: – still, and yet, if Jim were to walk by the phone today – in fact, if he picked it up today, if she were calling, he'd have to say, "Well, Alma, she's not been doing so well." I haven't been working quite as hard as I should have – [laughs] – if she were checking in.

So – now I'm sidetracked.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, you were talking about another challenge of working with galleries.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, yes, and that is that my work is quite – well, it's in an unwearable category. I say it's got to be wearable, and it is a little bit – not for long, right? But obviously a gallery is a business and people aren't going

to buy or want so much my unwearable things, and what they would much prefer would be some ring or a bracelet – not an armlet but bracelet. So I have found recently that I have fallen into what my husband says is a trap of trying to please the gallery by making some of the things more wearable because I know that when I call and I say, “Oh, I’m doing a wearable piece,” oh, they’re very excited in the background: “Marj is going to do something wearable!”

Well, it has been a trap, right, so those pieces I’ve made that fall into that category were all right for the gallery – I don’t think they’ve sold anyway – but they have not helped me. And what I must do at this point in my career is sort of stand back, and it was like standing back from doing the dowels and feeling that I’d said everything I needed to say with dowels and that too many people were finding them to their liking and not disliking them like I’d been accustomed to. So I need to reevaluate this point of view and get back to my old self, which says, well, I’m going to make this necklace too big for your showcases in this room, it’s not going to fit, and have that approach again, which I think for a bit I’ve lost.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So the gallery has kind of sent you some –

MS. SCHICK: Signals.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – staticky messages that kind of jam your own sense of direction –

MS. SCHICK: Yes, I have to think –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – navigation system.

MS. SCHICK: Now, I’m in a compromise state, aren’t I, because I’m doing these huge, very heavy – this pair of necklaces related to the Chrysler Tower in New York City for the Art Deco show, but only I and my model will probably ever put these things on, so, you know, now I’m figuring out – because I love the story about how the spire was built down inside, so now I’m going to make a smaller wearable one. Well, I mean, I think it’s smaller; it still probably will be to your shoulders and beyond but it won’t be as big as the whole necklace, so you can lift the spire part off and wear the spire necklace, or the other one, I think, is going to be just triangular shapes, referring to the triangular-shaped windows.

So there will be two more wearable parts on the two unwearable – well, verging on being unwearable parts. So, see, that’s a compromise. [Laughs.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But you’re reevaluating that now.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I think – you know, I should remember that I’m 62 years old and all these years I’ve been saying, “Well, I can do what I want to do, so I should forget trying to please others and do what I want to do. And I think Jim was exactly right; it is a trap. I won’t say that I’ve let myself fall into it entirely but more than I should have.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, certainly, looking at the entire span of work that you’ve been doing – and you have an amazing output of work, even in the last five years. I mean, it never ceases to astonish me. And I know that when you sent images of the most recent pieces for the *Metalsmith* article, there were certain pieces that I thought, you know, these are really pretty disappointing pieces.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, which ones? [Laughs.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, we’re talking about *Night Bloom*, which is one of – which is the –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, *Night Bloom*. That’s the one with the wearable earrings.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The little wearable earrings. And I thought, you know, it is a nice enough piece. And the color, the black and white tones, are worked out very beautifully and I like the concave surfaces that you did that has a very sculptural aspect, but then it’s got these little earrings on it –

MS. SCHICK: Little earrings, uh-huh.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What is that about? It’s way too much like – I thought – and I hope you aren’t offended by this; perhaps you will be – you know, you can go into gift shops and you can buy these kind of ornamental little things for your dresser that have little holes punched in them that you can put your pierced earrings in –

MS. SCHICK: Oh, my gosh.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – and I thought – it wasn’t quite that bad, no, no – I won’t say it was that bad but I thought, that’s kind of the feel of this, and I thought there was the wrong balance between the support object and the

jewelry object. I mean, before, in all of your work there is always a competing tension between the companion and the ornament, and that's what gives it its energy. *Night Bloom* to me doesn't have a lot of energy.

MS. SCHICK: Well, and I made it quickly, you're right, at the end of the semester, and I had a bad cold, and I was calling the gallery saying, "Oh, I'm doing something wearable for you." And so, there, that says it, doesn't it –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sure.

MS. SCHICK: – that I should forget about trying to please because, again, I still have my salary so I don't have to worry about – and they haven't sold anyway.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right. I mean, it's interesting – I interviewed JoAnne Cooper at Mobilia for another purpose and we were talking about you and she was just amazingly effusive. She said, "Oh, Marjorie Schick never ceases to amaze us," she said. "We have these theme shows; she comes up with these amazing pieces." And she mentioned a number of your really, really challenging pieces that you've done for them. So on the one hand they do have an eye and a real appreciation –

MS. SCHICK: Yes, they're wonderful.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – for your aesthetic goals. On the other hand, they are a business. And if your work is taking up space in their gallery, you know, maybe they're in a position now they need to have some indication – but at any rate, you know, that's their bind and if they're creating a trap for you I think you're wise to reevaluate that and find your way out.

MS. SCHICK: Oh, I don't want to leave the gallery but –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, I'm not talking about that. I mean –

MS. SCHICK: What I need to do is just not do things just to be wearable so that they can sell them.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sure. Right. I wasn't suggesting that you leave the gallery. I meant, I get the artistic dilemma, is what I was saying.

MS. SCHICK: Right. Right. No, I understand. But I wanted to bring it up just because you asked yesterday about relationships with dealers and I didn't approach any of these matters, and I thought today I actually should sort of get into it because it's something that's part of my concern right now.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sure.

MS. SCHICK: So one of those challenges –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And I think you have the luxury too – because, as you said, you have an academic salary and you have that safety net that you can continue to do whatever you please. You can follow your artistic instincts, and unfortunately I think there are some conservative pressures in the marketplace today and artists are really having to make some hard choices about what's the relationship between – I'm talking about studio jewelers who make their living from their work – hard choices about, how do I balance my time between my one-of-a-kinds and my production line work?

MS. SCHICK: I don't even – it would be difficult – exceedingly difficult to be in that situation, especially if your heart was elsewhere because the compromises would just be much too great. And we spoke a little bit about SOFA yesterday, and the thing that I love best about SOFA is going to everybody's lectures. Oh, I love to listen to lectures. But when you look at the work – I think Paul Derrez was right about the one in London, and I'd say it probably is, to a great extent, the same about SOFA. There is a great deal of safe work and not so much work that's out there on the edge that's a great risk, both for the buyer and the maker. And so I think SOFA is a fabulous thing but I think that we'd have to be careful about that aspect of it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sometimes I want to imagine this underground network of some kind of system that lets people know what else is going on. You know, you go to SNAG; you hear tell at SOFA of artists doing some interesting work. You hear tell at school exhibitions – you know, there are ways of getting access to artists who are doing really edgy, edgy stuff, but I wish there was more direct conduit to collectors. When I've spoken to a couple of collectors, for example – and this may be the particular people I've had contact with but I'm quite surprised at how uninformed they are on how to get information about the full range of artists out there and the real panoply of work that's being done. They do tend to go to SOFA, to the big craft shows. That's where they get their information and it's kind of like preaching to the choir over and over again. It's a very small community – the Smithsonian Craft Show, the same people tend to show.

And some of these collectors are saying, well – because I've done presentations for some of these groups and

they say, “We’ve never seen this work; who are you talking about, we don’t know these names.” And I said, “Well, they’re emerging artists or they’re people who have been in the field for a while but they don’t show at the Smithsonian Craft Show; or they’re not at SOFA, they show in other smaller venues,” and they’re asking me, “How do I get access to these people?”

So I think there may be a hunger there among the collectors for more than what they are being offered at the big exhibitions but there is a lack of information on how to find out the names and the places.

[Audio break, tape change.]

MS. SCHICK: Well, it’s an interesting point. We take both *Newsweek* and *Time*, and recently, in one or the other, I don’t know which, there was just a little half-page thing about – probably for collectors – that you could buy for $3,000 a museum-quality craft piece. Now, what did they list? I looked at it and Jim clipped it for me and said, go to these websites. They didn’t list *American Craft* magazine, they listed an Australian craft magazine.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Wow.

MS. SCHICK: Now, they did list the World Crafts Council, so you could go to that and you could get to the American Craft Council and you could get to *American Craft*, and then they listed Dale Chihuly of course, which was a great website, and one other one, and I don’t think it was an American artist; it was somebody who’s featured in *Collect* in London. And I’m thinking, wow, I know it’s an international magazine but why didn’t they use *American Craft* as their magazine? And they might have listed SOFA. I’d have to look at it again to remember if they – I think they did list SOFA.

But we need more advertisements – well, it wasn’t even an ad, it was just a small half-page article, but we need more of that, but to list American – the American Craft Council up front, first.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right, how to educate the public and where to get access to the craft world, since it’s so vital and so important and so accessible, and becoming increasingly important in museum displays.

MS. SCHICK: That’s true.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MS. SCHICK: That’s true.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It’s a very vital area.

Continuing on this theme of challenges, I was really struck yesterday when you were talking about your autobiographical work and this new material that you’ve discovered, how much enthusiasm you have for this new project that you’re embarking on. You discovered the paper dolls, the photographs, the fabrics from your childhood, and there was so much passion and pleasure in your voice as you were talking about these new materials. And I know – you showed me in your studio some first attempts that you’ve made at trying to put that material into a form. And I wanted you to talk a little bit here about how you see yourself addressing the challenge of working with this new material. I mean, it’s almost like you’re starting on papier-mâché or trying to figure out how to use plywood. You’ve got this new material that’s about your own past.

MS. SCHICK: You know, it is going to be a huge challenge because I had started with the window screen where I’d driven to Joplin and bought a whole roll of this black and fell in love with it, and I showed you yesterday my attempts, which I’ve kept covered in – when I opened that bulletin board and looked at them last night I wasn’t excited. It’s good that I haven’t continued along that vein. They were very interesting. I was trying to stitch on a copy that I’d done of transfers out of – my birth certificate on the first one. I stitched with the sewing machine onto the window screen where – 1941 in clear plastic, and trying to make it like a series of drawings that are layered, and you could wear a decade of these necklaces at once.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Because they’re very thin and you could stack –

MS. SCHICK: Lightweight –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – and then because you could see through them.

MS. SCHICK: Uh-huh.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, it’s a neat idea.

MS. SCHICK: So I think that there were a lot of good ideas there but I’m not so sure that that’s what I’m going to do. I’m still really – I’m unclear. I was certain that was what I was going to do. Oh, I can’t imagine doing 60 of

those, but I was going to do one for each year, et cetera, et cetera. But then I got sidetracked – and I think I mentioned that – in doing wood ones more like what my current work is, and relating just to everyday things. Well, actually I probably had found – I did find pre-cut fences at a woodcrafts store, so I ordered those and thought, how can I use these? And I remembered being a new kid in the schoolroom in 6th grade but – her name was Betty Jean, and Betty Jean wanted to initiate me in her way at recess, and especially after school. She and her group would escort me home – [laughs] – threatening to beat me up all the way. Now, they never beat me up but they threatened. But when I'd see the picket fence around the backyard I'd think, "Oh, I'm really close." Now, still they'd keep me at the gate another 10 minutes threatening not to let me go into my house. But whatever, they never did lay a finger on me so I was safe.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's pretty terrorizing though.

MS. SCHICK: [Laughs.] A lot of bullying. So I thought, oh, these fences. So I've done this square necklace covered with these painted fences. I've been painting on them for months, and I have three layers of them on one side, two on the other, and I've offset them. So the most interesting part of the necklace is maybe how it relates to the story, number one, and number two, just that it's so wide – it's not huge but it's so wide that when you stand and look at it, these fences at one point are lined up and then they become more and more out of line, out of sync. I don't know how to say it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's kind of like when you're driving down the highway and you drive by a wheat field and it's like the lines of the wheat kind of go in a funnel shape away from you. Do you know what I'm saying?

MS. SCHICK: Yeah, yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That kind of effect –

MS. SCHICK: It is that way.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – where all the lines are like a sunburst coming away from you.

MS. SCHICK: It is that way, but I alluded a few minutes ago to the fact that I haven't been working so hard, and I think partly it's that piece; it's just bogged me down, and I must not have been excited about it. I haven't worked with the same intensity that I normally do, and I think I have been fenced in by my fences piece. [Laughs.]

Now, Jim had said – smart man, of course – "Why don't you put gates on it?" So maybe what I ought to do now is do a gate – not that, but a series of gates because I feel fenced in by the fence piece, not fenced out, you know, but I need to get out of this. It's the same kind of feeling fenced in about wanting to do pieces that the gallery will just love because they're wearable and they can maybe sell. It's the same kind of thing. And it's been great to do this interview and for you to be here talking also about the retrospective ["Sculpture Transformed: The Work of Marjorie Schick," scheduled to open September 2006; curated by Tacey A. Rosolowski, Ph.D.] because it's making me reevaluate where I am in my work right now. I have a lot of pieces happening right now, and they're happening – I have so many of them because I'm slow painting, but also because I have this wonderful young man [Jared Webb] who can build these wood ones to my specifications.

Now, to make it easier for him, or whomever is helping me in that way, I've been doing very flat work, right, because it's easier to make a pattern and say, this is this size and this gets cut and it goes on top of that, et cetera, et cetera. Well, I've got to figure out a way now to get out of this flat thing, and it was a curator at a museum where I'd had a show two years ago – it's where he told me my new work is really conservative. And obviously, like Miss Eikerman saying, you know, your craftsmanship is bad, that's hit a nerve.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right.

MS. SCHICK: So I've got to now go into – I've got to change things, right, not feel fenced in by the fences but I've got to start digging deep inside myself and starting – I must explore and experiment. So I think perhaps the screen wire – the flat-layered screen wire – window screen wire was not the right direction for the narrative necklaces, but it was a start. And now I've got the fences, I've got a carousel necklace referring to riding merry-go-rounds when our son was little. And it's a neat thing but I don't know that it's very experimental, and all my life – career life I think I've been more experimental than I'm being right now. So I need to go into a new mode here.

And I think of my work as a celebration. I've had this fabulous life and a career that I just can't imagine that I'm having this interview here with you. [Laughs.] I can't imagine that that happened, that anybody is even interested. But my work is a celebration, I think, of all the struggles and the challenges and all the wonderful things. So I think it's a celebration of large and small everyday events. And I viewed this series of autobiographical necklaces that way but I'm going to need to experiment more to figure out just how I'm going

to do – now, it was kind of neat last night when we were talking and you mentioned that they are like a scrapbook. So in a way, even if they do stay flat, they're a scrapbook up on the wall and they're wearable.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right.

MS. SCHICK: But I want to figure out how to begin to take another step – let's take another step here.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Your artistic life has been a series of steps into new materials and forms, and this is a continuation of that whole artistic process of discovery and movement into new directions.

MS. SCHICK: Well, I don't know if it fits that I have this good story about movement, I guess. When I was taking my show from Joplin to Amsterdam, my first show in Holland – thinking about challenges again. But in 1983, I mentioned yesterday – Paul had invited me to have this slot in his time of – a June date for the show and I worked like a dog, and I was taking this whole series of wood *Dowel-Stick* brooches in a little soft woven nylon shopping bag wrapped in tissue paper, and I was going to put them under my seat on the airplane. Each change of planes they would go under my seat. I would be careful where I placed my feet and they would be fine.

So I go to the airport in Joplin to check in and go through x-ray, and I put my – it's not a huge bag and it didn't weigh much – this little shopping bag up to be x-rayed, and the woman x-raying it, she looked at me and she said, "They're weapons." I said, "No!" Oh, I didn't know what to say. "It's jewelry." And she said, "They're weapons." And what she was looking at, they weren't even very long stickpin stems but she was looking at six- and maybe eight-inch pins that would enable you to wear these Dowel-Stick brooches.

So later they got longer and they really could have gotten me on the 12- and 15-inch ones, but these were the short ones. She said, "I'm taking your bag to the back," and I thought, that's a good portion of my solo show. I'm headed there. It opens in, what, two days or three days.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Your first solo show abroad.

MS. SCHICK: My first – oh, God, I was just – didn't know what I was going to do. So I had to stand there while she took my bag to the back and then a few minutes later she came out and she said, "Well, it's all right." Her boss had looked out and had recognized me from a few pictures that had been in the newspaper and he said to her, "That's right; she's the jewelry lady. Let her go." [Laughs.] So that was one of those challenges where my work wasn't thought of in the normal way, right?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And you almost got fenced in but you got let go, so –

MS. SCHICK: That's right.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – let's hope that you're going to find your way out of these fences at this point.

MS. SCHICK: That's right. Well, I have enjoyed this interview with you so much, and thank the Smithsonian National Archives. I just can't believe that this has happened, and I want to thank my husband, who has such a huge – well, I can't thank him enough, like making me work, reminding me times when I'm not working hard enough, shouldn't I be at school tonight instead of watching TV or whatever, and helping me with ideas and how to approach things.

My mother, Eleanor Krask, such an inspiration; our son, Rob, who also has supported my work – oh, I had a solo show at Indiana University. They made me Outstanding Alumni [1990]. It took three months. I packed up – I hired two students to help me – 150 pieces. We had 56 cartons packed, the largest being a washing machine box. And then they went in various sizes. And for some reason I couldn't get to the elevator that day so Rob – this is 1990 – helped me up and down the steps from the second floor to the street. I don't know how many trips we made getting 56 cartons to the ground for the truck to pick up. So he's been an enormous help and always knows exactly the right thing to say. And I want to do a piece about him in my series, when he got lost in the jungle in Palenque and lost his RayBan sunglasses. [Laughs.] We thought he was lost, too. Oh, what a time.

And also thank Alma Eikerman for the foundation she gave me, and unlocking, as Jim says, whatever beast it was inside of me she must have seen, and she had exactly the right approach in helping me understand and appreciate aesthetics and making me have a sense of self-discipline with all those times she kept records of our hours spent.

So it has been – those are the people I have to thank the most: Jim, my mom, our son, Alma Eikerman. And, wow, it's been – and it truly is a celebration of all of that, my work is.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, Marjorie Schick, on behalf of the Smithsonian and the Archives of American Art, and also on behalf of myself, I'd like to thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences with us.

MS. SCHICK: It’s been such an incredible experience – such a pleasure, and you’ve made me dig – you’re going to make me dig harder now and that’s great.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, I wish you the best. Thank you.

MS. SCHICK: Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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