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Oral history interview with Robert Ebendorf, 2004 April 16-18

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Robert Ebendorf on April 16-18, 2004. The interview took place in Greenville, North Carolina and was conducted by Tacey 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.

Robert Ebendorf 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 transcript of spoken, rather than written prose.

Interview

TACEY ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski interviewing Robert Ebendorf at his home in Greenville, North Carolina, on the 16th of April, 2004. I'm conducting this interview for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. This is disk number one.

As an innovator in American jewelry since the 1960s you have been one of the leaders in exploring alternative materials and also – at least in a general sense – in pioneering that most American of jewelry forms, narrative jewelry. In addition, craftspeople in all media, as well as curators and collectors, refer to you as a consummate networker, one who has brought as much passion to building up the field and its human resources as you have to your own artwork. I want to ask you now, what are your reflections on the richness that you have brought to your field over these years?

ROBERT EBENDORF: On this spring morning, looking out the front door in April in Greenville, North Carolina, the trees are just beginning to show their greenery, and it brings the thinking about birth and brings the thinking about growth, and the question is many faceted, much like a gemstone: rough and some highly polished. But I would think maybe a gift that I've been able to share is a gift that I'll return to so many that have gifted me with technique, thinking, scholarly pursuit, helping work with organizations, finding the richness of the museum that is an archive of history, and let us say particularly in the metal field. So it's like a piece of fabric woven with many threads, and perhaps I'm just one of those threads that weave in that tapestry that brings a vision and brings an image forward.

In the field, in metal, I would say here in America, has had a rich and a humble beginning, but when we think about the jewelry history and the metal history, many of those first-generation makers came from – extracted – particularly from Europe and from the U.K. and brought those techniques and information, and that began to, again, like a tree, grow and set its roots, and here I find myself in the – in the early '50s and the late '40s beginning to explore this idea of making – making things out of metal and wood and working in clay and exploring the creative journey.

And it has unfolded with many facets and with many turns, with its dark tunnels and also to its illuminations of pleasure and joy, and the feeling of being a part of a family. And that family is both history, coming from many, many cultures, but it's also a family of mentors and my now contemporary – and also the students that I've had the richness to dance with, to be in the midst of their wonder and their leadership; around a table talking about ideas and design and making, or talking about historical technique that has been lost to scratching the surface to polishing it once again and bring it forth with a new voice, with a new pair of hands.

What I really find very fascinating is that the tools that I'm working with that are on my workbench at the moment, many of these tools are the same tools that have been found on the workbenches around the world in many, many centuries back.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What are some of those tools?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, the pliers, the hammer, the vice, the anvil, fire to warm the metal, to melt the metal. So it is a lineage and, again, it's handed down. And then if we go to the technical vocabulary, that also has been handed down from master to apprentice, apprentice to the next – who becomes a master and then to the next apprentice, and we in America really haven't experienced that apprentice journey in history like we have read about and know about in other cultures, particularly in the European and in Asia.

So the techniques are also many of the techniques we use today. Let's throw a word out like granulation or niello or – those are two good examples – champ levé enamels, cloisonné, plique à jour. Many of those techniques are being reinvestigated by the young contemporary and pushing the parameters of history and pushing the parameters of that technique, and breaking rules or making strange things that – where do those objects fit in

context and in the fabric of our history? And those stories will be unfolded by scholars and by research as we travel forward.

So I do feel that sense of family, and I honor that and I feel very fortunate to be a part of that family.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You talk often about – you often use the word journey when you speak about process, when you speak about the pathways that you have taken in discovering new materials, so I'm coupling here in my mind the words journey and family, and wondering – you've taken a particular kind of journey to your contemporary family of students and peers and connections in the craft world, and I'm wondering, how did that journey begin? What was your journey, beginning with your family background and where you were born?

MR. EBENDORF: You touched a wonderful nerve of memory and reviewing. When I spoke about parting of a family and of the craft being handed down, I oftentimes think about growing up as a young man – as a young person and as a child in Topeka, Kansas, and on Saturdays my father would take me down to, believe it or not, my grandmother and grandfather's tailors' shop, and the connection – let's put the dots together. Here are two people, a husband and wife, a team, a collaborative team in Topeka, Kansas – Swiss woman, German man. What are they doing? They're cutting cloth. What is she doing? She's making – sewing button holes, doing detailing on the clothing that my grandfather is putting together, this new pair of pants or a formal three-piece suit.

I can remember as a small boy being put up on the cutting board in the tailor shop and big bolts of fabric my grandfather would pull down. I can still hear – [makes noise] – coming down and showing me, well, this is the new – the new tweed, or, this is the new flannel that's coming this fall, and the cardboard maquettes. But behind the – not the counter but behind the table there was my grandmother sitting there with a hot iron and pressing and pinning the patterns down and cutting with these big, long shears.

So connect the dots here. So here all of a sudden I think about that journey, and here are two craftsman, making love to the materials that they are speaking and making objects, objects that end up on the body, that end up adorning the body, and here I am at 65 adorning the body, or making objects that speak about my passions, speak about the craft.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you were soaking up that whole tradition from a very early age. How old were you when you were visiting your grandparents' workshop?

MR. EBENDORF: Those memories can take me to probably five – four or five, six years old.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Wow, that's very early. And when were you born, Bob?

MR. EBENDORF: I was born in 1938, September 30th, Topeka, Kansas, son of – my father was in medicine, a doctor, and my mother was a wonderful mom, taking care of the house, nurturing the family, doing the washing and all those things that made my life easy – my sister's and mine as we were growing up.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What were your parents' names?

MR. EBENDORF: Mother's name was Nomah Large and my father's name was Harry Ebendorf, and the – don't know that much about my mother's side because the family broke up quite early, but I have many fond memories of my grandparents on my father's side, the tailors, and their victory garden outside of town, planting potatoes, picking the berries, having iced watermelon in the backyard on a late Sunday afternoon after working in the garden, and we had our bushel basket of fresh vegetables from the garden to take home to wash and to can and to take care of, and chickens in the backyard with my grandmother gathering – and some of the fond memories of – again, of family and of sharing something that is joyful is sitting in the kitchen with my grandmother making homemade noodles and dumplings for to do with the chicken that we had just freshly killed from the chicken pen, or gathering – sending me out on Saturday morning with the basket to gather the eggs from the henhouse.

And having those memories, I feel very fortunate, because today in our contemporary society, not that those are lost but our young people today, it's a different time and it's a different – there's a different voice going on and it's a different time. But I think that growing older has – with all the battle scars and the notches in my cane, the celebrations and the darkness, I have enjoyed becoming more senior and looking back, and also hopefully being a bit wiser and making better choices and better decisions about things.

The making of and the – the sense of the arts creeping into that, into the bloodstream and into the parameters of life, really probably I do have some photographs from the newspaper of taking the Saturday watercolor class in our town, but not much memory of that, but where the memory comes in about the craft or the arts was basically – really began to become more of an awareness in high school, in the junior or senior year of high school, being a very good athlete – but let's move back to grade school.

The disasters started because of the learning disabilities that at that time, not knowing much about, but there were times when it would be time to advance to the next class, next level like from grade school to – you know, from 1st grade to 2nd grade; I had to be put back several times because of – I couldn't handle – or I wasn't doing well in school.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What was your learning disability?

MR. EBENDORF: And, you know, at that time I had a – they didn't know anything about dyslexia complications that young people oftentimes encounter, so reading was very difficult for me, and even if you give me your phone number today I can probably give you the first three numbers but I'll have to write it down. So in my wallet I carry, you know, all the phone numbers that are the immediate – of importance, and I still struggle a great deal with reading and assembling information. Now, this we can talk more about. Maybe this is why the helter-skelter in some of the things I make today sometimes have been talked about, that I create my own language.

But going back to that grade school time, because where could I excel? I excelled in playing baseball, in the athletic field, and into high school the same – junior high the same thing. So I became a very good athlete, a very strong athlete, and I just hung on in the academics.

When I took the arts and crafts class instead of taking auto mechanics where a lot of the difficult and the renegades would hang out and chop cars and put in new mufflers and cam the cars and channel chop, et cetera, I was upstairs working with a piece of clay and chip carving on wood, and beginning to learn something about working in copper.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How come you didn't take the macho chop-the-cars course?

MR. EBENDORF: You know, maybe – I think my dear mother getting me up at 10:00 in the evening and – my sister and I, in our pajamas, and, "come outside and take a look; the moon is beautiful tonight. Look at the clouds passing over." She'd scratch my butt or pat me on the head, very physical, but those tender moments of nature and the gift that Mother Goddess gives us, she would call that to our attention, and gathering bittersweet in the fall in the countryside or going out and gathering the wildflowers where the old farmhouses used to be and bring them back. So it was a great sensitivity that my mother shared with the family. And I think that was shown artistically; I think that was the sensitive vein that she was massaging and sharing with me, not as an artist but more the observation and looking and seeing the subtle nuances and the beauty in that little detail: the bark, the rings on the – of the cut-down tree. And so –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It seems also, too, that you had a window into different processes by going to the workshop and seeing the fabric being worked, the button holes being made, and then with – I love the image of your grandmother getting her hands into the noodle or dumpling dough, and here you are later on, a few years later taking classes in metal, which is an ooey-gooey form and also clay, which is another kind of plastic form. So it seems as though you were being nudged in that direction. You had a comfort level with getting your hands in those sorts of materials.

MR. EBENDORF: I have to laugh when you say a few things like this because it does – woof, without getting too emotional, it does push me back in the memory of going to my grandparent's home on a weekend –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, you are getting emotional about this. [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: Yes. Oops, watch out now. [Laughs.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, no, that's good.

MR. EBENDORF: I wear my –

[Cross talk.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's nice.

MR. EBENDORF: – on my cuff and –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You know you're getting to the good stuff there.

MR. EBENDORF: But, you know, that quiet time when my grandmother would sit me on the floor and bring from her bedroom the huge button box – remember those old tin button boxes? You know, and I'd take off that lid and there would be all these mounds of buttons, all different color, and she would give me a piece of – golly, I hadn't thought about that – she would give me a piece of the fabric and a needle and thread. I'd sit there and pick out the buttons I wanted and sew them, you know, randomly on that piece of fabric. Or, the other – you know, as a

boy, a young boy, walking into her bedroom and all of a sudden on her – I guess it was called a – on her dresser there were all these instruments, you know, for combing the hair and these strange things, the hairpins, and then there was this strange object that was – it was a Bakelite – I didn't know the word Bakelite but there was this strange thing, round with a hole in the center with all this hair coming out of it, and I couldn't – but now I know that what it was is when you would comb the hair you would take – take the loose hair in the comb, and what did the ladies do with it? They stuffed it in these little jars that were on their dresser, and it was – but I remember seeing that and the hair kind of coming out of this hole, and I thought, that is very strange; what – I didn't know what and how it got there.

But, yes, process, materials, making noodles, putting the flour on the table and rolling out the noodles and letting me have the knife, and cut them, and all of a sudden watch them go into the boiling water, and preparing the radishes for the table and the vegetables from the garden. So process, now that we speak about process, and here I am at 65 having this joyful time of process and contextualizing process.

So the nudging was very quietly there, and maybe I hadn't thought about it in that context, but the grandparents did play – and that's why I think grandparents to children, hopefully that children have that opportunity to have those growing up times with one of the grandparents, family side, or maybe both of them, because they are a real treat to the early, early journeying and grounding of family – not family values but family. I mean, the way each family has their own values.

But I would – I had a very good childhood but I did have academic struggles, and that was an embarrassment for me because I didn't do well in that area, and it caught up with me along into the college days definitely.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But it sounds as though – I mean, you clearly bring an emotional charge to these different processes. You got very emotional talking about these memories of your grandparents, and so, process for you is noticing these wonderful aesthetic things, for getting your hands in stuff and sewing or making noodle dough, that has this family context, this emotional richness, so it seems a natural step when you're in junior high to step into the classroom and feel comfortable and excited and joyful about exploring a process in new materials.

What kinds of materials did you explore in those junior high courses? How did that take you to the next step in your journey?

MR. EBENDORF: I do remember – and I still have – in my little box of family I still have those copper earrings with the early sawing piercing, and I have the first ring that I made in silver with a chip stone that I – that is now broken; sandstone, which is very soft. But I remember in the arts and crafts class there was one time when she would put the box – a wooden box down, and we'll take – with our Exacto-knives we would do what we call chip carving, negative and positive, and I think we could create our own design patterns and we would trace them onto the soft box and then do that. But I do remember very much about the jewelry, and that was where – mostly working with copper, and then, since I seemed to take to it more ferociously than maybe some of the other people in the class, I graduated to – "graduated" to mean I stepped out of the copper and into starting to explore buying silver and making simple earrings and rings in silver.

And then the crescendo was that one of the other teachers wanted to have a gold ring made, and my high school art teacher was celebrating this young boy in the class, Bob, and said, "Well, you know, Bob could make this ring for you and could set that cameo – *family* cameo that you wanted to set in this *gold* ring" –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Your first commission.

MR. EBENDORF: Right. The teacher bought the gold, we got the cameo, came back and built the ring I did, then came time to set the cameo. And so she – the teacher was helping me, and of course I slipped with the tool and all of a sudden the teacher put her hand over this – and, "Oh! Oh!" and I thought, what happened? Well, I slipped and cracked the cameo. Then she – teacher – sent me down the hall with the broken cameo and the ring to go to the other teacher and explain to her that I just broke the family heirloom. So I do remember that experience as –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Tell me what you remember about that. How did you make that confrontation?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, the sadness of the – at the end of the hall, walking in and putting the broken cameo in front of the teacher that owned it, and apologizing and so forth.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How did she respond?

MR. EBENDORF: She responded, I'm sure, with not anger but sadness as well, and realized that I was kind of caught between the middle, and definitely she lost a family heirloom of something that was precious to her, or had memory, and it was in the ring but it definitely had a crack all the way across it.

But I think that this woman, as I think back of major pinpoints, she connected that first dot in where my self esteem, along with the athletics and getting all these awards in football and wrestling, gave myself in that high school days a position, even though I was having a lot of academic problems, but I was being focused athletic-wise, which is always very special in high school. If you're not on student government or in the king of queen of the prom, athletics is always – not a second but is always high in that – high of acceptance and celebrated.

So I think that was – and I can remember going back and visiting Fabian Wolf – my high school teacher's name – and wanting – because I had gone on to the University of Kansas [Lawrence, Kansas] to study art instead of taking the full scholarships to the Air Academy for wrestling and football, or to the University of Oklahoma for football or wrestling, or the University of Nebraska. And it turned out those full scholarships that – I told my father that I wanted to go to the University of Kansas, which was 35 miles away, and enter the school of art, and not too sure where that was going to take me but I wanted to know something more about making jewelry. I enjoyed that, so I was going to pursue that as a freshman and not take the full scholarships. I knew that if I went on scholarship to play athletics or to be a part of the athletic program that – I had enough problems academically and so forth; I knew that I couldn't split the energy between the two because I was pushed so hard competitive-wise in the athletic arena. So –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Was it –

MR. EBENDORF: Hmm?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I'm sorry. Was it difficult to make the decision between athletics and art?

MR. EBENDORF: It was between my father being proud that I would get a scholarship doing something that I had gotten a lot of recognition in the paper, and entirely sought after or celebrated, and to – going into an area of art, which – I think he was more concerned about, where would this take me? I mean, I'm a doctor, I'm comfortable with what we're doing, and I want my son to be happy, but where would going to the art department, where would this maybe take me?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So that was really a first major decision that you made for yourself, to make your own path.

MR. EBENDORF: Very true. And taking that – taking that, not risk, but definitely stepping into the unknown to a certain extent, not having any idea about where the success or financial remuneration, or even where it would take me or what I would do with it, except it was something that I wanted to look into.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And what did that feel like? I mean, how did you know? What was making your inner compass point to A for art?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that high school art teacher.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And this was Fabian Wolf?

MR. EBENDORF: Fabian, who patted me on the head. And there was another thing that happened there that was, again, key by Fabian – by the teacher. At the Topeka High School, as any strong high school, the recruitment time came place – took place, where the University of Kansas – the universities would send a representative of the university. Well, it just happened to be that since there were a lot of people going to the University of Kansas – anyway, there was – arrived on the high school we were going to have a day with the University of Kansas professor – two professors from the art department and the drawing and painting department, and they were to come and give us the morning. So when they were to appear, Fabian Wolf said, "Bob, when Carlyle Smith – Professor Smith comes, I want you to – you're going to be in charge of taking his slides and setting up the projector and being sure the chairs are set up." So she gave me a position; she gave me a sense of worthiness that I had a responsibility to welcome this person or to be in the midst of the moment.

And the class came, was set. Carlyle Smith showed his slides, talked about the University of Kansas, the school or art, design department and the drawing and painting department, and then after it was over with the students all went on to other classes. I was able to stay back and give him his slides. And of course Fabian is, "Oh, by the way, Carlyle, let me show you what Bob has been working on." So there was some little metal things that I'd made. And Carlyle said to me, "Well, you know, eventually you all are invited – your high school is invited, for your field trip, to come to the University of Kansas for the morning, to come through on campus and have the day. And when you come, please come and look me up and I'd like to say hello, but you are going to visit the school of art," and I said, "Yes."

So, a big bus comes three weeks later; we go over, we go to the school of art – well, it was called the design department because it was a division between the design department and the drawing and painting department. But anyway, we walked through the halls with a guide, and the guide said, this is the ceramics room, and this is the textile – this is the weaving department, and these are the design rooms, and – you know, walking through

the hall. And of course we went to the metal – to the jewelry studio, and we went in and we all stood around like pegs in a game board, and stood there, and they said, this is the jewelry – and Carlyle recognized me. He said, “Bob, how are you?” He came over and welcomed me a bit and showed me some attention. He said, “Oh, by the way, you’re going to have the afternoon free before the bus goes back.” He said, “If you want to come back to the jewelry studio, please come back and just hang out here until the bus leaves.” And I said, “Well, thank you.”

So of course we were free to go to the union to have lunch, and we did. The girls were all in their heels and their crinolines, and their feet were hurting so they took off their shoes and just hung out watching all the college boys and girls walking through the student union. But I grabbed my sandwich and I walked back over to the jewelry studio and walked in, and Carlyle said, “Oh, here, Bob, sit down here.” And he put one of the graduate students on me and sat down and showed me what they were doing and said, “Oh, would you like to make something this afternoon while you’re here?” So they got this metal there and – so when I walked out of there I’d made a ring in the studio.

So, getting back on the bus I’m sure that – feeling somewhat personally welcomed and also going to the studio and hands-on again, the material, and the process of filing, sawing, and soldering, and here I am with these college people and I can be with them and I understood what was going on, and I could contribute; they could give.

So I think that when you ask the question, was it a hard decision, I think when I came home I was a convert. I came home and said to my dad, “I really want to go to the University of Kansas and not do the scholarship thing but I would like to go through the art department and take some classes.”

So I think the decision came very easily for me in that context.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It was really just a no-brainer at that point.

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah, and – you know, but again, where that would unfold was still totally a dark mystery – or not a dark mystery but it was a mystery, except I knew that you would get an advisor and I knew that they would help you take certain classes and the doors would open up and things would unfold and we’d see where the journey would take us.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So what year did you begin at the University of Kansas?

MR. EBENDORF: You know, it must have been ‘50s – I don’t know. I don’t remember; it’s very foggy. I don’t know if it was the late ‘40s or the early ‘50s – something like ’52 or ’53, I think.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But when you began it was what you expected, or were there –

MR. EBENDORF: Yes. I mean, all of a sudden there was a course called design. There was a course in sculpture. There was a – yeah, it was – the book opened up with many more chapters than I ever had experienced before. The one course that I do remember that was very special – and it goes back to – again, about that process of visualization and visually awareness of your environment. There was a course that I thought was a very, very important course that I experienced as a freshman. It was called Nature Museum Study, and what it was was we learned to start sharpening pencils and we first worked in graphite, then we went to ink, then we went to watercolor, and then we could go to mixed media. But the first semester was nature museum drawing only in graphite pencil, and we would bring in vegetables and we would sit there and look at the surfaces and with our pencil we’d try, in two-inch by two-inch squares, or maybe it was four-inch by four-inch squares, we would visually look at the pine cone or the piece of bark and try to capture with our pencils – to emulate the surface textures.

So what this was doing – or maybe it was a blade of grass, or maybe it was the tulip, and we would take off one of the petals and she would say, look at such and such an area, and she’d actually have us cut out a square – a small two-inch by two-inch square and put that piece of paper with that little opening over that segment. We’d have to try to draw that. So it was that careful recording, visually being aware of what I would think maybe would just be a branch but all of a sudden realize that branch was made up of all these component parts.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, discovering worlds within worlds, kind of, and focusing your attention.

MR. EBENDORF: And then that was about design, and she would fold in – you know, look at the patterning, look at the shading, look at the textile quality versus the smooth part of the surface.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So that was really teaching you how to see, and then –

MR. EBENDORF: Absolutely.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – and then the hand-eye coordination too.

MR. EBENDORF: Absolutely. And just think about if you were to zero in with a microscope or with a magnifying glass on the orange – on an orange – not open it up, just on an orange. So she would have us make that close-up observation, then midway in the class she'd say, "Now open the orange up," and we'd have to draw the inside peel instead of the outside peel.

So it was that visualization, that coordination, that surface awareness, and trying to make it look real.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Now, did you feel – when you were doing those exercises in the context of the class, how did you feel the impact of that in other courses, or just in daily life as you related to objects? In other words, how did those seeing skills –

MR. EBENDORF: Those seeing skills took the world – I mean, particularly outside the art department – took the world around me and gave it such – it just vibrated in so many different ways than I've ever experienced before, even though I thought I was somewhat sensitive to the environment, but it gave me – it talked about spatial relationships; it spoke about instead of looking at the tree as a whole, I began to realize that tree was made up of all these component parts. So it kind of broke down a lot of things and put them not into categories, but it gave me a bigger picture of the component parts that make up a whole.

But in my other class work, I mean, I struggled through printmaking, life drawing – not good, hard. Life drawing was not – I was not skilled, didn't do well in that. But printmaking, acid etching, the copper plates and doing intaglio and learning the language and some of those ABC techniques. As I think back, they all – the University of Kansas did me well. They really did a good job as a four-year undergraduate experience, and I celebrate that gift very much, and then I also did stay on for the two years for the graduate program as well. I tried for scholarships to go away to graduate school but nothing evolved and at the last minute – and money was not there, but at the last minute – I mean, I wasn't aware that the graduate program oftentimes had assistantships for graduate people to teach the freshman design classes and drawing classes and at the same time be working on your graduate degree, which was called the MFA. And I was awarded – or was asked if I would like to stay on to do my graduate work in jewelry at that time, because that's where I have really become more focused.

So I didn't go away. And the sad note, hindsight, I probably would have enrichened the fabric if I would have been able to have gone away because I would have had different instructors, different challenges, and I would not have known how to navigate where I wanted to go, who I wanted to work with, and it was an easier journey than it would have been if I would have been relocated and rechallenged.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's true that often graduate programs have, you know, a kind of unspoken policy of not taking undergraduates from their own departments for exactly that reason.

MR. EBENDORF: And I'm livid today – and I've been livid – after returning – unfortunately returning to the academic circle many years later, boy, am I one that will be cantankerous on that topic when all of a sudden someone say, you know, "Jerry was very good; why don't we – we have an adjunct position to let them" – you know, not adjunct but a – and I have been very vicious on, "No, make them go," and –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Fly the nest.

MR. EBENDORF: I should have – I could have – I would have had a richer investment of my time if I would have done that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: As you look back on that period, however, are there certain pieces, certain objects that you made that you remember and that seem to speak to you about what was going to come?

MR. EBENDORF: Validation. In Kansas, if you go into the history of the decorative arts in the mid-50s and the '60s, there were several very strong – and '70s – for example, the "Fiber, Clay, Metal" exhibitions at St. Paul were very important, I think, in the decorative arts for the crafts in the '60s. In Kansas there was the "Wichita National" competition, and that took place in Wichita, Kansas, and there is a rich history of this period of time, and that exhibition was a competition, and people from all over the United States could send in their slides, and they were juried, and then the exhibition would take place, and it was quite – and fortunately it was only – you know, I am in Lawrence, Kansas, it's in Wichita, Kansas, and all the major makers that were interested in the exhibition of the programming would send in for this. And I can remember being accepted twice as a graduate student to the "Wichita National" Exhibition.

We then would also take a field trip down and take a look. And here I'd see pieces by John Paul Miller, Fred Miller, I'm speaking now of metal – or Ron Pearson, Earl Kretsinger (sic). These are – or Mary Kretsinger and Earl Krentzin. These are icons in our metal – in America metalwork of the '60s and mid-'50s.

But anyway, having my pieces chosen for these exhibitions, the proudness of quietly standing at the exhibition seeing my ring or my piece from the workshop in Lawrence, Kansas amongst these icons, amongst this

exhibition, I think those were some things that – the question I can remember, the quiet smile, and a sense of, not success but acknowledgement, validation, giving me permission to journey on, or that there was something happening that was being recognized outside of my professors or teachers about art. It was someone who chose my piece to be amongst this exhibition called the juror.

But, yes, I can remember – when you asked about objects, or whatever – so I do remember that experience and that – I can remember several of the kind of things I made, and –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What did some of them look like? I'm wondering what the jurors were seeing and what excited them.

MR. EBENDORF: The piece that I remember very quickly where they were filed in wax and then sterling silver cast with – the ring and earrings and cufflinks that were then inlaid with ebony and ivory, and for the color differences between – using the wood and the bone of the ivory. At that time ivory was used a great deal before it became something of an endangered species. But that and also to a raised nut bowl – sterling nut bowl with a forged spoon, which I still own today. So those are objects that I do particularly remember from that.

I remember fondly my ceramic classes with Sheldon Carey. I remember also the sculpture class with Eldon Teft, who was at the University of Kansas, and the warm classes with Robert Montgomery in design and three-dimensional design. He also taught jewelry and metal work, and of course the mornings of conversation with Carlyle Smith, who was the head of the metal program at that time.

When I chose to do the graduate program, knowing that – I thought I would be hopeful about maybe getting a teaching job, but because at the University of Kansas we didn't have a lot of experience or input about designing for companies or working at a jewelry store or shop, it was – at that time too, teaching was quite fluid for many – that was available because there were all – if you remember at that time they were building art departments and flourishing in the applied arts after the GI bill.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The GI bill, yep.

MR. EBENDORF: That was flourishing, and then also the OT, the occupational therapy classes for returning from the military.

Anyway, so I knew that maybe I'd do my graduate work in three-dimensional design with an emphasis on jewelry. And why I chose to do that was if I had chose that route I would have to take many other kinds of classes and not just focus at making jewelry. So that was going to make my nest larger with more eggs in the nest for potentially being more attractive. I had a strong background of working with ceramics and also working with silk screening, and also working with metal and also working with sculpture.

So I took this journey in graduate school in three-dimensional design with an emphasis in metal. So when I finished, my portfolio, or my slides and my vocabulary, was quite broad versus – but with the strongest voice of course within the metal. So I kind of put that thought together, thinking that would be more attractive maybe for a small junior college or a college or a university academic position.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It was very savvy. Is that an idea you came up with on your own or did you get advice?

MR. EBENDORF: I think I came up – I think – I don't remember being counseled all that well about what was going to happen afterwards, but I took – maybe because there were a number of teachers that I experienced – again, going back to the undergraduate and here I am in the same bedroom with the same people – there were certain teachers that I'd had that I wanted to have more time with, so one was in clay and one was over here, so I chose to continue to have more time with them. Now that you ask, that, I think, jaded into that decision-making process.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well it was certainly – I mean, I'm struck by the strength of your decision, having gotten an athletic scholarship to go to one place and you turning that down, saying no, I'm going to follow what I want to do and go to the University of Kansas for art – [audio break, tape change] – and then as a graduate student, a beginning graduate student, when most beginning graduate student really don't know what end is up, but you making a very savvy decision to not focus yourself too narrowly but to remain broad so that you're marketable later on. There's a real survival strength there, a real attentiveness, however subtle it is, to what's going on in the market, the world around you, the practicalities of the world.

MR. EBENDORF: You know, because there wasn't much talk, I mean, with the teachers, of trying to scrape back into that – there wasn't much talk about what are you going to do with it and where are you going to go. It was just like –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It was there.

MR. EBENDORF: They were good teachers but it seemed like it just kind of ended at the end of the piece of paper, and what was the next – on the next page was kind of like – I don't remember being – like here today we're coaching all the way, like, how do you survive? And so we're talking much about game plan, the five-year plan. You know, they're doing wonderful in the studio but I would like to see them continue to be successful, so that we do spend – and I think not only myself but I think a lot of good professors or good people in the academic field do network and do think about how can we send these young men and women out into the creative field to exist?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, as you're talking through your decision-making process at these critical periods, I guess – even though you didn't know the impact of your decisions, what I'm seeing is the hints of what's going to come, which is that you are a person who's really moving and shaking in the field; you're always thinking, okay, I'm in my studio but my world does not end at the studio walls. There's a bigger world out there full of people and things that are going to be happening – shows in the next few years, more jobs to take, more experiences to have. So I'm seeing that coming, and you nurturing that in yourself.

MR. EBENDORF: Well, to jump ahead a little bit because you hit a point – yesterday I overheard you speaking to some of the students as we walked through the studio and I heard you speaking about – it seems like oftentimes the maker, let's say of ceramics or let's say a weaver or let's say a metal person, we know that field, but that particular creative problem solving and skill oftentimes we don't – the student doesn't often know that they might be able to knock on other doors instead of just going out and throwing another pot, but taking that skill and working in industry in a think tank of materials – that we're discarding these materials but as a creative person, this technology lab hires you to – because you're skilled at precision work.

And my antenna kind of went up because I think your astute observation is absolutely true, that unfortunately today so many of the students have tunnel vision. I'm making – I'm going to talk about jewelry – I'm making jewelry and when I get out of here, that's why I prepared myself to make jewelry. But they don't realize that they can work for an architect – because they're used to building models and working with materials they can go and work for a machine shop because they have precision making equipment, because they know materials, they know nuances and detail and precision. Anyway, so we are oftentimes missing – missing the bigger picture.

But going back to Kansas to the university for a moment, there were some things that – that were gifted and very special. Because I was struggling in the academic circle so much with taking the language – the psychology classes and the philosophy classes and the art history and the English classes and so forth, and I'd have to write papers and themes and so forth, and oftentimes I'd be getting these marks back with failing marks on them or Ds, and of course our advisors or our faculty always had printouts of where we were academically in case they needed to call us in and talk about why are you failing art history, or what's going on here? I can see that you're having some bad marks. And that was my case of having some disasters in some of these classes, and one of my professors, who I had also enjoyed his leadership as teacher, Robert Montgomery, he would oftentimes say, "Bob," he said, "The next time you have to write a theme or the next time you have to write an art history paper," he says, "you call me and come to my office because I want to read it over with you, because you're failing and you can't do that. We need to – so come talk to me."

So he had this open door, and when I would write something I could always go to him and lay it before him and feel totally comfortable with being – with a bad – totally naked with a poor document, and he would say, "look," circle this. And he said, "I don't understand what you're trying to say here. This is a dangling participle, this doesn't – this sentence or paragraph doesn't flow." So he would literally make me rework and then bring it back and rework and bring it back before I handed it in so that I would continue to stay academically out of trouble.

So his nurturing and help did make a lot of difference sometimes where the marks were getting thin at times.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You had mentioned earlier that when you were in high school and even in elementary school – as early as elementary school you felt a sense of shame about how you slipped in certain areas even though you excelled in others. And I'm wondering, did this experience with Robert Montgomery make you feel differently about the learning disorder? Had it been named dyslexia at that point or did you as yet –

MR. EBENDORF: I don't think it had, no.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Okay.

MR. EBENDORF: What it did give – it gave me a haven. It gave me a place where I could come in comfortably, knowing that the piece was – the document – the paper was in trouble because of spelling or because of English – the proper situation. And what it gave me is an opportunity to come in and lay the paper down, and even though it had all these red marks over it, not feel ashamed or not – all I had to do is go back and try to rework it. And so there was a support system that made me feel comfortable.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And a sense of control, too, because it wasn't, you know, you blew it once, you got another

chance, you can get control over it. If you blow it that time you can make it a little better. Keep going back.

You said that the dyslexia makes it very difficult to read. You have difficulty remembering sequences of things. Do you see the influence of the thought process that creates those difficulties? Do you see those thought processes feeding your artwork in any way, in a positive sense or a negative sense?

MR. EBENDORF: I see it feeding it. And I think – I don't know if it's a positive or a negative, but I do see – with that critical question, because – why I should say that is that oftentimes when I'm writing letters – I've had other people who are writing about my work, or essays, or people doing a critical observation of the work, where sometimes they feel that my helter-skelterness and my sense of being out of control or not being legible – I'll swing the other way and all of sudden start doing collages in the letter or start drawing. And today if I'm writing a letter personally – even professionally if I'm writing a letter – you know, I don't do the computer and I enjoy the Pony Express. I love putting a stamp on the letter and running down in front and seeing the cloud of smoke coming – here comes the pony – and I know that – I'd reach up and give him the letter as the rider goes by. It's on its way; it's traveling. And I still love the hand. Is it about the marks? I bet it is. I love making these marks.

So oftentimes I will jumble things up. If I'm writing a stream of conscious – I'm writing to you; if I often get blocked because I don't know how to spell a word, I'll just go ahead and write it what I think it is. And if I go to the dictionary and I'm trying to find a word because I know I can't spell it, I don't even know how to phonetically or the – I am impaired there. I don't even know how – so the dictionary sometimes is extremely frustrating to me to try to look up the word because I don't know how to sound it out or where the letters are. So that's really how frightening – the fear sometimes when I am put a document in front of me and he says, "Read this to 500 people," et cetera, whatever, it brings the sweat to my brow and I will do anything I can to dodge that bullet, but I've gotten – I've dealt with this for a length of time so you would never know this from my verbal skills or the way I handle myself because I'm able to compensate that; I know how to move around that, navigate around that barrier or that challenge.

So, going back to this in relationship to the work, I think when one views my work, oftentimes the work is very erratical, very spontaneous and very asymmetrical, laden with information or maybe over-the-hill – maybe too much glitz on it, and I think there is a relationship there, that the helter-skelterness or the going against the grain and being – throwing a twist in there maybe is a part of that association and assemblage of ideas and assemblage of information. Maybe I'm skirting around – maybe I'm not making sense in what I'm trying to express, but I think that it has – I love collaging. Why do you collage? I love putting things down and marking back over it and rebuilding that surface and contextualizing working around, and I think part of it is I'm creating my own language. Several scholars who have looked in-depth at the work of – I remember someone quoting them as saying – them saying Bob creates his own language. The marks and the scratches and the collaging is his way of – his language that he creates that. And as I think about some of the – how I like to inlay and – take a broken plate and take it and then take the broken glass from the street and start laying these like little bricks into the matrix of the piece of jewelry, it is like building the Byzantine chapels with all the wonderful mosaics.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's also the part-whole relationships that you learned about – learned to see in a new way in the museum drawing course as well.

MR. EBENDORF: Yes.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So I can understand. I don't think – I think what you're saying makes perfect sense. I mean, as you were speaking about your letters and this combination of text and images – because often you have to write on a postcard, or you take a photocopy of some kind of poster and then you write in the empty spaces around the poster so you're always juxtaposing words and images, and I thought immediately when you brought up your letters of the assemblage pieces, the *Off the Street, From the Beach* series, for example, where you collected all kinds of colorful fragments of multimedia objects. Some of them had texts had on them, some of them were simply color and pattern, and then you put them together in the same way. I mean, there was a resonance there between what you do in your letters and what you do in those pieces.

I'm wondering too if there's a connection – I'm thinking, for example, of the umbrella that you did and the very highly filigreed pieces that you made that were really art songs, if you will, of the craftsman, or keeping with silver or working with metal, these very detailed – Byzantine is the word you used earlier – the Byzantine patterns, and I'm thinking, you know, there again you're taking the form of an umbrella handle and you're breaking it down with the filigree, creating the part-whole relationships there. Does that make sense to you as a connection as well, in the context of assemblage work?

MR. EBENDORF: It fits perfectly into what I just previously said about patterning and putting – on that particular piece you're speaking about is the umbrella handle made in Fredrikstad, Norway in the workshop in – probably in the '70s – yes, '70s, a major, major piece, and it's one that is over the top of expertise of craftsmanship and reverence to the history of making – both the silversmith and goldsmith. But as you speak about – as you come

down the handle there's a row of filigree wirework, a row of filigree wirework, filigree wirework, and then all of a sudden I shift that visual vocabulary and then it becomes circles of silver, circles – another row, another row, and then I shift again and go back to the filigree work, and I shift again, another row of silver round pieces.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Gee, you're reading it, aren't you?

MR. EBENDORF: And it's a wonderful display of that sense of language, but it's also too, if you – I feel that's a very formal – because of its precision and – it's tight. I mean, it is tight and it is so beautifully done, and then if I take and swing to some of the – let's say the cross reference exhibition and all the different pectoral crosses that are from broken shards of ceramics or broken shards of Amari plates and Absolut glass bottles, et cetera. In a way – I guess in a way it's the same thing, but they're – because they shards of glass and pieces of china are all broken and there's no control sense of the shape so they're all different. But again I'm laying them – I'm laying there the same way when I'm writing a word or making the marks on paper.

So sometimes people will say, is there – do you see a thread in your work, Bob? And I guess that oftentimes I don't sit and think about that question, but sitting here today and thinking about that thread, does the work – if I look at the pieces from the '60s and now to this body of work and to my timeframe now, there is a thread. There definitely is a story; there is definitely a vocabulary and an attitude and an odor that these – that your work – that my work does, you know, bounce from one to the next to the next. But I guess when you're in the process of making certain collections of work, you don't feel that thread, or I don't see that, until you sit down in a quiet moment of space and reflect on that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I was thinking too as you were speaking that you certainly are not the only artist who struggles with dyslexia, and so many people speak of just feelings of frustration, of shame, growing up with these, with this difficulty, and sometimes it's hard for them to let go of those negative experiences that they had, shaming experiences they had with parents or teachers, and to say, "Well, wait a minute; this is actually wired into my mind and it's an integral part of my artwork, the productive part that I do. It informs how I process the world, it informs the way I put shapes together, it informs the sorts of challenges that I set myself as an artist, the kinds of technical things I want to take on because I want to overcome them." So there is a golden side and there is an oxidized side, a bright side and a dark side to it as well. I just wanted your reflections on –

MR. EBENDORF: You know, that's – you're overview, I've never really kind of put in that perspective, but it is – I can see how clear that maybe that was a gift – the way I function has been a very strong coin that I've played, and very unknowingly, but I'm going to step back a little bit further to that University of Kansas time when I was not – I was not that aware of how I could review this challenge and see it as an intricate part of the way I behaved and the way I function.

I'm going to take you to an experience that is very monumental to me, and that's at the University of Kansas I came out of the studio; I was getting – it was the last year of graduate school, it was in the fall. I came out of the studio at two o'clock in the morning; I was silk-screening fabric. I stepped out in the hall and there was a sign in the hallway in yellow and black letters, and it said, Study Abroad: Fulbright applications due such and such. And then it had Greece, Germany, Japan, and it said room such and such. And I remember standing there looking at that, knowing that school was going to be coming to an end and not knowing too sure what was in front of me, but I remember standing there and looking and saying, oh, you know, god, wouldn't that be great to study abroad? Oh, man. And then all of a sudden I said, oh, but what are you talking about? Your grades are so poor. This is for scholars. There's no way, Jose. But I remember standing there looking at that and then how I all of a sudden I got this cold ice emotional twist and said, you know, but your grades would never – you'd never make it because of your grades, your academics.

So anyway, off I went, and about a week or so later, walking across campus I found myself – instead of headed for the art building I found myself in the library coming to this room. I said, "Excuse me; is this the Fulbright office?" And she said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, let me ask you a question" – the lady behind the counter. I said, "Do you have to speak a language?" She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, to apply for a Fulbright do you have to speak a" – because I didn't have – I mean, I could hardly do English let alone speak a foreign language. She said, "Oh, no, you don't have to speak a foreign language. Like there's the U.K and there's Australia and" – and she went on and on. And she said, "No, it's not," – she said. I said, "Well, may I have a form? May I" – she said, "Yes." So she laid it up on the counter and I said, "No, give me three of them." She said, "Why do you want three?" I said, "Well, I might make a mistake if I try to fill one out."

So I took it and – took them and I went into the library and set down and started reading through them quickly. But anyway, I'm headed – there's an end to this but it's very – it points something very interesting to me, I've reflected on it over the years, and often I share this with a student. I remembered from art history that there was a lot of things going on in Scandinavia that dealt with the hand and dealt with the craft – I mean, bowls and textiles, and the furniture. And this was also at the time when the Danish modern was hitting America and we were hearing about it and we would – all the catalogues in New York – you know, the lamps and the textiles, the

teak furniture and the Amari plates – I mean, not Amari but the Kari Frank and the ceramics, and there was Marimekko fabric.

So I went – pulled all of a sudden Scandinavia, and da da da. All of a sudden I came across Norway and it talked about the history of enameling and silversmithing. For some reason, Georg Jensen didn't – a red light didn't go on there, but Norway and enamels – so anyway, I started reading about Norway. I thought, well, I'll just apply for Norway. I mean, why not? So I was doing this. I happened to be having an art history class with a woman who had been in Scandinavia on a Fulbright, and so I went to her and told her, and she said, "Bob, bring your paper; let me see your statement of purpose." So I showed it to her, and – Marilyn Stokstad, Dr. Stokstad – and she looked at me, and she was the art historian teacher that I was taking and we'd finished the exam – because I was taking a class with her, and she said, "Well" – to our class; they were all graduate students – "Well, Bob, I don't know who you copied off of but you made a C this time. Good for you." Everybody would laugh and I'd get my paper back because I always was in trouble with her about getting –

But she liked me, but when she read the piece of paper she said, "Bob, you're saying nothing; you need to be able to say what color shoelaces, what room you're going to be in, who you're going to study with." And she said, "Well, I have a few contacts, and I don't know if you have time or not but I will give you a letter to put in with your letter and you should send this document to these three people and ask them to respond back to you, and you might get something back in time. And if you do, you should include that in your proposal and then bring your new proposal back to me." And things got back in time, and they came back from the museum on their letterhead. They came back from the academy with the letterhead; even told me what room I would study in and who I'd be with.

So long story short, so I'm standing there, I get a letter, and I've gotten a Fulbright and I'm overwhelmed. That night, standing on the stage, getting this piece of paper, being acknowledged in front of everybody, here was the person who was going off to study medicine; here was a person going off to study in law; here was a person going off – Fulbrights in archeology, et cetera. And I was the only person going off on a Fulbright to study art. I remember receiving that piece of paper and getting very emotional, and tears coming down, all of a sudden realizing that I look at that poster and I was not worthy – I said to myself, you could never do that because of your marks. And without taking that risk – but it was that sense of that – all of a sudden that evening I realized that you do have – you can chart some of your destiny, you can chart some of your – you can be the pilot, you can take challenges. You'll fall off the table and get nosed and bump your knees, but what you need to do is take those risks and then just get up and brush off and go to the next challenge.

So the Fulbright – that evening changed my life in many, many ways, because what happened then of course with the Fulbright, that parlayed me into the Tiffany Grant and that parlayed me into – you know, and so it put a notch in my gun, it put a cornerstone in the building with good mortar around it, but emotionally it made a big impact that evening, realizing that I had looked at that and said, no way, Jose; I've got all these bad marks. And so we never should – and I share that with a student because oftentimes they don't think that they're capable of that challenge.

So that Fulbright did – it made a lot of difference. It opened a lot of doors, and many of those Norwegian contacts I have today that I still celebrate and am fortunate to have were ones that I made at that Fulbright time. And they're major players now in the arena in Norway and in the Scandinavian countries. So it speaks of that taking the challenge and saying, well, what can I do except get a no, so let me just go ahead and go for it. I've got a lot of no's. I've got a lot of grant proposals with no – I've got a lot of challenges with potential commissions and got a no, but you just kind of gussie up and take those documents and put them in the files and go back to the workbench.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Your story resonates with me because when I interview artists, when I do workshops for students to help them write artist statements, for example, I can't tell you how many times I've spoken to people – not necessarily artists who suffer from dyslexia or struggle with dyslexia but artists who just say, quite as if it's very obvious, "I'm not a word person, I'm not a scholar. I don't deal with language; I deal with images." And that belief or misbelief about yourself is very crippling because this culture is so – privilege is the word. I mean, if you can speak you've got power. If you can write you have power. This is something that's drilled into us in school, and so if you find yourself as an artist, a person who works in the language of images, you've been taught also from a young age that somehow you work with a currency that isn't worth quite as much and that you're not going to be rewarded.

So it doesn't surprise me at all, given your history, particularly your additional struggles with language, that you looked at that Fulbright poster and had those feelings about not being worthy. And I'm glad that you told that story because when you said – when you told about going to the Fulbright office you said, "I found myself going there," as if somebody else was pushing you, as if you were in a trance or something, and I was wondering what that was about. It was obviously a very emotional decision for you to decide to get yourself on your feet and go there and confront this self-doubt that you had, this sense of unworthiness.

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah, and it did – there was a lot that came out of that that today I continue to say thank you for in that sense.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, a very rich experience personally, but also the success that you had enabled you to continue, I think, the generosity to keep giving back to people around you. You talk about how you tell this story to your students. It really impresses me, I have to say, when you're talking about your experiences, how you run into such generous people; the people who have been willing to take the time to help you with the papers, the people – Carlyle Smith extending the welcoming hand to a high school student who's come to visit a program; Robert Montgomery, who has an open-door policy so that you can be helped out; Fabian Wolf, your high school teacher – all these people who have been so generous with their time to help you move on your way, and I think that's – those are bright lights along your path that I think – I see you being that bright light for other people, being generous to other people. You had that modeled so strongly for you in your own history.

MR. EBENDORF: You know, when you speak about that gift or that sense of nurturing and sharing, or opening doors – you know, I can go countless of my artist friends but also too the curatorial world has been – thinking about learning something and opening a door and laying things before me to experience, and I found that the museums have been very much there for me in a very interesting way, all the way from not knowing that you could go and make an appointment and ask for item this, this, this and this, and give the numbers, and you can find yourself in a room with a pair of white gloves and with a magnifying glass and drawing paper and observe and study something. At the same time, here's the curatorial person, the museum director or the person the head of that department, captain or leader, sitting across the table from you, asking you questions about, "Well, how do you think this was done, or what do you think about these lines? Isn't that – look how the design is laid out," and so forth.

And so there has been this incredible window that was opened up for me in that sense. I never will forget going – reading something that Hovine had written about the Metropolitan Museum [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York] about – during his reign of leadership, where he's talking about wanting the Metropolitan Museum to be more available to the public: how can we get the public to be more engaging with our holdings, and this is a house to welcome you to, and education is important and how can we reach out to the public?

I remember reading this article, and I had just arrived in New Paltz, New York at a new academic position with Kurt Matzdorf, to develop the metal program at SUNY New Paltz. And at that time I was president of SNAG [Society of North American Goldsmiths] – and that was 1970, and I went down and – connecting the dots – on the Fulbright boat – ship going over to Norway to start the Fulbright there was another Fulbright scholar, and he was going to study at the Folk Museum [The Norwegian Folk Museum, Oslo], and so Bret Waller – Mr. Waller is his name, and he is just now retired as the head of the museum at Indianapolis – Indianapolis, Indiana Museum of Modern Art [Indianapolis Museum of Art]. He had also helped build another major museum in Albany, New York, the new building that they had – he helped fund raise for.

But anyway, he was now back in America after the Fulbright. We had spent time together as young Fulbrighters in Oslo, Norway. He went back home. Now he found his job at Albany, at the museum, and then he had gone down to New York as head of the education department [at the Metropolitan Museum of Art]. So I go into him and make an appointment, and I said, you know, "Bret." "What are you doing here Bob?" he said. "I have an idea," I said, "I would like to talk to you because you're the education – the head of the education – I would like to have a conference of metalsmiths to come to the Metropolitan Museum for maybe, say, three days, and to have hands-on viewing of objects. I mean, you've got these wonderful holdings in here, and because of the Society of North American Goldsmiths, the conference will take place in New York, in New York City, and since – and I'll coordinate this." And he said, "But I don't" – I said, "Well, you know, I read this, hoping" – and I put the document in front of him and I said, you know, "He wants the museum being more to the public." And I said, "Is there any way that you can make an appointment with him for me to propose this project?" He said, "Okay." But he says, "First we have to get the approval of all the different curatorial people that if this were to fly, that they would welcome you for two hours in their department, let's say the medieval department or the arms and armor."

So that took a long time because all of a sudden I called to say, well, "Can we make an appointment, Mr. Nichols, the head of the arms" – oops, bad month. He's having, you know, work. So we learned a lot about the museum world. Sometimes they're on good behavior and sometimes they're not, with one another. So finally we got all the approval of the people that – in the different departments if we would do this. So I went to holding and had a meeting with them, da da da da. And I said, "You want the museum to be a welcoming space, and here's the way that I would like to be able to interface with you." We got the green light.

So that experience – and here there was like 200 people or 300 people came from New York, and we had three days of sitting down with the curatorial and different departments with the sponge laid out, white gloves, with our books, discussing and talking technique, talking about culture, talking about the object, contextualizing what we were looking at, this object. And it was a monumental experience for us, and that's what I talk about in the

sense about a gift.

[Audio break.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski interviewing Robert Ebendorf at his home in Greenville, North Carolina. It is April 16th, 2004, and I'm conducting this interview for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. This is disk number two.

Bob, we were talking about this amazing experience that you created at the Met with craftspeople coming in and actually looking at objects, and I just wanted to give you the opportunity to have some additional reflections about that experience.

MR. EBENDORF: The richness that's created was the first time that the – many of the museum directors of different departments had sat down side by side or across the table with an object in front of them that they knew so well. They knew it from a historical point and reference. They had written about it for their catalogue, as you see the word like niello and repoussé, or using language that the metal smith knows. And on the other side of the table, here we were who were makers. And the dance that began to take place, the stripping off of credentials, where all of a sudden the museum curators said, "But, you know, neillo – now what is niello? What is it – how do you – what" – and we'd laugh and say, "Yes, you know the word but do you know how it's made, or do you know how we apply it to the surface."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Could you stop for a second and tell us who was there? Who was around this table?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, it would be, for example, if we were the arms and armor – I don't remember the curatorial people's names, the directors at that time. That was back in – I don't quite have that. But when we would go from one body of work, Roman pieces, it would be the person who was the head of the Roman –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Okay.

MR. EBENDORF: So it was that. But what was happening was that there was this exchange of comfort zone of all of the sudden the scholar, not feeling uncomfortable, said, "Yeah, I use that word but I don't know what that means, or I don't understand – what is repoussé? What is – I mean, I know that it makes the metal go up and down, but how do you make the metal go" – so there was this wonderful dance that was going on in the moonlight in the sense of not knowing the answer, but can you tell me the answer? Which, I was told, was quite unusual, because usually – you know, I'm a scholar and I don't want to be uncomfortable that I don't know – yeah, I'm using these words. And here we had the richness – we, the makers, had the richness of handling this bowl and looking at it and saying, "Oh, my goodness, can you see – I never thought it could be put together this way."

So it was kind of like a clinic but it was a clinic of comfort zone that we really enjoyed, and it was the first time that many of the Society of North American Goldsmith's students, young people as well as teachers, were able to pick up a 16th century bowl or to have this object in their hands, and to explore closely and to – with their magnifying glass or to do a drawing, or – [gasp] – "Look here what I found! Yes, it was done this way, I think." And so it was a very – and that's exactly what Hovine wanted to have happen was to embrace the going public, to embrace both the scholarly as well as the maker, as well as John Doe walking in off the street.

So that conference for the three days also opened the door for other conferences of this kind because I could parlay that – I was president at that time – I could parlay that blue chip to the next museum and say, well, if the Met did it, I think your Virginia Fine Arts Museum [Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond], your wonderful Art Nouveau collection, and the wonderful pieces in your collection that are from the Fabergé collection, we would like to be able to see, or the Greek gold jewelry.

So it was the turning point for the Society of North American Goldsmiths to once again to fold scholarly pursuit in with theory, in with the exhibitions, in with the exchange of ideas. So the museums have been a very special springboard and gift to me, and I celebrate their gift, and I've had – you know, it's enriching, because art history was not – was something that was not academically – grade-wise was not one that showed very strongly, and it was a struggle, but through the Norwegian experience and having the museums that we had to sit and do the drawings of the pieces in front of us and so forth, the museum became alive to me and became human beings and culture. And all of a sudden it tweaked me – it tweaked me to want to go pick up the journal and read a bit more about that particular culture or that particular village or that particular archeological dig, et cetera, where I didn't connect that when I was sitting in the classroom listening to slides in the dark and making poor marks on the exams trying to reassemble the thoughts from the lectures. So –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I'm sorry to interrupt you. I was just thinking that we're talking about art history, where you're shown a sequence of slides or you're looking at books, and they're flat. And you're talking about relating to three-dimensional objects and the joy of discovering three-dimensionality.

MR. EBENDORF: That's exciting to hear you say that because that's why, when we have that dimensional and that tactile and that odor and that sensibility of taking the object, the ceramic bowl or the woven piece of fabric and to not only pleasure the eye visually of its color or of what – of its image, but to handle the piece and to feel the knots, or to feel the glaze or the roughness of that surface, and to have the dimensionality or to be able to walk visually and physically with my hand around the object, how that, again, illuminates the history; it illuminates the culture. It brings me to wanting to go to Africa or brings me to want to know more about this particular period of time.

So, yes, when I'm looking at a slide – and we grow up primarily in our educational context of a piece of paper with copy on it that takes you to another part of the world or takes you to a philosopher's thought, but the richness of sitting across the table and having a cup of tea or red wine with the scholar and to catch his or her nuances and body language, how that enriches the journey.

Yesterday I overheard you talking to the student as you were walking through about the object and the three-dimensional presence versus the flat screen, of the slide on the screen or the computer screen, and the sensibility of the texture, the odor and the hand on the object. And it does become – and my world is about my hands and my eyes. They are my tools. I mean, I just happened to pick up a hammer versus the pencil, but it's the hand, the eyes that help me navigate, or help me bring my thoughts into dimensionality or into a dimension.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Also I think hands and eyes are not only tools but they're also organs of intelligence. I mean, people who handle things, they have – it may not be something that we're used to talking about easily in Western culture because we think about the brain as being the seat of intelligence, but that's a really limited way of understanding how you bring – how you bring some kind of organizing force to the world. Something that creates – you take something random out there and you make it organized, you create it, you make it into something aesthetic, you make it into something beautiful. And artists use their eyes and they reprocess materials to how they touch them, what they know about the textures, what they understand about the structure of a three-dimensional object, and then they reorganize those materials and give them back to us. So there is a lot of intelligence in the hands, I think.

I'm just making a connection here, and you can tell me if I'm right or wrong, but you always talk about how you were so athletic when you were a kid and then in high school, and I think, you know, there's the body intelligence in athletics as well. You know, how do you pitch? How do you get that ball to sail across just the right arc and hit its mark?

MR. EBENDORF: When you talk about body intelligence, particularly – I have to think about that sweaty body when I was wrestling, and the sense of – because it's one on one, and you're engaged in physical contact, or combat, but a lot of that is about balance and feeling where the other person is, on the right side, the left side, the balance of that, and your quick move to move around and grab the ankle and to upset the person. But it's just that physical contact and that sense of that being able to touch.

And I think about that sense of hand and materials, and because my world is very much about what I pick up, and as I'm walking down the street or walking in the woods and I pick something up, I'm not only seeing it but I'm actually sometimes putting it to my nose and smelling it, or breaking off a part of it and seeing what the texture is – you know, how strong is the material?

So, assembling that emotion and that sense of sensibility is far – a world apart from reading copy on a piece of paper. And you used the word intelligence, and I think that, particularly here in the West, we think of intelligence by disseminating what we read and what we gather by eye and by what we read and retain and spew back out or bring back out verbally.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And also in math.

MR. EBENDORF: But my world is very much – not opposite, but my world is very much about my hand and the object – the dimension – the fiber of the object, and then I recreate that – or bring that language together in an object.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I love the way you describe the wrestling experience, and I'm making a connection with a phrase that you used with me in another interview in another context, and you talked about how when you were working metal – you called it "making love to the metal," and that's not a combat situation but it's still this intense interaction. I'm wondering if you see connections between working of metal and the wrestling for example.

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah. I mean, to – [End tape one.] – to – for example, I'll go to the metal arena that when I'm riveting something and drilling holes and finding the right wire to go into that – or particularly in soldering where I've set up the assemblage of the piece and to solder you need heat and you need to have the metal clean and so you're working with all these parts to assemble them and get them in the right position. Then you bring the

flux to it and then you put your solder where you want to place it and in comes the heat and you're bringing up the temperature, and you know that the solder's going to melt at a certain temperature but you don't have a thermometer there.

You don't have a thermometer telling you that now it's getting hotter and hotter but it's visually and you're watching and you're kind of pumping, you're kind of watching that. And then as the – as your getting to these – and your eyes are telling you through the color – the way the metal's changing color-wise and what the flux is doing, the flux is watery. It's just – it's just there and then all of a sudden the water is burned out or evaporated out and it starts getting the chalky white. And then the chalky white then turns to this glassy transparent. And again, you're knowing the thermometer's going up and you're sitting there watching and hoping that you've judged everything properly.

And then as it reachs that temperature where – when the solder – where the solder is going to now melt and make the union between the joints that you're trying – and it's like this sexual, this wonderful flow of this white line moving around through the traveling – where you wanted to go, you've – I've nailed it. Everything was done exactly like I wanted. And to watch that white line, the solder line, move through the – through the journey, it is like "Wow, look at" – and all of a sudden your body language goes back down and things are now cooling off.

And so there is this sensibility in taking it to the wrestling match where you've got this body contact and the sweat and you're slimy and whatever, and then all of a sudden you slip out from underneath his armpit because you've been quick and you've caught him off balance and you've made that escape. And you've – you gain a point because you've escaped or done the – made the right move.

So the combinations are real in the sense that there is a – there's a moving towards that event and judging and trying to put the right combination together and then making the right move. And, for example, on my bench if I'm working I – all of a sudden I've thought I'd prepared and making the right move and the thing burns up and the wire melts and there's a hole in the piece of metal, I look, I go didn't – didn't call it right. I made the wrong – I made the wrong decision.

But it's all about I made that decision and, you know, the workbench – I've often wondered if I'm – it's all – you know, that workbench is like a small world and I have total control of that and it's my call. And if I make the wrong decision I might burn the piece or doesn't fit, and it's not about, you know, dealing with a committee and negotiating the right price or negotiating the right kind of deal, having my hidden agendas and if I'm going to be able to make that happen. But when I'm – it's just pretty honest. It's between me and my decision making with these materials.

And I've often wondered if – how that plays in, if I'm a person who wants that kind of control and this is one way I get this control is in my little world, in this capsule doing my creative dance. I don't think I've found an answer but I've oftentimes brought that up to myself as a question about is it about control and is that because you don't – you can put your family, you can put everything else out there during the day – responsibilities – on hold and you're here with your – with your dance. You're here making love to what you enjoy doing and for that moment in time or for that day or for that ongoing project I'm bliss. I'm in this – I'm in this world of my own and challenged both creatively and technically.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Why do you ask yourself that question about whether – why are you bothered by the issue of whether it's about control or not?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that – I think this could go back to an – it's going to bounce back to an educational experience. It was a – there was a certain period of time as a teacher – and this was in the mid 70s – where I began to wonder and I also – I was going to therapy, I also began to – I began to ask myself am I a teacher – is this about control? Am I such a sick puppy that I need to have this – I can walk into this room and say, "Blue," and everybody will work with blue, and I'll say, "Now go left," and everybody will go left because I'm asking them to do this.

Is that about – so I was asking myself am I – you know, is this a world that – you know, am I afraid to be outside here and to take on all these other – all these other things? Because you look at teaching and it – it's interesting the psychological game or the psychological behavior that goes on there. I mean, you are a very controlling factor and this group of people is looking for your leadership. So I can give them whatever recipe and ask them to follow it. Like Pavlov's dogs they're going to travel – follow that maze and then end up at the end where – where the – where the document will tell them to.

And I began to ask myself the question – and I think maybe that's where I began to change my teaching habits to a sense where it wasn't so much about a formula and it wasn't so much about giving a hand out to the – or a hand out where I wanted them to go. I would give them enough of the recipe but not all the recipe and they'd say, "But I – what do you really want?" I'd say, "What I want you to do is I want you to find your way and make a decision and be responsible for it when we would discuss it. But don't" – "Do you want – do you want us to make

the ring hollow or do you want us to" – I said, "Make it solid if you want, just be responsible."

But the craftsmanship, do it well and if – and you know, if you're going to go over the edge and do a sloppy job, dammit! Do a really sloppy job. Don't mess with my head. But let's talk about responsibilities and let's talk about – because I want you to find your language.

So I think that when that educational thing – and if that goes back to this about control, but I've often – and why do I ask myself about that today in working at my bench? Because I'm in – I'm probably the happiest in my world when I'm in my workshop working and it's because I'm very isolated and I work very much alone. I have long periods of time alone and it's a sanctuary. It's like my temple and I can, you know, put music on, I can light candles and have incense and I'm surrounded by the things that I love and that – that nurtures my creative dance or creative journey.

And so I – anyway, I look at the workbench because sometimes when you're at the – for a jeweler, that becomes a pretty small world and, you know, my parameter looking out five yards to the left or right, I need to be right there or else I'll lose where I'm headed.

So – but I think when I'm talking about control I think back of that earlier time in the '70s when I began – I was in therapy beginning to ask questions like that about – you know, about what the world I was participating in and about education, about teaching. And maybe it was a time that, you know – then those questions come about to some people, maybe they don't. And I'm sure there were other things going on too. I mean, therapy is something that has been rich for me to experience. It was uncomfortable at times and I was also kind of quiet under the radar but now looking back and realizing that a lot of – a lot of growth came from those – from those times and those hours.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What made you decide to go into therapy?

MR. EBENDORF: Probably relationship struggles in the sense of being better understood and sharing time with people, with a wife and with – and also the educational questions. And taking – taking to – taking on certain responsibilities maybe that I had cared to – not to address and maybe not having the strength to pull that together myself, and I was told by others that this was maybe one way to face those demons or to be a part of that and to scrape away layers – why you behave the way you behave.

So, you know, I – and it – and it does reveal – it does bring you to some very interesting realizations about yourself and looking in the mirror and be able to look in the mirror and look at yourself and be comfortable with what you see, and also realizing that, you know, when that – when that demon raises his head you're aware of it or when that challenge is there and you're aware of it. If you go to the left you really find yourself unhappy and off-center. If you realize the temptation or the challenge to be better equipped to make the right decision. And I've made a lot of wrong decisions but, you know, it's because I didn't make the right turn, I took the left turn instead and then have to work my way back out of that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So this period of time when you're reevaluating your life and your relationship with responsibilities and making these decisions about changing your classroom strategies with your students – and I thought it was interesting that you were asking them to examine their own responsibilities vis à vis their work at that time as well. I'm wondering did you think back at all to your own experience – we haven't used the word mentors but have – did you think back at all to those educational figures that you had in your own past who modeled for you how you behave in the classroom?

I'm just – I'm just wondering – for you to think about because we talked about Fabian Wolf – I don't know if you'd count her as a mentor – and then Robert Montgomery and Carlyle Smith. I mean, who would you label as your mentors. And now, with the distance of time, did they do a good job and are – did you aspire to be the kind of mentor that they were for you, or you have a different stamp that you put on that role?

MR. EBENDORF: I think there's a lot of categories in that question, but let me – let me –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.] Sorry!

MR. EBENDORF: – let me – let me buttonhole a couple things –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The poor interviewee unpacks the question! [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: Let me buttonhole a couple of them that I can – can put in context. Let me go to Carlyle. You're right that I haven't mentioned much about the word mentors and exactly pinning that down, but Carlyle Smith, who was the head of the metal program and the person who I had a lot of contact with. And I – and oftentimes when I talk with other former friends that also had time with Carlyle we used to laugh about how on a certain day during the week it would be our turn to go get donuts and coffee and go to his office, and of course we

treated. He didn't buy. We treated so we knew we had to have money in our pocket the day that we – we'd get our number called.

But we'd go get coffee and come back and sit and just sit in his office and talk about the work we were doing, but he never – he never pushed us one way or the other. He never – it was more of a fireside chat. It was more of a – we didn't talk about life. We just – we ate donuts, drank our coffee, had the work on the table. He didn't – it was just this kind of conversation but it was not about the design of things, that I remember anyway. It wasn't – it was just that we knew sometime during the week we would go there and do that.

But what he was able to do, he created an environment for us to do our work and to bring as many experiences to our educational enlightenment as he could. At that time we didn't have guest – a lot of guest artists to come in to do a workshop. He didn't think worldly about much more. He thought – as far as we – that I knew about was Kansas City, Missouri or Kansas City, Kansas and maybe the "Wichita National" because we all applied to that. But we didn't get catalogs, we didn't – it wasn't that flow of information. We had a metal guild that we would come together and do things, but it was a pretty low-key studio. But he had good staff working with him, other teachers that, you know, worked with the program.

Now, in that program was Robert Montgomery – also taught a metal class, but I'm going to shift now to another, I would say, mentor like Carlyle Smith. Now, you know what's interesting? Carlyle Smith is what? Probably 91 or so today, and he and I still talk on the phone. And he's getting ready to have an exhibition of his work – it might be the last one because he is getting frailer and frailer at – in Topeka, Kansas at the Mulvane on Washburn campus [Mulvane Art Museum of Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas]. But we still stay in touch and – by phone, not by letter anymore but by phone.

Robert Montgomery, who's passed away. When I think about mentors I think about the richness that he gave to his class and I was one who sucked that up. He would start his morning design classes by reading from *Time* magazine. He would read an article – he would start – he would choose an article and he would read it. He said, "You as people who are in the creative field, who think you're or whatever, you should know what's going on around the world around you so that you can contextualize – you can bring this into things that you're doing." And he would read an article about some place in another world. He would read the section about art. He'd pick out an article, he'd read it.

But I can remember him opening the class by reading out of *Time* magazine and before we actually started on the design project of the week or whatever the assignment was. And what he shared – what he brought forth was the importance of the bigger – the bigger picture, and he was good at criticism. He was good at looking at the metalwork or looking at the design work and talking about proportions and so forth. So he was more hard-nosed in a sense of getting us to talk about criticism and about the work we were doing.

But I look at him as – again, he was the person who said, "Bring me themes and let me talk to you about them." He also opened his house on Sunday afternoons. We knew if we wanted to go for dinner we could all come and put money in the pot and someone would go out and get the pasta and the hamburger and so forth and we would all cook together. And who came there – who came there were the hardcore shakers that were the graduate students that were in graphic design and textiles and ceramics. They were the hardcore young men and women that are – today are still very active in the field.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Who were some of those people that you remember?

MR. EBENDORF: There was a Russ and Dorothy Deanna who – who were both graphic designers. There was also a gentleman who – industrial design – but they – they were people that went on and made a mark in the field. Some were educators and some were in the field of publications and design field. But it was a place – it was a haven where we could come and there was jazz music and there was food –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It has a real family to it –

MR. EBENDORF: It did.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – that really jumps out.

MR. EBENDORF: And it was not Bohemian but it was where we could come and just be who we wanted to be.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Did Robert Montgomery – did you feel he pushed you in any particular direction in terms of design vocabulary or did he pretty much give you free reign?

MR. EBENDORF: Open.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: Free reign. But seemed to be very broad in his sensibilities of if you were working in graphic design or working in textiles or ceramics – so he seemed worldly. He seemed like a person that had – he was a Korean veteran coming back and he had been damaged in the war. He had some – he was going to VA hospitals every other week for therapy, and –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: When you say damaged what do you mean?

MR. EBENDORF: He had been facially damaged by shrapnel and also in his back. So he had a lot of physical pains that, you know, you wouldn't know. He was – his face was scarred rather severely and – but, you know, once you got to know him and so forth that – that didn't make sense. I mean, you didn't notice that, but I remember his tear ducts – he would – his tears would – he would constantly have tear ducts where they would be watering. But he would go to the – over to the VA hospital for physical therapy work and he was on disability type of thing, but he – but he seemed to bring – he seemed to bring the outside world – the art world, the social concerns into the classroom where some of the other teachers were just hardcore about what they were good at and what they were teaching.

And so – and Desa Bush, the lady who I experienced as a freshman in the nature museum drawing class. I mean, she was this long-legged drink of water with this white hair all piled up on her head, and said – you know, and walked around like a crane and around the tables looking at each – as we were working. And she would sit up in front because usually it seemed like we were there at lunchtime or 10ish – at 10:00 in the morning we'd hear the rustle of these little sacks. We'd look up and she'd be eating away raisins and then the pecans and, you know – and then she would eat the oranges. So she was just this health nut probably that was – but what a wonderful – she was very [inaudible].

So there's – there are three people who are extremely memorable to me in my educational journey and that – and my – and my thesis advisor was Margie Whitney who – Margie was – Margie Whitney was the head of the design department and she was the person who I sat with and would go over the thesis material that I was preparing from that sense.

So the educational thing the – thinking back at the KU time, it didn't seem to be as – it didn't seem to be as formalized as I see the art department that I'm in now – you know, people who have hand outs for every class. And there was syllabuses, I'm sure, at that time but it didn't seem as driven. Here – you know, nowadays in many of the universities you have all these syllabus, you have to turn them in every year to be approved and looked at and also – even so much where some departments have you actually – let me see the syllabus for the whole – you know, every project you give to kind of be sure that everybody's on the same chart and so forth.

And so it's – I think it's a little bit – and that has a lot to do with the computer world too, I think, and in the sense –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And also departments justifying their existence to other echelons in the university system.

MR. EBENDORF: The number count and –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, all of that.

MR. EBENDORF: – you know, if I can do it – a general art history class on art appreciation you can put 150 people in that lecture hall versus a weaving studio where you have 10 people to 12 people. And the administrative say, "You know, we like the numbers because that's – that's – the dollars come in on that end. So you're running a class with 10 people? You know, I don't quite get the connection here."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But you were fortunate enough to have mentors who really left you to your own devices. I mean, they seemed to give you just what you needed and let you have free reign – to use the phrase we used earlier – to find your own way. Or maybe you even as a young person had the wisdom to select out people who would give you that freedom.

MR. EBENDORF: You know, and that goes back to the thing, the sadness of me being in graduate school at the same undergraduate school where I knew – I knew the support – I knew who I enjoyed working with or who I – who I excelled in and I knew the ones – the areas, the teachers that I didn't do well with. And so I, of course, chose the ones that I – that embraced me and from that sense. And I really do feel that if I would have gone away to another university for graduate school I do think that I would have grown so much more, I think, because I am so avidly against here – I mean, many years later and the three different universities I've been it, I've – I'm the first one to throw a red light up in a person's return to do graduate school –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Sure.

MR. EBENDORF: – at the same – at the same group. And sitting there and counseling the students – say "But I

don't have the money to go – you know, that's why I want to stay here again." I know – I said "But, you know, if you stay here you won't learn and you won't – you won't be challenged because you know the game."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, it seems that at the end of your MFA experience you took the big leap and really got yourself out of the situation because that was when you went to the Fulbright.

MR. EBENDORF: Right.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So maybe we can talk a little bit about that experience.

MR. EBENDORF: The – the Fulbright definitely – someone says, "You know, what was different about the Fulbright years – educational experience than the University of Kansas that you celebrate so much and speak so – that they did such a good job?" Well, the Fulbright took me to an academy – to the Oslo School of Art and Design and those teachers were – some of the teachers were people who worked in industry for a factory, for a major firm and spent – to the government – the state would pay them to – a salary to come to the academy to teach two days a week.

For example, in this silversmithing class, the – in the workshop there was a man who was like the technician who came two days a week to be in the workshop. And I didn't speak fluent Norwegian but with my hands and the grunting and groaning, the drawings and knowing the tools and the materials I did well, but I could have done so much better if I would have been able to have been fluent in the Norwegian.

However, in the workshop I was building a – making coffeepot and I was getting ready to do some soldering which was very, very complex for me. And the students say "Well, go to" – the man's name was Malum – Malum, who was the technical wizard in the workshop. They said, "Malum's the best solderer in all of Norway." I went big deal, best solderer, you know – so it came time and I was trying to fit these – these hinges into the coffeepot and getting ready to the soldering and Malum came, looked over at my shoulder because he walked the workshop and he was assisting – he was a technical assistant.

And he saw me going over to start to do the soldering and he came up and he tapped on the back and in Norwegian – I couldn't understand exactly except I knew that he wanted to show me something and so I gave him the torch. So he stood there and soldered these hinges into place and as he did this I stood there, and his hands and his knowledge of what was going on was like a surgeon doing open-heart surgery with one eye shut. And the solder and the – you know, it was like his fingers were right there with the red hot – moving things around where it wanted it, and when he got done and hung the torch up and walked away I said to myself yeah, he's the best solderer in all of Norway.

And so at this school we had this opportunity to – I mean, that's where I really felt I got honed and my edge got sharpened and I got put in my place about the craftsmanship because I was working with men and women who craftsmanship was the pride of their world and this is what they had passionately chosen to do, and they wanted to passionately show you or be there with you to nurture you and build you to bring that same pride. So the Fulbright brought me into sharpening the knife and realizing that if I didn't do it right, go back and re-do it. If you burn something up, that's okay, just re-fabricate that piece and do it again.

And so the Fulbright brought that into focus and the Fulbright also brought into focus where like we would go to the museum to the drawing room – they had a drawing room or a laboratory, a laboratory. We would go in, there were drawing tables with lights and our professor who wore a white coat, we were – and there are cases all around the room with glass and big block doors and we would be asked which object do you want? And you'd walk around like going shopping in a supermarket and you'd say, "Gee, I like that reliquary, that gold and silver with gemstones." Or, "Gee, I like that chalice," or maybe it was a knife and fork and spoon.

And I could say, "I want that one, number 704" and he would take his clipboard and write down my name and 704, take this big key and open this door, this cabinet door and swing it open, and reach in and give me this artifact, this object. And I would take it back to my table and I would live with that object for the next five – five weeks and – or the next – during that time. And what we would do – we would be charged responsibility of investigating the object that we chose and then to draw it on the piece of paper, draw it to – with precision.

Like, for example, when I finished with that drawing – or when we the student would finish that drawing, we could take that drawing to the factory and ask them to make this piece. And so when we would finish the drawings he would come up with his calipers and the object would still be sitting there, and he would take the calipers and do this, go to the side, look at the hinge, do this, look at the spoon, make the measurement. So he would make a mark or a grade or an approval on how exact we were able to pursue the investigation. And I had never had that gift or that surprise and to be able to be that close to, and that serious about, the investigation.

So, again, now where does that key into? It keys into Desa Bush and the nature of museum drawing class –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: – where we were asked to draw that orange peel – look at that orange peel and draw that orange with graphite on that flat piece of paper so it looked like I was looking with a magnifying glass at an orange peel even though it was in graphite. So –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So when you – I'm sorry.

MR. EBENDORF: No.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I was going to ask, so you were given this assignment you did consider it a gift. You didn't kind of buck a little bit at having to do it with precision?

MR. EBENDORF: No, I never – and I think that's why the museum – because it was in the museum and that's why all of a sudden the museum began to take on this new persona of wisdom and history of my – of my men and women before me that had made this thing. But I also found out in this experience at the museum, and visiting the factories, et cetera, that all of a sudden many times these objects were made by teams.

They were not like – I came from an experience here in the U.S. at that time where, you know, the jeweler – that the university jeweler or the student – the jeweler would go to the studio and make the – do the drawing, show it to the client, come back and make the piece of jewelry, or draw the coffeepot and go to the studio and start raising and put the handle together out of wood and this and that. And we would make the piece totally by ourselves, but in the – in the European experience all of a sudden I realized that there was a person who was the raiser, there was a person who was the chaser, there was a person who did the engraving.

So in the Scandinavian workshops many time there was a, you know – there was a gift, there was a talent for – and I learned that more now when the Tiffany Grant came about when I was actually working in a small workshop and I can talk more about how that did become very departmentalized. I mean, all of us could solder, all of could hammer and so forth, but when it came time to make the spoons or when it came time to make the lockets or the boxes with hinges there was the guy who knew how to make the boxes, and there was the guy who knew how to make the spoons, or there was a lady who knew how to put the enameling – you know, make that all work.

So I've had that window opened up about the, you know – in the medieval workshops oftentimes there were the expertise people that were the young men who were the apprentice who – you know, who did the charcoal and got the forge ready and did the – did just only the hammering and then someone else would do the detailing.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What other differences were there between – did you see between the American system – either of education or of production – and the Scandinavian?

MR. EBENDORF: In the academy the school was connected to the museum and even though at the University of Kansas there was a museum but we never had the opportunity to, you know – but so at the European experience, particularly the Fulbright, it seemed like that they – there was a workshop, there was also technical people who came to be in the workshop so many days a week that were coming from industry. Our professors were also men and women who we could pick up certain catalogs and see pieces they had designed: candlestick holders, bowls, vegetable dishes, flatware that they – that were in production in the major silver houses in that town. The David Anderson Firm was one and another very well known was the Tostrip. David Anderson and the Tostrip company, these were the two – they were like the Cartier's and the Tiffany's of New York but they were the major silver and jewelry houses.

And many of our faculty, you know, had – were on retainers, drawing on paper pieces to be made in the factory or be made in – for the firm. They were no longer doing the work, but when the drawings were approved they would be bought and they would go to the workshop – the drawings would go to the workshop. And the silversmith that you don't even know, he would start or she would start raising the vessel and then it would go from there to the repoussé and chaser to do the ornamentation on the surface.

So the Norwegian Fulbright began to open up the realization of the bigger picture of the – of the – of my history or the history that I was a part of.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Now, how did it – how did it work? Did you go there and then you were given specific – you worked in the workshop but then were you given specific assignments of pieces that you were supposed to produce yourself? How – what was – what was the goal of your time?

MR. EBENDORF: On the Fulbright?

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, on the Fulbright.

MR. EBENDORF: The Fulbright did have structure. We spent the first half of the – of my experience of that year we spent at school but then also at the different museums. We went to the Folk Museum and looked at old Norwegian objects and we went there to draw and to – we would draw sitting in front of a case, trying to duplicate what the glass in front of us – the object we had chosen. Then in the afternoon we'd have what we called investigation where we would look for creative ideas, design, craft, and materials. So we could anywhere in the museum and draw with colored ink looking at something that gave us inspiration and we could stylize that how we wanted to.

In the workshop, we had assignments. We had assignments in the workshop – I mean, at school. Like I had the drawing class that to design flatware – I mean, knives and forks and spoons – too – we might have another assignment to design a coffeepot and teapot and a tray. This would be drawings and we would make also the drawings. We also would make in plasterline clay representations of some of the things – you know, like what the handle looked like or what the spout would look like in dimension.

And in the workshop – meaning where we actually were sawing, filing, and solder – we would – we did enameling pieces. We would design in the – on paper what we wanted to make and then we would go to the workshop, and the workshop – our professor might walk through but that's where the technicians would come from the factories, the technician would be there. If I was in the enameling studio there would be an enameling technician there that – I'd have my drawings and I'd have to sit there and do my sawing but if I had enameling questions about, you know, what – what color goes – matures more than the other one she was or he was there to help me with that.

If I was making a bowl in the workshop and I had the drawing and I had purchased the silver and the stakes and the hammers, I'd be hammering away – kneeling, hammering away but the technician would be walking around and if I had a question – he'd say, "No, not that hammer. Use this hammer." If I needed help to solder the bowl on I could go to Malum and say, "Malum, you know, I'm trying – how do I – how do I hold this down?"

So there was that – so that was the difference – it was just ratcheted up versus where at the University of Kansas it seemed more relaxed and not – there was a different attitude going on.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It seems like a really different social environment too because did – I mean, were there the after – after hours parties? I mean, what was the social life like?

MR. EBENDORF: The social life was definitely not with the faculty, the – or at least from my experience. The social – being a foreigner, being a Fulbright and some of the students – well, also too it was very departmentalized in the sense that I was there to be in the metal program and I was in the metal program every day. And I didn't do ceramics, I didn't – I didn't really venture – I tried to venture in because I was curious but I – my umbrella, the world that I lived in was in the metal world. When I walked in that's the rooms I went to and the courses that they had.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Where did you live?

MR. EBENDORF: I lived up the – very close to the Holmenkollen ski jump, about a half hour out of Oslo by the train. You would take from Nationaltheater [Nasjonaltheatret], from the center of town where all of the trains left – I took a trolley car up the mountain to – and on the Holmenkollen line and I lived in this wonderful cottage that hung on the side of the mountain, and my stop that I got off was the next to the last stop on the Holmenkollen line.

And the cottage overlooked or opened up into the valley, and so it was very – very beautiful, the living accommodations that – and I – and who owned the house – it was a bungalow. And it was owned by a family that the husband was a world-renowned geologist because, you know, Norway was a major, major geology world for so many scholars who were geologists to come to be there to study their world of geology because of the snow, and the mountains and so forth – and the oil and all. So geology – he was a geologist and world renowned and they had a guest house that was a rental that – I found my way to that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You lived there alone?

MR. EBENDORF: I was there married and had that wonderful year there.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And your wife's name was?

MR. EBENDORF: Susanna. Susanna Springer from Sunburst, Montana.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And when were you – what year were you married?

MR. EBENDORF: Right after – at the end of graduate school, and Susanna and I went on the Queen Mary, matter

of fact –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, really?

MR. EBENDORF: – on the voyage with the Fulbrighters out of New York City to Oslo, Norway and spent the year in Oslo on the Fulbright time.

Something else happened there that I just want to make reference to because it was a very disjointed moment and frightening time and one of great emotions. During that year, it was the year that J.F.K., John F. Kennedy, was assassinated. And I can remember sitting in this little bungalow, both Susanna and I, listening to the wireless – to the radio on the shelf to the BBC getting in English – because we didn't understand Norwegian – getting this report that this had happened, this tragedy had happened. And being totally saddened and also feeling totally disjoined because we were in a foreign place and all we wanted to be was – we wanted to be home, we wanted to be with our family. We wanted to be with our – with our nation, with our – we wanted to be home and we were not, and we were really in this world of – that we didn't really – couldn't communicate that well with.

That morning I had to – I went to school and I can remember going into the school, getting off the train – and, of course, on the train no one knew that I was American. But anyway going into the school and – that morning, and the janitor saw me walking and he came up to me and he gave me this little American flag and some flowers and just said that he was sorry, and just that sense of being totally away from our community and family and listening to this little wireless. So that was something that I oftentimes reflect on of a memory of the sensitivity and sharing and also being in a foreign place at that moment.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, yeah. What a sensitive gesture on his part.

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah, it was.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I mean, to know that that was the right thing to do.

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah, absolutely. And so the Norwegian Fulbright brought me into a hardcore sense of pride in being a craftsman, and it was an honor to – it was like, you know, my son or my daughter – my son didn't go to the gymnasium, to the university but he's a craftsman. He – he learned a trade and I'm proud of it. Or being a person – which I experienced in the Tiffany Grant – where these men and the women would come and sit all day long and solder, solder, solder, but when they finished and punched the clock or got ready to take off their work apron –that they were proud that they had spent the day being a craftsman and being in a profession that they totally celebrated with pride. And not where if I was – if I was a laborer working construction pouring concrete or whatever, you know, and my brother is a lawyer, but there was an honor, there was a pride in being a craftsman.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right, right.

MR. EBENDORF: And that was pretty special to have that environment and realize that – look into that window and realize the status of that presence.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What's the most important piece that you produced during that time?

MR. EBENDORF: I would say the Fulbright would be the coffeepot which is now in the Yale – the Garvan Collection in the Yale Gallery in Hartford. And on the Tiffany Grant it was the wonderful umbrella handle under – the umbrella handle that now is in the – in Philip Hanes' collection in Winston-Salem, the Hanes family. So those are two monumental pieces that came out of those two different periods and visits and educational experiences.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How did you find living in another culture for those – for that extended period of time?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, quickly one of the things that still comes very quickly to the surface and it's about taste. Being in the Scandinavian countries, and particularly in Norway, the wonderful experience of eating their foods and also being introduced – good idea – being introduced to their celebrations and – celebrations and special holidays because they all had, you know – again like our Thanksgiving and Christmas, oftentimes at that table, that family, that grandmother, that mother made a certain pot roast or a certain kind of cream style onions or whatever.

And so the Norwegian experience was that at that their celebration times there were these foods that I've never tasted or cakes and the different cheeses, and so I did enjoy very much the – that experience because I like cooking. I mean, maybe – my grandmother and from that time but today cooking is something that I really enjoy very much and so – [Audio break.] – the taste buds were definitely recharged with new experiences and the preparation of the foods.

Also, too, living, you know – Oslo sits very close to the ocean and so we had times of being – being a flatlander from Kansas all of a sudden being in the Oslo fjord and having time – and all the islands sprinkled around the coast of Norway. That was a first for me to kind of live in that environment. Cross-country skiing and being in a country that winter months were also a time of outdoor activity and sports, and sports being physically the family on the weekends cross-country skiing. Or in the spring, I can remember looking out my window – because we lived on the side of the mountain there, and there was a path that when you got off of the train at our train stop down the road where the house I lived at you would see people walking with their rucksacks on their back Sunday morning.

And I remember the first experience of looking out and seeing this elderly couple standing quietly in the middle of this path looking up at the trees and I couldn't understand. They kept standing, they kept standing. Then finally I put two and two together and what was going on was that they were standing quietly with the sun kissing their face and just standing at the moment, enjoying that – the warmth, the sunshine and that fresh air. And so the outdoors activity was something that – I saw them really as worshippers of the sun and of their environment of nature.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Did anything about – of that sensibility or the pace of life enter into your own work, either at the time or maybe later that you carried – when you carried that experience away, back to the states?

MR. EBENDORF: As a jeweler, I think, it very much embraced the sense of celebration in a sense because it's one of the joys that I find now today is that, you know, making gifts – making a gift – you can talk – if you want to say commission, but it's not uncommon for me to – if I were going to dinner to someone's home or going to weekend festivities, instead of buying a bouquet of flowers I would make a brooch or I would make a pair of earrings and leave them quietly on the nightstand, and with nothing said except maybe a thank you for a nice evening or a thank you for a weekend. So, you know, heightening the moment with celebration and, my goodness, as a jeweler what a wonderful way to do that, making something that you give to a loved one or making something to – in appreciation of a thank you.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You've talked about – well, actually when we were having lunch we were – we were talking about living in another culture and you were saying that you really don't enjoy playing the tourist much. That going to Oslo and actually living in the county was much more your style of getting to know a place rather than bouncing around – you know, it's Wednesday, it must be this city or that city. How did that feel to take root in the city at that point? And then, again, I'm looking ahead toward your next experience in Scandinavia with your Tiffany Grant because you went back again under the same kind of context of taking root in a place.

MR. EBENDORF: Well, we can double dip here because the Fulbright was living in Oslo and the Tiffany Grant – which was such a rich gift to be able to return on, and at that – on the Tiffany Grant returning to a very small island and living in a very small 16th century vision with a moat around it and all stone streets – cobbled streets.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And that town was –

MR. EBENDORF: That was the town of Gamlebyen, Fredrikstad. Fredrikstad, Norway which is down the coast from Oslo and sits on the sea and it was a fortified area because to come up the fjord or up into Oslo you would have to pass through the channels in that area. And so in the early days Fredrikstad was a very guarded fortress to somewhat protect the way into the harbor of the Oslo up the fjord.

But in Oslo it was like living in – you know, in the capital, in the big town but I loved going to the market – going to the market, fresh flowers. There would be snow on the ground and at the market there would still be the fresh tulips that would be flown in from – from Holland or from the hothouses and there would be – buying the eggs all wrapped – and when you'd buy them they'd wrap each egg in a – in paper – in newspaper, and gathering the eggs and the potatoes. And the women – you know, you'd find yourself going to certain stalls because you thought that was the best price or maybe it was a place that greeted me with a smile and knowing that I didn't speak Norwegian fluently. I could – you know, I could draw or I could put the numbers down.

So the city became an unknown but then the joy of discovery, like finding the little restaurant that you might want to sit and have an ale or sit and meet or have a coffee and a cake. So the Oslo time was – I was quite young too and so it was – it was discovery –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How old were you?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, just finishing graduate school so what? Twenty-three, 24? And, you know, my first big outing of living in another place and I couldn't really speak the language or – and also didn't know so much about the currency and it was all new, all new – and making new friends and navigating through that. So there were things about living in the big city that – and taking the train to and from work, riding on the train coming in in the mornings and looking at the houses along the railroad, the train – direction and you'd see people hanging their duvet and hanging their bedding out on the banisters to freshen them up and – A duvet is like a down – a

comforter that you would sleep under with goose feathers and linen sack and filled with the goose feathers, but they would hang the – hang the clothing out to freshen it up because the drycleaning was quite expensive. But – so you'd see racks of – on the line hanging from the windows, clothing that would get freshened and bed sheets and bedding and – to freshen up.

Going to the fish market and all of a sudden being – an array of tables of different kinds of seafoods or fish. So –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So Oslo is a bustling place.

MR. EBENDORF: Bustling – and there was something interesting that you experienced that – you know, because remember now we're getting to a part of the world that in the winter months you had very little daylight and there would be only a certain, maybe an hour to two hours in the early afternoon where you had good strong daylight and then it started getting early dark. So I would go to school in the dark and come home in the dark and I'd be in the academy during the day so there was oftentimes really a kind of loss of what I considered normal daylight and nighttime. It was kind of all blended into a darkness.

At the academy some of the young people that were my classmates – something that was – to me was – you know, you ask a question about socially, et cetera – did I fraternize or socialize much with – did we get to know the teachers that well like maybe we somewhat experience in our American university and colleges. So the faculty – the teachers were very formal. We did not have – I did not have that – that richness of going to their homes and hanging out with them.

But the students would oftentimes – the ones I got to know would say well, Friday night would you come for dinner, you know, after school? After our classes we'd all meet at someone's flat and have dinner and we'd stop and get the beer and the bread and we'd go and maybe I would buy flowers – that was always something very much of a custom, to take either chocolates or flowers. If you had enough money maybe a bottle of red wine but usually on a student budget it was a bouquet of flowers, maybe a flask of ale or definitely a chocolate for – for the host or hostess.

And the big pots of soup. You never ask what was in the soup because the soup really – for the student days really ended up being what was leftover on Monday, what was leftover on Tuesday, then Wednesday. It kept going into that big soup pot and so you'd have all these chunks of maybe this or that but it was so tasty, but you never really quite knew exactly what the soup of the day would be because it was not a soup of the day it as a soup of the week!

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Soup of the week. [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: But wonderful and then you'd sit and you'd talk and you'd – you know, student life and that was enjoyable hovering in the small apartment in that sense.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How did –

MR. EBENDORF: In the winter months – in the winter months because oftentimes the snow and the rain and the slush experiencing – if you're standing on the street corner and – at the light and the traffic – because, you know, you're in the city now and there's the traffic. The lorries are moving down the street quite – if you were standing there and a car passing by you hit a chuckhole – which there were often – up splashed the water all over your clothing. If you got the license tag you could turn that in and that individual would be responsible for cleaning – for the cleaning of your drenched and mucky wardrobe.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Now that's a just society. [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: That was – yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So how did the Tiffany Grant come about? And that took you to a very different small town experience.

MR. EBENDORF: When I returned from the Fulbright, fortunately – and this was an interesting happening but maybe we'll go there, but about how did I get this first academic job –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, sure. To fill in that –

MR. EBENDORF: Well, let's go there and then I'll go to how – when in Norway – the year was so wonderful and so full of new and unexpected – but along about mid-year, after the first of January I began to realize I'd be going to home coming – you know, for the fall and I had no job. So I began to write – I took the dictionary and looked in the back of the dictionary. There was names of universities and colleges. So I – you know, I xeroxed my resume, whatever I had and I took black and white photographs and xeroxed them. Anyway, so I sent letter after letter introducing myself to – just dart throws of universities and colleges inquiring about an academic position

teaching design or craft or my area now is metal.

Anyway, of course being out of the loop of things, you know, I was really unconnected. So I was really shooting in the dark. Nothing was happening. Each envelope was quite thick and quite expensive on a Fulbright budget of monies. But I sent a letter to a friend, a friend from graduate school – ceramics, teaching in Florida, Charles Fager. He now was teaching as a beginning faculty member at the University of Florida or – anyway, in Florida.

He wrote to me and said, "Bob, nice to hear from you" – because I was writing to some of my former graduate classmates – and he said, "By the way" – he said, "I know you're going to be coming back and you asked about do I know about any work." He says, "At Stetson University I hear that the man who is teaching ceramics who also" – because it's a faculty of only the chairman and one full-time professor who is leaving and, I guess, an art historian. "But the second faculty member is going to be moving on and I told the gentleman who's the chairman of the art department, Fred Messersmith that you might be writing to him because I was going to him because I was going to tell him about your job opening – about the job opening."

So I get the name Fred Messersmith, Stetson University, Deland, Florida, School of Art. I send a letter off and I hear nothing, and so then I turn around by a letter again, write to Charles Fager in Florida, say, "You know, I've heard nothing," and so he, Charles Fager, picked up the phone and calls Stetson, speaks to Fred Messersmith and said, "Did you get Bob's resume and letter?" And Fred says, "Well, you know, I don't remember the name. I don't remember the name, but I did get something from Norway now that you bring it up," but he said, "How can I hire – I mean, I don't even know this person. He's in Norway and so I threw it in the wastebasket. But maybe – what can you tell me, Charles?" Because he and Charles knew each other. So Charles more or less formally introduced me by telephone, so Fred Messersmith then hires me totally sight unseen, sends a letter to me and says, "I would like to offer you this job." And the reason I think about this is again it's about – you know, in graduate school I tell my students whom I now enjoin – who are working on their Master's, I say to them realize that probably your best blue chip, your best investments at the moment are the people who are going – who are your classmates at the moment, the people you are here with at 1:00 in the morning and at 2:00 in the morning you argue with, you fight with. Sometimes they become your lovers and so forth.

They are the men and women who are going to be your best connections and best conduit of information for the next three or four years after graduate school because I, one of your major professors – when you leave there's someone else taking your place and I will be nurturing and working with them to help them get through the maze. So remember that in graduate school – I'm talking now currently to my students – that, you know, your best investments are the people you're working with right now because who's going to pick up the phone and call you and tell you about a job or that – a commission or something that's going on or a competition. It's going to be those people who have enjoyed time with you, such as Charles Fager. He was the man who said, "Bob, by the way, this job, you might want to look into it."

So Fred brought me back to America from the Fulbright with a job and position in Deland, Florida at Stetson. After two years in Stetson, at the end of – in the middle of the second year – I enjoyed my time there. I taught a little bit of everything: art – I mean, art education, printmaking, basic design, ceramics, jewelry. So it was – you know, we were a two-man – two-person department with a guest art historian who's only there half a year.

But I was sitting in the library and I happened to be looking at art – *Art in America* and there was this notice about the application deadline for the Tiffany Foundation, Tiffany Grants and this year they were focusing on the crafts – or this was the year for crafts applications. And remember when I talked about the experience of trying for the Fulbright? Well, I thought, you know, why don't I go ahead and write up and make an application to the Tiffany Foundation? So I did that and going back to my papers that I had saved, my application from the Fulbright, re-reading that grant proposal and my statement of purpose, taking that and tuning that and shifting my thinking a bit. I had grown a bit.

I had another idea in mind and so I proposed a project to the Tiffany Foundation in reference to why I wanted to return to Norway, and the strength of that application was that I would like to have the opportunity to go to Norway and work in a small goldsmith shop so that – as a worker, not as a designer. But as a hands-on, day by day soldering, filing, buffing – because I felt that would not only enrichen me but I would be able to enrichen the academic – the student in the classroom because I could talk not only from a one-of-a-kind maker, as a studio jeweler, but I could also give them some insight what it would be like if you actually had the job opportunities to work in a small workshop, production work every day.

And how you make, you know – how that world is so different than I being a one- of-a-kind artist or you being a one-of-a-kind maker where working on a production line or working on a group of pieces that someone else has drawn and you're making the work. So I thought it would enrichen my academic offering, my teaching vocabulary, and give it of a deeper – a deeper pitch.

So the Tiffany Grant did accept and gave me the green light and the opportunity to return to Norway, and I went

to a small workshop in Fredrikstad – in the old town of Fredrikstad at the Plus – like plus, like negative and positive – at the Plus Center. In Norwegian, Plus Centrum. And this was a group of studios. There was a glassblower, ceramics, there was textile, printing, there was a goldsmith, there was a weaving studio. These five studios had a main showroom in the center of town which was called the Rosingor, or The Center.

All of the work that we were doing in these different workshops – when the tourists came you could go to The Center and have the tour guide meet you. The tour guide would take you to all the different workshops and walk you through and speak to you in French or Italian or in English and introduce the goldsmith shop. Then they'd walk down the cobblestone street to the other building and go into the ceramic workshop, and then to – around. Take you back to the Centrum and in the Centrum was a big gallery, a showroom, salesroom where you could then purchase something from your visit. And so it was modeled around the creative studios, also a very savvy concept in marketing, and a very savvy concept in tourism.

So it was a rich time living and we should talk more about living in a small village versus living in a big city such as Oslo.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski interviewing Robert Ebendorf at his home in Greenville, North Carolina. It is April 16th, 2004 and I'm conducting this interview for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number three.

Bob, we've had a break of a few hours and when we closed off our conversation earlier today we were talking about your experience in Fredrikstad or Fredrikstad when you went there on your Tiffany Grant. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your experiences of working in the small craft studio and what you took away from that.

MR. EBENDORF: The uniqueness of that experience was it was a small workshop and it did production pieces and it also had special commission challenges or commissions that came to it. But the richness of being there was I was a worker and I wore a blue coat, went to work at 6:00 in the morning, and on my workbench would be, you know, soldering 200 cufflinks or to forge silver bracelets for production to be sent to Oslo, to the market there at the shop that they had in Oslo. So –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So this really was just hands on, gritty, in-the-trenches production work?

MR. EBENDORF: It was – it was where I sat as a worker – at the end of the day when I looked down at my workbench – no one came around and said you did a fine job or whatever. I evaluated the end of the day. And it was an opportunity where I saw and felt what it was about to be – the pride of being a craftsman and doing a fine job. And if I burned things up and things didn't work I could see the disaster pieces in the scrap tray, but I could also look and count the numbers that I did successfully.

So it was – it was a part of a team and you would be given an assignment with a timecard and measurements and the formula so you'd know how many pieces of metal to cut and what length to cut it. And if you did every – all the movements properly you would end up with earrings. Or if you did all the movements properly you would end up with a forged bracelet that would then be sent to the polisher in the other room who would polish the piece and prepare it and put it in a little bag and send it – put it on the tray with the other pieces that would be 100 in the order.

If the studio had a special commission – and we did, oftentimes the church would commission a chalice or a set of candlestick holders, and – and then the headmaster would give certain parts of the commission to – one person would build a certain part, another person would make another part, and then the other person would do the soldering and put it together. So I had the opportunity to bring back to America and back to the academic circle, to my students, the vocabulary and the experience – vocabulary meaning being able to speak to them and open another window besides being a one of a kind maker – working with a team, working and being a part of an organization. At the same time, also, I was able to speak about production work a bit more articulate and a bit more understanding. So that experience for the year was bringing home that richness to share.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And that's – the whole experience of doing production work is often one that isn't discussed very much in either undergraduate or graduate programs because it – in the American context there's such a focus on the one-of-a-kind piece or pieces as art songs.

When you came back from the Tiffany Grant experience what was your next move? Where did – where did you go?

MR. EBENDORF: The next move – when I returned there was a job – a new job awaiting for me at University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia to re-build their metal program that had fallen in disarray and to come into a new community of living, as well as – you know a challenge of re-tooling or re-building their metal program. And so that challenge was there but I also came back with that – still that very strong Scandinavian influence of

craftsmanship and high polish using filigree wire work. And many things that I was designing and making had the odor and had the flavor of the Scandinavian footprint.

But it was at that time – and that came into where I would say a pinnacle turnaround or where I hit the wall and things began to shift and in '64 and '65 I began to explore some alternative thinking and, you know, I had felt that I had learned the rules. And why did I start becoming restless? I think part of it was that I needed a new challenge and I was comfortable in the genre of work that I was making. I was working on chains of offices for presidents, and pieces for the church, and high budget commissions that would take maybe two years or a year to complete with going to meetings, discussing drawings and models.

And I also still had that strong influence of the Scandinavia. Was it an albatross around the neck? But I became restless and I began to break rules and began to put, you know, paper with silver, eggshells, old photographs from my photo collection. I had been a person collecting daguerreotypes and tintypes and cyanotypes and photography. Those images I would gather at the flea market but I began to cut them up. Instead of setting stones I would set photographs, embezzle them, and I would take pieces of tin can and pieces of iron wire that I'd find on the street and begin to, you know, use them as – in a goldsmith context of techniques but setting and bringing those for color and also for telling stories because the images evoked a question – was it your family? Or did you know these people? The old piece of bamboo, you know, where did you get this? Have you been in Japan?

And so I began to really become kind of an outlaw and you would have to think, you know, in '64 – '63, '64, '65 making that – taking that kind of turn in America, at the jewelry, it was very radical. Is it was very cutting edge? No, it was just very foreign and very questionable. What was this guy doing? So –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What was the emotional quality of that for you? Because here you are, you're coming out of these really strong experiences, developing this pride in your craftsmanship, and suddenly there's this restlessness. Do you know why that happened?

MR. EBENDORF: I've asked myself that oftentimes and I've been asked that question oftentimes and the – the response and the emotional finger pointing – I think it was that I – I had become comfortable and I wanted – I wanted change. I yearned for a challenge and maybe being – taking that turn I wasn't too maybe sure why I did that but I think I needed to grow. I needed – I needed to be released and I felt that I had permission to do so. And if I had a commission that I wanted to do, I knew how to perform and to deliver the product or the object.

So emotionally, I think, it was restlessness and wanting to be uncomfortable again and to be in an unknown forest and trying to battle my way out and to find a clearing.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And so did you start selecting those new materials because they made you uncomfortable or because they seduced you? Or –

MR. EBENDORF: I think seduction. I think that because it wasn't where – I think they just became a part of my palette and became – the language began to be comfortable and – but using that sense of design and composition and the skill of a hand and the craftsmanship and putting it together. So it seemed very foreign but it also felt comfortable to feel like I was in challenging waters and swimming upstream, shall we say.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And you had yet to experience one more trip to Norway which, in a sense, took you back to some of the earlier experiences. So how – maybe you could talk about that and how that helped you with this new experimental phase you were finding yourself in.

MR. EBENDORF: You know, and that was again connecting the dots. Going back to Frederikstad on the Tiffany Grant – sitting across from me was a young gentleman going through his apprenticeship and then that was in – in the '60s when this experience in Frederikstad. Now, in '78 I get a phone call from, at that time, a friend that had worked across from me in Frederikstad, the young apprentice. He was now on the board of directors for the David – you know, on the David Anderson Firm in Oslo, Norway. And the David Anderson Firm was 125 years of age and he was in the – in the big decision making – on the board –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What was his name?

MR. EBENDORF: – and – Kjell O. Langthon called and said, "Bob, you know, our friendship is rich and we've stayed in touch and how would you like to come and – I know you're on sabbatical leave this year because I have followed your – I've followed your work by those letters you've sent and the announcements. Would you like – would you entertain the idea to be our guest as a guest designer and come and – to the company and design and be on the design team?" So I said, "Yes." I went.

Why? Again, because I thought what was it like to be a full-time designer? I mean, I'm a maker that draws the ideas and thinks the concepts and sits down and carries it out, you know. So I'm the one-man band but what

would it – what it is like to sharpen pencils all day and work – look at white paper and draw my ideas out and present my ideas and what – I don't know. Just think what I could bring back to my students, to have that also as part of the – part of the recipe in this educational exchange as a teacher to the studio and to the students.

So I went and spent a half a year wearing a white coat from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon, sharpening pencils, coming in on Monday morning with an assignment on a piece of Xerox paper. All seven of us were to design coffeepot, teapot, and cream and sugar and a tray and the price range that it must be marketed at would be such and such of – amount of money. So for a week – for the four days we would draw, we would make paper models. We would – some people would go to the woodshop and cut out shapes and spray paint them with silver and – well, however we wanted to design and present our ideas because on Thursday – on Friday morning we would have a staff meeting, a meeting where all the designers all would come together, do the pin board, present our drawings.

And who was there at the meeting was the head of marketing, the head of the tool and die department, the vice-president, and also the public relations person, and as we would make our presentations they would be taking notes. We'd have our discussions and after lunch we would find out which designs would be designs that they would pursue. And what drove the decisions of the green light was could we bring it in under a certain price range, so it was about marketing and about money. So we – oftentimes we would be very unhappy because the designs that we thought were worthy and were fresh and were – were our soul would not make the cut because it would be too expensive to produce.

So it was interesting for me to experience as a team, working independently on ideas, but working as a team and then watching it be negotiated in such a manner with the calculator and they did, they had a calculator. They had scales there. They – you know, talked about how much the public – the marketing would put it on advertising and it was a real interesting eye opener for me of the real world, wearing a white coat, not wearing a blue coat and getting dirty and hanging my clothes up in the locker and having to shower at the end of the day in the locker rooms. But it was being privileged.

I would draw – when pieces were being made in the workshop they would come up to the design studio and come in and put the piece in front of the designer and say, you know, "Is the curve right? Should it be higher? Is this thick enough gauge? Is that what you're thinking about?" So, had that experience where the marks on paper ended up being executed by the – the craftsmen and the designers just were the people who, not set in the ivory tower, but they generated the – the idea and then the worker bees, the craftsmen who loved the material and loved and pride what they did, they would make the work. And the company would stamp it and it would go on its way.

So that was an experience that was rich for me to bring back and to be able to fold in to experience as a craftsman, as a maker. Now I could talk about being a designer and working in a corporation.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Did you – what of your own work did you do during that time?

MR. EBENDORF: They knew of my restlessness of wanting to be at the workbench because that's – I missed that very much. I missed getting dirty and having – that was where my love was at. So about midway they said, "Would you like to go and design a collection of jewelry, gold jewelry and if you wanted to put gemstones in it," he said, "would you?" I said, "I would love to do that." So I designed 27 ideas on paper and then we met and they said go for it and I said, "Well, can I actually make some of these pieces?" "Why don't you take your drawings, we'll go to the gold department and I'll introduce you to the headmaster and you can work with him and his work team, with his craftsmen and to execute the pieces."

So, I actually had the richness of sitting down and looking at my drawings and measuring out the materials. So each idea had a timecard, material card and we executed these 27 objects from the collection.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: All 27.

MR. EBENDORF: And so I had the great pleasure of sitting beside the diamond setter and saying I want this stone here or I would build part of the piece and pass it to the other person on – to my left who was an expert at hinges or an expert at building – so it was, again, a collaborative dance. And I didn't carry out one piece from the beginning to the end. It began to be passed around and that was the way the gold shop and the silversmithing shop worked. There were experts in certain areas so it was not a one controlled environment. It was one that we worked as a team.

And the pieces got done. There was an opening. There was a celebration but, you know what was interesting? Once I left the collection died because what they did, they built the ambiance around – like the Elsa Peretti. Ebendorf, the guest designer. They fluffed it, they did the PR, they did the promotion and I was there at the opening, meet the designer, he's an American. But, you know, I was the – I was the star of the activity and when I left there was no star. That was just cloudy and dark and the collection just subsided. It never went any further.

It was nice, though, because when I left they said, you know, "What would you like?" And because I wasn't – I was paid a minimal fee to work there as a worker. So what I was able to do was to buy out of the collection the pieces that I wanted for my own to bring home. And so there were four pieces that I purchased to – that I still own from that experience, and they're a part of my collection of archival history.

So the – there was something radical. It was that I was mixing copper, silver, diamonds, 18 carat gold and oxidizing the silver black, mixing up the metals, and again purist as that company was, that was very hard and very radical for them. It was not the stable, you know, all silver or all gold. How do you stamp this piece, because of the regiment of part of it was 18 carat, part of it was copper, part of it was silver? So I was a bit of a handful for them, pushing the perimeters.

In that collection there was – there was two pieces that the Metropolitan Museum now own that were in that – in that collection. They were pieces that had stones in them, acrylic gold and silver. Those pieces I brought back with me and I forgot that they were purchased. They're in the collection at the Met.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you were blending in this spirit of juxtaposition –

MR. EBENDORF: I was blending the material.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: I was doing – I was at that radical time, you know, in America before I left where I was mixing the photographs with the copper and storytelling language, but then when I arrived there it was a very straight-laced firm of 125 years family and I began to mix the palette up a bit with bringing the copper, silver and gold together.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you shook things up for them. Do you have different feelings about the pieces that you made in that series because you didn't take them from concept to final product with your own hands?

MR. EBENDORF: No, I don't. I mean, I look at the pieces I brought home and I'm so happy that I – that I have them. Is it maybe a memory? It is maybe all the richness that came out of that experience? And I'm sure that that's a nostalgic sensitivity or sensibility to the work but I enjoy the friendships that I made with the diamonds that are in the – and many of these relationships I've still stayed in touch with. So I think it was the – the experience that carried the preciousness and the – the smiles and the warmth of the object.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So those are all embedded in those objects for you?

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: That was – you know, I'm very – I'm a very sentimental kind of guy and so I'm – friendships are like investments and if you don't nurture them they dry up and fall apart. And so these objects symbolize that experience and the warmth of learning in that manner.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's a great memory to take away. Yeah.

This is Saturday, April 17th, the beginning of the second session of the interview with Robert Ebendorf. Yesterday evening, Robert, we finished talking about the experiences that you had becoming a master craftsman in Norway and your experience at the David Anderson – the David Anderson studio where you were actually part of a design team. And we also began to touch on how that experience came on the heels of this break you see in your career where you were working with metals, fine-tuning your skills with metals and then needed to go on and experiment with a whole palette of new kinds of materials.

So, my question for you to start off today's discussions is how do you see – how do you compare the metals work and the craftsmanship that you used in that context with this sudden flood of new materials that you were so enjoying swimming with, the paper, the found objects, the photographs? And what did these new materials allow you to say that the metals somehow didn't allow you to say?

MR. EBENDORF: The – let us just reference back a bit in the sense of where I sensed that break began. In the – the Tiffany visit to the Norway and the guest designer to Norway, they put me in a certain kind of context which worked much differently than what was going on in the studio perhaps when I was, you know, in the states. Where that break of materials and shift took place, I think, really began to happen like in 1964, '65 when I began to take on a new challenge of using the goldsmith skills, the craftsmanship, the precision, the high polish, the cutting the gemstones, all of that wonderful information and skillfulness and began to venture into a photograph, Plexiglas, a piece of wire off the street, a tin can.

And how did the – how did the technical differences challenge me? Well, you know, the tin can or the old button box with the decals or the images on them – with my jeweler's saw frame and saw blade I can come back and cut out certain images and certain parts of the – of the metal. And, no, I can't solder because the heat would burn off the pigment, but I could with my jeweler's saw blade cut around and then bezel it into position or to rivet it into position.

I never thought my work was figuratively oriented in a sense of like, you know, using the anatomy where I would repousse or chase it or engrave it or, let's say, enamel and do enameling techniques to illustrate the figure or the figurative genre. But I can get that by appropriation of the images on top of the button box or the old photograph from a scrapbook and dismember or separate certain parts of the composition – let's say the – [Audio break. Tape change.] – the photograph, the head, the body, the torso, the hands – and place those images into my design of the – of the object, of the piece of jewelry. So, yes, the paper's flat but I could treat the paper and set it in a bezel or fasten it in the same way that I would use my goldsmithing skill to set the stone with an engraver or to build a bezel around the cabochon stone. So there – I didn't see the – the technical differences. I seemed to just flow with looking at the material and saying oh, well, I could coal – put in by coal.

Now, I began to explore also too different kinds of glues or different kinds or epoxies or adhesives to fasten things in and, you know, there was that challenge about is this appropriate for a goldsmith to use adhesives? But, you know, then when I started thinking about history, you look at the Chinese headpieces that have the wonderful hummingbird feathers or let's go to a pre-Columbian gold vessel and they've raised the – the Incan had raised up the gold vessel. And then you saw this face with abalone shell for the eyes and turquoise set in for the teeth into the gold vessel, and how was the pieces set in? They were set in by gathering pitch or, let's say, the gum from the – from the pine trees and making an adhesive by pushing the pitch, the resin from the pine trees into this and then pressing the stones into it and they're still in place today.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Are you – were you second guessing yourself and going through this thought process about history at the time because there was this understanding that oh, craftsmen don't do certain sorts of things?

MR. EBENDORF: Absolutely. You know, was this is a no no and a shame behind the closet, behind the doors and the pieces that you looked at and say oh, magic, how did those pieces stay in place? And there was that taboo or the – I wrestled with that question historically and technically, but then as I began to look in history at the museums, reading, I began to realize that adhesives have been used for bonding things quite early in the history of making –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you were reaching beyond the limited tradition of American making.

MR. EBENDORF: And that gave me – that gave me a sense of permission and not of an embarrassment. And, you know, if you – if you lose your pearl on your earring and you stop in to the jewelry – local jewelry store and say, "Can you repair this?" And he says, "Come back on Wednesday," and when you walk out he goes to his tray, finds a pearl approximately the same size of one you had, he scrapes the post, he takes Krazy Glue, puts it on the post, puts the pearl on. You come walking back in and he charges you $15 for just basically gluing that pearl back in place. So we – we do see that behavior and problem solving solution to – the jeweler uses it frequently in that.

So, the material shift just became, I think, another palette to work with and I found it very exciting and challenging.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Who were the people who were your peers at the time who were also working in this experimental way? Because this was – this was a hot time. I mean, this was the '60s and all sorts of stuff was happening.

MR. EBENDORF: And, you know – and I didn't – sitting in Deland, Florida and then finding myself in Athens, Georgia, I really kind of thought I was by myself in doing this. And then in 1970, going to the first SNAG formal beginning of the organization in St. Paul, Minnesota – the first conference and the crescendo, opening up as a formal organization, I met this man, Fred Woell and, I mean – they said "Oh, do you know Fred Woell?" I said no, "Who?" "Well, he's working here in Wisconsin," and lo and behold here was a comrade working the same – kind of the same – in the same stream that I was swimming in and I didn't even know this work.

So he was and still is a wonderful artist that appropriates materials: old license plates, photographs, Boy Scout buttons, church buttons and memorabilia and drops them into the pieces. And he's well recognized for his pioneering and forward thinking in the '60s. So, yes, there were people out there but I guess if I were quickly to put my finger on someone that I felt not a kinship to because I really don't know him but – except the genre of the work that he was doing. As I began to know about his work there – we did hear the same music.

So, I think that there – there were people beginning to – I won't say break rules but there were people who were beginning to look at that whole thing about alternative materials. Remember the exhibition that the – that Lloyd

Herman put together at the Smithsonian that was called “Good as Gold” [“Good as Gold: Alternative Materials in American Jewelry,” Smithsonian Institution, 1981]. And here he brought forth to the public in this exhibition “Good as Gold” many of the – most of the material – most of the objects, jewelry, that he selected for this exhibition – doing his research – were jewelers, and they were American jewelers that had kind of began to look in-depth at, you know, using pieces of dominos or a piece of broken hair comb, a plastic – there was – so the whole exhibition was about the creative thinking. Jewelers making work that were, you know, “Good as Gold.” They were as rich aesthetically and artistically as if you were looking at a Cartier or a Van Cleef & Arpels diamonds and platinum piece.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: As you look back, what do you think it was about that particular period of time that made people look to these other materials and, particularly, the found objects?

MR. EBENDORF: Perhaps, that – you know, a found object evokes emotionally a very interesting – it triggers – it triggers an interesting response from the viewer. I mean, for example, if I used a small cracked porcelain doll head from a miniature from a small dollhouse, a little girl maybe had – and I found it at a flea market. And if I took that small broken porcelain head and brought it into my composition, you know, as a woman or as a person looks, “Oh, I remember that. I had one – I had something like that as a child.”

So, I think that sometimes that using the found object – if it’s something from the attic or from the flea market or a bottle cap off the street, you know, that kind of touches – there’s a quick communication, visual communication that comes down and it might be one of memory. And so, I think, that oftentimes those who do work with found materials do work in the narrative. They’re telling a story, perhaps. Or the viewer reads into – into the work because they can feel a part of that as a child or as an adult.

But, anyway, it’s – so maybe some people who work with – and I do know there are people who very much trigger that, play that, work with that in their – their – I mean, that’s their artistic gift to the work they do is that – their intelligence of working in the narrative and triggering those responses.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I mean, that’s certainly the effect of many of your pieces and I’m thinking particularly about the ones that use the photographs and also that are assemblages of materials that may have text on them and they make you ask where were these found? Why were these objects put together? We need to create some sort of significance by, you know, linking this bottle tab or this part of a label with a key chain, for example.

But I – I get the feeling that you don’t set out with the intention of telling a specific story, or maybe I’m wrong. It seems as though you’re selecting these things more for an aesthetic – their aesthetic pleasure.

MR. EBENDORF: It’s interesting that you dissect visually, knowing my work very well and have done a lot of research in the sense of the objects that I’ve made, and I think you – you’re very true on about that because I don’t think I set out to play with you – with the viewer in a storytelling manner. And I – and I do select the work or find the work – coming to the work because of their surface or their color or maybe the – you know, copy – a paragraph oftentimes because of my stumbling with reading, et cetera, sometime that page just becomes texture.

I mean, the copy, the handwritten letter, the – the German newspaper; as I look down at the black ink on the page or the – or the writing of the ballpoint pen, that all becomes just not scramble but becomes this beautiful markings. So when I find text or – take into text into – such as the wonderful necklace that were made from the Japanese paper – newspaper and the gold foil that – a fine example’s in the Victoria and Albert Museum in their permanent collection on display. That – those ball – those beads were just a mass of beautiful black and white and the black was the copy and the characters of the – in the paper of the characters.

So – or if you go to the collection of – particularly the necklaces that were constructed and put together from the exhibition at Susan Cummins [Susan Cummins Gallery, Mill Valley, California], and the title for the exhibition was “Off the Beach, From the Street.” That – all the necklaces that were assembled were materials that either I picked up walking on the beach and, of course, that’s old – I mean, plastic spoons and pieces of Bic lighters, and whatever would wash up on the beach I would gather – and usually they were small objects – and bring them home.

If I would go to the parking lot – and you could call it “parking lot art” if you wanted to, but I would go to the parking lots in the supermarkets early in the morning on Saturday before they would do the clean up, walk the vacant parking lot with a bag, picking up, you know, pull tops from the – from the juice cans – juice bottles. And also particularly the plastic spoons and forks and knives, a Barbie doll shoe, a hair tie back, the – from the plants, from the garden department they would come out in the parking lot and pull out the, you know, the little plastic tag of what the plant was – was it tulips or whatever. And they were full of color and I would gather these and come back, wash them and begin to assemble them into the composition on the necklace, coming around.

So those were the objects that were chosen specifically for, again, from the – for the design relationship.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What was the year of that Susan Cummins exhibition?

MR. EBENDORF: That must have been 19 – probably ’92. Living in Santa Monica, California and that is also – that exhibition was also my first personal meeting with Ken Trapp who was then at the Oakland Museum, and our friendship and our dialogue from that day forth traveled and still is in place richly today. But it was his questions and asking about the work that created an interesting dialogue between the two of us.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Isn’t it true too that you went on many of those collecting trips in Santa Monica with your daughter Brittany? And I was just reminded of how your nostalgic feelings about the series of 27 rings that you did for David Anderson and saying, “Yeah, I may not have taken them to completion but they meant a lot to me because I had these strong relationships with the people who made the pieces.” And I’m thinking about how doing those morning collection trips with your daughter probably infused a little bit of – of emotion and memory – pleasant memory into those pieces.

MR. EBENDORF: I chuckle and if I shut my eyes I can remember Brittany saying, “Dad, do we have to walk to school this morning in the alley?”

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: And then I’d say, “Well, just this morning, please, dear?” Where we would walk to school in the alley and we’d have a bag, each one of us, and we would be picking up bric-a-brac as we went along – along the Dumpsters. Or walking to school with her and there’d be a car window that had been broken into or a car that had been broken into and the windows glass all shattered on the curbing, and I would stop and scoop up into the plastic – or into the paper bag all the shards of glass. So Brittany – sometime I overheard her saying to one of her friends, “Well, I’ll remember my dad because, you know, I guess maybe growing up all I remember strongly is elbow and butt.” [They laugh.] Because I’d be bending over – stooping over picking up something off of the street and she’d be behind me and my elbow and my behind – she remembers that – that visual, I think, often.

But, yes, so the *Tazza*, the silver tazza that is a very important piece in my making time and is that tied with memory and it’s tied with the pleasure of a father being with – don’t get emotional, Bob – a father being with a daughter and having that time of gathering and nurturing and also she was at – you know, going into grade school at that time and I taking care of her every morning and going to school. So that piece evokes and brings back all of those fond memories and also the late nights working on this piece and setting 109 pieces of broken glass on the surface of this – of the dish, of the plate.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Is that in a collection? It is, isn’t it?

MR. EBENDORF: That’s – it is, and it’s the piece that’s – that several museums had pursued and they were trying to raise the money for the purchase and meantime a private collector stepped up that, and said, “How much?” And I told them – and I said “But, you know, some museums” – and she said, “Well, it’s on hold, I understand. I tried to pursue it.” And I said, “Well, a museum is interested in it,” and she said, “I have a check here.” And, of course, I needed the money to keep the studio running and it was a healthy sum and so I said, “Yes,” and that allowed me to buy more materials and keep fluid in the workshop.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, I thought I recalled that that had been – it did find a home in a collection. I just wanted to pick up a couple of details here because Brittany is the daughter of – a product of your second marriage with Ivy Ross and there was an interesting introduction to another kind of material that you had with – with Ivy Ross. Maybe you could talk a little bit about that.

MR. EBENDORF: In – in the early 1980s, like ’81 or ’82, Ivy and I were introduced to the material that was being produced by Formica company and this new product they branded as ColorCore, being developed by Formica – by the Formica company. And the ColorCore was basically layers and layers and layers of paper but the paper had been charged with pigment so they were color, you know, the laminate for the Formica tables and the kitchens and in the industrial counters, et cetera. But that laminate was, again, just a thin layer of image, a thin layer of color on the surface. So if you were to look at the end view you had a very thin bit of material on the top which – whatever they chose to put on the top. Then there was this black substance underneath which was the – the subsurface.

ColorCore was stacks and stacks of paper. So if you were to look at the top it would be say blue. If you were to look at the side it was blue. And the thickness would be about the thickness of a quarter so it was a total color. So what they – what Formica was hoping to do was to bring to the market a new product and who they were hoping to target – they were hoping would for – was the interior designer, the architect, particularly those two potential markets.

And to do this they – Susan Lewin had the brilliant idea of presenting this new material – offering this new material in a competition and let’s go after the architects, let’s go after the interior designers, and let’s go after

the artists. And Ivy and I were in this circle of people who materials were sent to and we began to – as jewelers to explore this. And we won the product development award for the jewelry direction by making a collection of jewelry – cuff links and studs for formal wear, necklaces, bracelets, earrings – using the product of ColorCore.

And the architects – like Frank Gehry and Stanley Tigerman, all of the top dogs – Michael Graves – all of them of them were involved with the creative use of that. You might be very much aware of the fish that Frank Gehry did that was – glowed in the dark or had lighting behind it.

And so they got a lot of press and we got a lot of fluff and excitement over this – this creative journey. But it was interesting because the Formica company was always there to continue to shoot materials to me or to us, and I used it for the students on a project that also the ColorCore – Formica supported. At SUNY New Paltz we did an exhibition that the students were involved in the material, and they did a small publication and PRed it as well.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: When were you at SUNY New Paltz? When did you make that move?

MR. EBENDORF: I arrived there in 1970 and stepped away in 1989. So I had a wonderful journey in the Hudson Valley working in – at there and helping to develop the metal program.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Let's see, there are a couple of directions I wanted to go in. I think I wanted to pick up a little bit with the relationship you had with your daughter and you're talking about these collecting trips. And I'm wondering if you could compare a little bit what it was for you as an artist to undergo that process of collecting with your daughter and making those pieces versus the real different context of having ColorCore put into your hands by this big company and you generating a very different looking product. What were those two – how did those two processes differ and how did you feel differently about the results?

MR. EBENDORF: The – you know, working with the Formica company and with the ColorCore material, it was very much – I was very clear that it was high-end to the market, it was very clear that there was a big PR roll behind this so that if the work was strong and they – if they particularly liked the way it was working out that they would kick that. They would, you know, bring it to the public by – via brochures and so forth and so on. And they had – they had all the marketing skills and there were also too that the work was – the material was usually – the way I use it, was either stacking it or flat. It didn't – it wasn't something you could bend like a piece of metal or – the contours would only get by if I were to stack and cut back and carve into it.

And also too it was – it was not – definitely it was not the emotional kind of charge or conversation with – of course with Brittany, you know, it was like, "Dad, do we – what – when are we going to get home? I'm tired." Or we would go and have lunch afterwards. So there was a certain kind of bonding relationship going on and it was our time together. And – or even if I'm doing this, you know, walking in the woods by myself there's a certain kind of seeking and finding the hunt the – that there's an edge going on there. Will I find anything today as we'd walk the beach. Or was it, you know, a day that – that all of a sudden the tide didn't wash things up.

So it was quite different and definitely there was an emotional difference, strongly so, and I also think that the work was – if you're cutting the line I think that the ColorCore pieces were about color and they were kind of cold in a sense. They didn't have the warmth and nuances that I felt the other – the other work did.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: They are much more serene, almost cerebral whereas there's a vitality and energy to those assemblage pieces that is so palpable. I mean, just even if you don't touch them and you're standing looking at them from – through a piece of glass in a gallery. I mean, they just – they send out energy to you, they really do.

MR. EBENDORF: Also, too, you know, the ColorCore was the – was very attractive to the woman who had bought a beautiful blouse or for the necklace, the color – let's put the – we're blending colors here. We're talking about color palette. We're talking about accessorizing a garment. And where the other pieces – no, it takes a – it takes a certain kind – I mean, the audience was narrower with this other work. Then the audience was broader with the beautiful color and let us accessorize a beautiful Perry Ellis jacket, let us say.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Because you were talking about the different emotions that those two bodies of work evoke for you and you're talking about the journey and will I find something today? I'm just reminded of a conversation that we had a number of months ago where you were talking about how the hunting and gathering for these pieces really puts you in touch with a certain feminine side. And you often talk about your masculine and your feminine side and how you tap into these two different resources within yourself to do your work. And I know this also touches a chord because you had – you were very nurturing with your daughter and were very in touch with your feminine side with your relationship with her.

So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that masculine and feminine side and how it – how you see it entering into your work?

MR. EBENDORF: I'm glad you brought that up because it's something that I have often thought about and

discussed with – with – sometimes with people. But the – let us go to the hunt, let us go to the gathering and coming back and nurturing the object or working with the object. I mean, I think that – let us look at the woman. I mean, she nurtures the child, she bears the child, she does the washing the dishes, she oftentimes does the cooking, she keeps the family together, and all those concerns and there's – that's caretaking – and gathering the firewood for the – you know, to cook on or the berries to dry for the winter months. And, you know, so when I'm gathering things I sense very much the same way. I think it's very much the feminine side of me in the sense of the journey and gathering and bringing something back and nurturing and bringing it forth to – in a different context, let us say, in a piece of jewelry.

So, you know, and then as a father I had this rich opportunity to be with Brittany so very closely, day by day, seven days a week. I was in constant contact with her. Ivy was living and working in New York as a designer, working in a corporation and oftentimes traveling, and so Brittany grew up for the first 11 years very, very closely to my hip. And as a male and as a father what a wonderful gift that I had totally unbeknownst to me that this – I would cherish this forever. And so there was – you know, there was that sense of care and coddling and putting to bed and all of those – those sensitive things that the mother oftentimes do – does to nurture the young ones and to care for the young ones. So, that was a gift and I – and I'm – as a person I'm fortunate to have had that. I cherish that time very, very much.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I'm also thinking back to things we talked about during the session yesterday when you – and I'm – when you were discussing your grandmother and your mother and how the very close nurturing relationship you had with them also included, you know, "Look at the clouds passing across the moon" or "Come watch me sew on these buttons or do this very technical thing of making a buttonhole." So that relationship that you had with women and women's nurturing also included some kind of introduction to craft, to aesthetics, to materials.

I'm wondering what do you see in your own background, in your family background with relationships in men and women that modeled or helped you come to this sort of understanding of your own two bi-gendered side if you – sides if you will.

MR. EBENDORF: I would think that – my mother was very hands-on. She was very physical with – with me and I think also with my sister. I mean, I never saw my – I never saw my mother and father – [inaudible] – with one another or show affection, and maybe it was that, you know, that time and era that adults – I mean, at least – I never saw that. I never saw this passion – affectionate side.

And – but I felt that very much with my mother to me as a son or as a child, you know, pinching my butt when we're out there looking at the – at the stars and, you know, bringing us out at 10:00 because we were still awake or waking us up and wanting us to see this awesome night sky. Or going out on Sunday afternoon with the family and picking bittersweet and, you know, we had to be shown exactly how to cut the bittersweet because if you tore the bittersweet, the berries, the branches that would perhaps kill the bush and my mother said if we care for this properly we can come back next fall and re-harvest.

And what would happen, we would – I would gather or we would gather the bittersweet – we all had clippers and we knew how to clip it properly. We'd bring back our harvest and put it in the garage and I would bundle up these – I would make bouquets of bittersweet and then I would go stand on the street corner right before Christmas and sell bittersweet for money for – to buy Christmas gifts. And it was a ritual that – that we did each year.

But – so the feminine side or the nurturing and the caretaking, my mother, you know, filled that cup very full. Grandmother, the same way in the weekends of having time with her and, you know, plucking the chicken after ripping its head off in the – in the – fresh killed. And then, you know, our canning the berries and canning peas and beans from the garden, that kind of work. Or icing down the watermelon on Sunday morning after church, knowing that after dinner, late mid-afternoon, we'd all sit around and open the watermelon and have cold watermelon – or make the homemade ice cream.

But those were things that – that I enjoyed as a child growing up and hopefully that – some of those same kind of warm thoughts and memories Brittany shares.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What kind of figures were your father and your grandfather?

MR. EBENDORF: The grandfather, this wonderful very strong-faced German gentleman but very formal. He was – he would sit after Sunday meal in his big armchair and with his three-piece – with his vest on and his gold watch chain coming across, very proud and smoke his cigar and look down as – at the children playing in front of him, my sister and myself, and not be seen very such. Even at the – at the tailor shop he was not a person that kidded with me or that I had – I won't say fond memories of – I was more standoffish from him. Not frightened, but he was very kind of this figure that didn't – he didn't kid with me and play with me like grandmother did.

Now, my father, he also was a very quiet man. Read a great deal because he pursued his – his medical journals, but, you know, I didn't grow up in a household where dad and I went and played golf together or went and fished together or went hunt – did hunting and so forth. I did those kind of – particularly the hunting and fishing thing with the neighbor boy and his father. My father, we didn't have that kind of togetherness in that sense, and I'm sad about that because in my later years – later meaning in college, senior year in college and into graduate school – I began to realize that I really had missed something with my father. And I tried to reach back and reconstruct our time together with more meaning and – but I lost that – that moment, I think.

We were close and he appreciated my success and he felt very proud of that but he was definitely over-dominated. My mother was very much the – the voice of the family.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And certainly had an effect in creating these contexts where you did activities with her within the home. So –

MR. EBENDORF: Yes, the Christmas – the Christmas cookies, the opening up the hard walnuts and sitting there at the kitchen table picking out the nuts from the black walnuts. Or baking cookies and then sitting there with a toothpick, you know, dragging the color – the red and the green icing, the white icing on the stars, et cetera, and putting the little bits of candy on them. A lot of, you know – there was – there was a lot of craft.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I'm just – I'm amazed at the range of motor skills that you just talked about there with all of those activities. I remember reading an article one time of a microsurgeon. He would, you know, do surgery connecting nervous – nerves and that kind of thing, and he was saying that basically he owed his career to his mother because his mother taught him how to sew and that's how he learned to have these very, very fine hand skills. So –

MR. EBENDORF: It was – it was that whole period of time when bridge was big, right before canasta and bridge was big in our house. And I can remember sitting with my mother at the kitchen table making bridge tallies and bridge nametags where you would buy the little envelopes or the little tallies and then we would get these – she would get these colored seashells and glue – and a toothpick and we'd do these rosettes of – with the seashells. And we would do hours of this activity and make that. And then there was the – the felt flowers. The flowers that you would make out of these pieces of felt and – and florists wire that you – anyway, it was a lot of – and, you know, now that I think about it – or wrapping bottles with colored string and making candle holders – empty bottles with – or jars –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So going to – going to multimedia was sort of going back to your roots! [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: It was early – it was early – early in the trenches.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It was in your blood. And I get the feeling that you – you didn't resent these chores, that you kind of got into it, making all these flowers and –

MR. EBENDORF: Well, when mother – when mother said we were going to do it we knew that we would have some time doing it, and so – and also too, some of the craft classes that I do remember, they were actually craft classes – were conducted maybe every other week at a church basement, and the women would come and pay x amount of money to do this. And I would get to go with her and I'd have my table where they'd set me up and there'd be probably some other children with me because these were all moms that were getting out of the house for an evening. And we would get a pile of seashells or we would get a pile of pipe cleaners, you know, to manipulate and keep busy with.

So that, you know, as you scrape away and ask this question thinking of grandparents to my own household, there – there was a lot of attention and a lot of time spent to those kind of things. I didn't sew. I never learned to knit. There was a sewing machine in the house that my sister would, you know, work with but I never had the opportunity to creatively use the sewing machine. Like today we see some very fine contemporary work being done totally with the stitching and the sewing machine very, very creatively. But I never – that was never offered – that was off-limits, I guess.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: As you undertake your work today and either discovering a new material or working with one that you've – are familiar with, does some of that kind of childlike pleasure come back? Is there a sense of play in your work in –

MR. EBENDORF: I talk often now about playfulness and I once had a conversation with Herman Junger in Munich in his garden with coffee one morning. And we were talking and he had just – he was just getting ready to retire and he said to me – and, of course, to me Herman Junger was a – is a monumental figure in contemporary – in jewelry movement not only as a teacher, as a scholar, as a thinker. He was a very, very bright man, very, very scholarly but also a killer of a maker, very good. And my time with him I've treasured very, very much.

But we were in the garden and we were talking with good coffee and cakes and he said, "Bob, there will come a day when you go into your workshop and sit at your workbench that you'll just play." And he said, "I know you won't understand this now," but he said, "there will be at time when you – and when that happens," he says, "you will have made another step into another level of – of your life when you just find that taking – and making a choice of what technique you want to use and how you want to do it and you're not trying to impress anybody. You don't care if it's going to be for sale but you – you're like a small child in the sandbox and you'll be playful." We don't play enough, and I – I now – you know, now some years later I do know what he's talking about.

So playfulness – unfortunately, you know, as we grow up we're playful and as we get more involved with life we become, I think, oftentimes less playful because our challenges, keeping everything together, paying bills, relationships, a job, et cetera, we kind of forget how to have fun. And the heart needs laughter and the spirit needs playfulness. So I smile now as you ask that question because I do really enjoy sitting down and looking at the materials and saying I – oh, I'll take this piece, I'll take this piece. I will set the pearl here. Oh, let us put a gemstone here! Or let us just take this piece of wire that I found on the way home and look at it and – oh, that would make a great part of the brooch and let's just see what it looks like. And just to be playful.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you think you needed to develop a certain level of confidence and skill in order to emerge into –

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – this playful state?

MR. EBENDORF: You know, the groundwork, the – learning the ABCs and learning the sense of skill and craftsmanship, you know, are the – are the early cornerstones of being fluid with – with what I'm doing now. And so it did take that – the – the painful time or that growing time, maturing time to find myself where I am now where I – where, you know, if I want to stress myself and want to get into trouble, I know what challenges I can take on technically and that I'm not that skilled at and it'll just push me against a wall and I'll just sweat bullets. But if I don't want to be stressed in that sense, well, I know so many other things, I can go this avenue to solve the problem and have a good time at it.

So sometimes today I say, you know, do I want more stress in my life? No, I want to have fun and so I'll choose maybe the low end – the easiest way to solve the problem. And, you know, it's interesting also to – there was a certain period of time I bought more tools and more tools, more power tools. I bought more this, and the more things I had the more art – the more verbal I could be with the work I was doing, and now I'm giving it away.

I give – you know, I'm giving tools away and I have – I mean, my workshop – I do everything by hand. I have only one piece of power equipment and this is a tiny electric drill. I don't have a flexible – I'm not bragging about this. I'm just saying it's interesting how I've come full circle and – with my – a few hand tools and a hammer and so forth. It's amazing how elegant you can speak with – with minimal tools.

Look at Alexander Calder, I mean, he's a wonderful example. I mean, such a skilled maker but he'd take that coil of wire and put it over his shoulder – of course, this was one of his – you know, you knew him by coming socially – he'd have this coil of aluminum wire around his red shirt. You know, and he had his red shirt on, flannel shirt socially and he would be talking to you and he'd just be pulling off that coil of wire and a pair of pliers and he'd – and he'd – he'd give you a brooch or he'd make a bauble for you to put on your – put on your lapel.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's interesting. He was – he was constantly fiddling, constantly. Yep.

MR. EBENDORF: Constantly fiddling. And it was only – there was no heat. It was just a pair of pliers –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: – and him taking that piece of wire and drawing with it. Go to any of the images that you would find in the – in the books and you'll see that – you'll follow that and it's just like if he had a ballpoint pen and it was fluid.

And so I find that, you know, very few tools do I – but it's the hand. It's the hand and the sense, the feel of the – of the material and the richness of that which I respond to and so much enjoy.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Your studio now is right in your home and it's not even a very large room. I was quite surprised when I saw it. And it's just encrusted with all kinds of goodies. Have you always had your studio in your home space and what – what does that working space mean to you? How did you go about setting it up to make it a haven and a place of bliss – to use a word that you used yesterday?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, I think that because I have been harbored and had the richness of being in the academic

circle and – you know, and going off to a university and having a large studio with power equipment and all the technical stuff. So if I'm – if I need – you know, if I'm working big and need that assistance I've been fortunate to be able to have that, but for my – for where I rest and where I feel the bliss is in my studio and in most of the time it's been in the home.

It's never been in what we would call a basement. It's always been kind of on ground floor. I've enjoyed windows. And I just have an old office, wooden office desk that I've set up and made it that way, that I can funk up and burn it or whatever and so – but, I mean, crusted and embellished around me are so many things. The materials that I bring home that I find on the street or in the ally or at the flea market or someone – a package comes in the mail. Someone says, "You know, I've got all these bottle caps" or "I broke this antique mirror and maybe you – you always seemed to like unusual things so maybe you can do something with it."

So, I have boxes and boxes of materials and so my – the top of my workbench oftentimes becomes my visual sketchbook. I used to draw a lot and, of course, if I'm making a commission for somebody they would like to see some idea of where I'm headed or we'll be discussing something, so marks on a paper and drawing – not – you know, not mechanical drawings so that we can come together are important. But if I'm in the studio working on a piece I can – I'll work fluidly from – from my heart and follow my heart and use my aesthetic tuning visually and bring it together technically.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Are your days in the studio pretty structured? Do you have rituals that you go through to kind of pump yourself to work?

MR. EBENDORF: You mentioned about the studio, "I noticed it's in the house," and going back to that question, and I think the reason it's in the house, it's not uncommon for my days – like this morning as you were beginning to make your appearance and waking up after a good night's rest, I was in the workshop at 4:30 this morning. So oftentimes I'm there so in the house I can come from the – from the sleep to the workbench and I can be on a project if I'm against the calendar or if I just have an idea and I'm there. So I can walk in, put on my work clothes, and leave my slippers on and work and be there.

The – Heikki Seppa who is a colleague friend, another maker who has gifted the contemporary metal movement very strongly, once said to me when he saw that we had moved to a new location, he said "Where are you going to put your workshop?" He was a guest there for the weekend. And we were "Oh, it could be in this room. And there was a basement. I could be in – I could put it down in the basement, it's quite large." He said to me, "Bob," he says, you know, "Don't do it. Don't put it in the basement." He says, "I've been in the basement all my life." He says, "I don't see anything. I don't have a window." He says, "Don't do that," and he said, "see," – there was a barn on the property, a barn like 10 – maybe 15 steps away from the house which was in New Paltz. He said, "put it out there." He said, "You know why?" He said, "Because if you do it in the house you're going to be doing the laundry or you're going to be cleaning house." So, he said, "But if you have your workshop out there," he said, "those 10 steps or those 15 steps to open that door and sit in there, it's like if you were going to Alaska. There's no phone out there or whatever."

So, in New Paltz I had my workshop for many years in the barn and then I did move into the house into a separate room. So I like being able to have access early in the morning or whenever I want to. Like when you came up this morning and said, "Good morning," where was I? I was sitting at the workbench soldering and enjoying the morning. I do oftentimes start the morning – you know, because oftentimes I want to be in the studio and looking forward to the day and all of a sudden my day shifts. I've got an appointment or I've got something I have to do at the university or Aleta wants to me go and be sure that certain things get done for the house.

So I find that I used to wrestle with this. If I didn't feel productive and I wasn't in the workshop, I used to kind of beat myself up and wish that I was there instead of over here when I had to do this. But I've been able to let that go and the way I found to share the – the energy flow is I oftentimes will wake up and do collages. I'll be making a cup of tea, I'll go in and make postcards because I correspond a lot. So I'll sit and do drawings and I'll do collage. I'll tear paper up and mark on it and take graphite and rub on it and gesso and scratch through it, set it aside, do another one. And I might only be able to do that for – you know, for a half hour or 20 minutes but what that has done is like my therapy. It's like my moment in time by myself, being playful, not having rules to follow, and being creative, being in the moment of flow of creative enjoyment.

And you know what? That gives me – if I have to go and not be in the studio for the rest of the day, I've had this wonderful moment of time of being creative. And I find that that has been a very, very – and you asked about a routine but I find that that is something that has happened over and over again that the postcards or the correspondence of collaging and drawing and being playful is the way I start my day off at times.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It grounds you in yourself –

MR. EBENDORF: It does.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – for the rest of the day. Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: And it – and if I don't get back to the hardcore stuff – filing, sawing and solder – I've had my moment. I've had – I've massaged my – myself in the sense, in the creative – in the creative dance.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I wanted to ask where you get your inspirations from and I'm wondering, you know, today it just – it struck me as a question now because I'm wondering are there particular kinds of ideas that come to you from that little ritual of doing the collaging process in the morning that's so grounding. But, in general, also as you look back how have you found inspiration? Where has it led you?

MR. EBENDORF: I was just asked recently by another person doing an interview and they asked about how do my ideas come about? Or, you know, what is the inspiration? And I said to – to him, I said, you know, it's – not to sound aloof but, I said, I used to draw a lot. If you were in my studio you would see my workbench is my sketchpad. But, I said, you know, I can – I find myself today, if I'm at a flea market, if I'm walking home from school and going to the grocery store – because it's nearby – walking and I find something on the ground, I pick it up. I can stand there and look at this piece and begin to actually construct the – the piece in my hand or I can actually enjoy navigating design and technique and have that dialogue with that – with that object or these objects and begin to put that concept together.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you – do you – can you think of a particular example?

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah, there was a – well, one that appears quite often or has appeared is like, you know, the pull top where all of a sudden – like the tennis – the aluminum tennis cans. There was this – or the potato chips. You pull off this, you know, and you've got the pull top which is still connected to the round aluminum piece.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The disc, yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: And it's thrown on the ground or it ends up and the car runs over it and runs over it and scratches it and the rust gets on it and then it gets scratched again. If I pick up one of those and I'm looking at this and it's right there ready for me to come and adorn because I can rivet on to it – the pull top, where the finger – you know, the pull top actually is like a hanger just waiting for me to hang something on it.

And so I can – or like the – I found this wonderful piece of aluminum foil that had been run over and run over. It was a wad but then now it's flat. It had this wonderful textural quality. It looked like sterling silver that had been just crunched down, you know? And I looked at it and I brought it back home and I took that and set pearls and silver into that piece and so that was an example.

Another example was – you know, of course the washer – the rusted washers. I mean, I – because I make so many rings. They're beautifully set up because of the size of the – you know, to work – I can set something inside where the opening is. I can set pearls in there and diamonds in there. I can take a piece of broken glass and bezel it and set it inside there. So there are a number of things – nails. I now find myself stopping at the – on the road, country road and there's a barn that's, you know – that is dilapidated and broken down and just kind of starting to go down in shambles and the roof is down. I'll go over from the car and walk around and I have – I have a pair of pliers and a hammer with me and I'll start walking around and looking at the old boards and start pulling the nails out of the – out of the wood because they're – oftentimes in this part – in the eastern corridor of North Carolina a lot of the tobacco barns have – in their early years were put together with handmade nails that are – that are forged. And so I've been gathering these old rusty nails and I'll bring them and work them into – into the piece of jewelry.

So, I've kind of sometimes find these hotbed of oh, let's walk around this area because I bet there's some – some bric-a-brac that might be of interest and has an attitude or brings into history some kind of context. So, you know, walking only yesterday I saw – you know, when the aluminum cans fall off and if they lay in the ditch or in the yard and the sun gets on them – they're bright, it's color but if the sun gets on them what happens is that the pigment – 7-Up, Coca Cola, the pigment on the aluminum surface begins to mute because the sun begins to pull the – and they get these wonderful quiet colors, subdued colors. And so I've been very attracted to that quiet graphics – it's there, but also the blush of color and I find – you know, there's some material there that might be workable for me in some way. Where the 7-Up is, where the Up is I might take the P out and put something there, you know, whatever.

But, so the found materials or the flea market, the junk table that has broken watches and pocket watches and – I love the pocket watch. I love the broken – so if it's there and – and he says, "Well, it doesn't work," and I said, "That's okay, that's okay." I said, you know, "So what's the – what's the" – you know, "Give me – give me 50 cents for it." It – you know, it doesn't work, I know that and so, you know. But I love it because I can take old pocket watch, open it up, unscrew it and from the back take the guts out, screw it back together and I have the lens to look through and wow! I can unscrew it and that whole inside becomes like a canvas. It becomes like a place where I can build a composition by riveting in or setting stones or filling up – just filling the whole thing up

with loose pearls and screwing it back together and making a chain and it becomes a pendent. You know, an old 14 carat gold or worn surface.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski interviewing Robert Ebendorf at his home in Greenville, North Carolina. The date is the 17th of April 2004. And I'm conducting this interview for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number four of session two.

Bob, you've just described very vividly how you respond and gather your ideas so immediately from materials that you happen to encounter on walks. And that you – you seek out interesting places where you know there are going to be great caches of materials for you to work with, and that will catalyze this immediate response that kind of almost go electrically – with an electric connection to a design idea. How has that style of working changed over the years? Or have you always had this immediate movement from material to concept?

MR. EBENDORF: I don't think so, but I think when you ask that particular pointed question the quickest thing that comes to mind is – I'll give an example. I think the – at a period of time when I was younger, the influential things that would happen that would direct me towards some thinking or investigation such as, you know, another person's work, another contemporary worker. Or having time with an individual and having long conversations and how that conversation would maybe begin – I would begin to look at making jewelry differently.

And I'm headed towards my experience with Claus Bury who was a young man, German, very good maker. Came to America for a visit. I had the pleasure of – he knew my work. He had been also a student of Herman Junger's and – but he came to America, his first visit. And he called or we had contact and he came to speak at New Paltz, New York and be a houseguest and be with the students and also he and I spent a lot of time talking about jewelry. And –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What year was this?

MR. EBENDORF: In New Paltz, New York in probably 1970 – 1976 maybe.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Okay.

MR. EBENDORF: Or thereabouts. And he also had a number of his pieces with him for the students or to show because he was making the rounds with gallery people, et cetera. But he was working with – again as a goldsmith, very skilled, but he was also working with acrylic, a transparent and opaque acrylic and fabricating it into gold. And his objects were – his jewelry was quite large – large for – they were pieces of sculpture. I looked at them and they were – they were, you know, hard edged but they were like assemblages of color and stacked and then beautifully handled with gold.

And we talked much about jewelry and he was younger than I and was getting a lot of attention in Europe as this new maker coming – coming forward. But our conversations about jewelry and about the object was something that really intrigued me and the students enjoyed his visit. He goes away and during the time that he was a houseguest, before he left, he would – in the mornings would go out in back and he would do drawings. He was drawing. He happened to be drawing the house that I lived in and he was in the back, and he drew the back part of the house and there was a chimney and he drew smoke coming out of the chimney and he took some photographs also as well.

And then before he left he took the photographs and the drawing and he collaged the two together and he sat down, he wrote – wrote me a thank you note on the drawing and he spoke about a colored smoke machine. And I said, "What is a colored smoke machine?" He said, "Oh," he said, "see the smoke coming out of the chimney, the graphite?" And he had also taken color pencils and had drawn some colored smoke coming tumbling out of the – out of it. He said the colored smoke machine – he said, well, he says, "When you come from school if you've had a good day," he says, "you'd go to your" – because I know we were burning the fireplace every night – he says, "you'd go to the fireplace and you'd put a color filter in. And if it's a good day you'll put a red filter in and as the smoke comes out the neighborhood knows that it's red and that you've had a glorious day, and if it's been a gloomy day you changed and pulled the filter out and put" – so he's told this whole fantasy story about the chimney and the colored smoke machines. So, it didn't – but that was the story, and he left.

And I had also – was jogging a lot at that time and because I was very much in training of just physically with myself and I would oftentimes run in the early morning or late in the evening after studio hours. And down at the end of the road there was this power plant and there was a lot of large equipment in the – in the yard, and they were like big transformers with wires and connections and porcelain tops and finials and so forth. And lo and behold I began doing these drawings and the – the industrial equipment began to be part of – began to appear in the drawings, I mean, the shapes and forms of the big transformers and then the wires, et cetera.

But I began to find myself looking at the acrylic and starting to bring acrylic into the work. So, I made this body of work that began to look like industrial machinery with these Plexiglas rods coming out and with gold finials on

the end and small pearls and so forth. But as I put the work together they became very sculptural, much, much different than the work I had been doing before and I was trying to identify what was going on. Why – you know, how did this shift take place? And they became sculptural in a sense where I would actually do a drawing, put them back into the drawing and put them on the wall and then if you wonder where are the brooch – this is nothing new. Many people have done it where you take the brooch off – off of the drawing, out of the frame and put it on and then put it back afterwards.

But I began to realize what had influenced and what had happened was the – the conversation with Claus, the objects which he was making and the acrylic and gold, my visual experience at the industrial yard of – of these industrial pieces of equipment. And so out of that identification I began to talk about the color smoke machine and the importance of this short personal experience with this – with this artist.

So that brings me to this next – there was a period of time, I think, maybe in all people but there was a time where I was influenced by if I was – like this conversation and this work grew out of this visual experience of Claus' work and our personal conversations about jewelry, his jewelry. Can it be a piece of small sculpture that fits on the body and the body becomes the framework to present the work? So there were all these questions going on with me about body adornment, sculptural, functional, mixing of materials which I'd also enjoyed doing but – and the drawings as a part of the – of the total package.

And so I ran that – I ran that number – or ran that timeframe until I kind of exhausted it, but when I had the exhibition, it was in 1974 – when I had the exhibition of my work from this body of work at the Fairtree Gallery on Madison Avenue, which is no longer there, I entitled the exhibition "Colored Smoke Machines." And I also – as you walked in there was an acknowledgement of my – acknowledging Claus because the work was definitely very much looking like Claus' language and I also knew that when people looked at that and they say "Oh, he's just ripping off Claus." But I – what I found interesting is that once I publicly identified this and shared this with the growing public, I felt very free about – that it was okay that, you know, I'm telling you yes, Claus, was a part of my life and he has made a great – a great footprint on my thinking.

And it was wonderful to be able to – to walk into the gallery and see that I acknowledged this – this experience and it therefore made me feel comfortable, that I didn't have to feel like I had ripped somebody off. The work didn't really look like Claus except all of a sudden I had not worked with Plexiglas in that manner, and I identified the other inspirations that that body of work came out of.

So, I think there was a period of time that things did influence me heavily and that was a good example of that. Or if I went to the museum and saw historically the Norwegian carved spoons out of bone and wood how the – those objects would, you know, come back and re-filter into the work, or, you know, a museum experience. So, I think there were times when I was very impressionable of – of that work, but I particularly have talked oftentimes about the Claus Bury experience because it was a very – a very rich and wonderful growing experience that came out of that.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The work was very different from what was your usual vocabulary. It has – and I know that people have responded to it saying that it looked very sexual and very phallic and there was some kind of amusing reactions that you got from people as a result of that. But yeah, I think it has a really unusual stamp and I think it's very modern looking. I mean, when I look at those pieces I think they could – they could be made today because they have this biomorphic kind of dimension to them, that they – they're hovering on a boundary between being machine-like and being very organic. So the tinge of eroticism for me comes from the fact that they almost look like they're living machines, they're living bodies that are somehow functioning in a machine-like way.

MR. EBENDORF: I have to smile because hearing you lecture just recently and your visual awareness and scholarly pursuit and in knowing about work and making that tie between the Industrial Revolution, the industrial machine versus the way certain makers have enjoyed embracing those objects and embracing that time. But so, you know, I think that you caught – you put that in context very nicely.

There was that experience that night at the exhibition when people – and they were women, friends – who came up and they start talking to me about these objects being very sexual. And I had never – I never thought about my work having sexual overtones and then when they'd say, "Oh, Bob," take – they'd point out graphically – and maybe it was their fantasy – but they – I mean, now that I think – but they pointed out certain aspects of the work. I mean, the finials with the – with the gold tubes on the end with these small white pearls oozing out or coming out of the end of the – of the small finial tubes on the end of the colored pieces, and because they were arced and moved and twisted around.

But I remember that night going walking around and starting to look at the work and going ooh, you know, maybe and how it put me on edge because I've never felt like my work – I'd never felt like I had dealt with a sexual issue in the work that I do. And – and many people have, you know, with the type of imagery they've

worked with or the way they've handled certain things and blatantly or very quietly. But I'd never quite felt that about the way that I work and I –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Did you avoid it or did you just – it just didn't occur to you?

MR. EBENDORF: It's – it just never occurs to me, and – but that night I – I know I was off balance when it came up not only once but it came up a number of times.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That disconcerting moment when the artist realized that he or she does not have control over how the public sees the work. [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: Someone said to me, "Well, how is your bedroom, Bob?" You know, and I said, "Let's don't go there."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: So, I mean, maybe there was something going on there.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, it adds another level of richness and mystery to it. I love those pieces. I love the color. I love the energy of them and I do love the mystery of them. And I love the little pearls, whatever they may suggest.

MR. EBENDORF: And, you know, I – I still – I still archive. I still own some of those major – because there was about 9 of them and some of the ones that I think are more successful, I've hung on to those, and they're – but maybe I hung on to the memory, you know, the experience of my time with – with –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: With Claus.

MR. EBENDORF: – with Claus.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah. What about commission work, which is a very, very different style of working and I'm wondering how – what would have been your most important commissions and how is like to work with the set of parameters that a client will offer you?

MR. EBENDORF: The – they're quite different than, of course – today I don't – a lot of the commissions I'm doing today are just jewelry-directed and a lot of rings and, you know, personal adornment pieces. And fortunately I'm able to – or they've oftentimes said, you know, "Make me something in the style which you enjoy doing and I don't need drawings. I mean, just, you know, here's the budget and I really want something made by you." I was just – as you were warming your coffee I was reading a letter from a woman who just purchased three rings and she was talking to me about how much she enjoys – because it's with her daily and then how rings are different than, you know, a brooch that you wear on special occasion or whatever.

So, but going to the – to the larger commissions you said what ones have been memorable. I think the ones that have – that are major to me or ones that I'm – that I'm proud of and that I think back of the long haul because there was budgets discussed, and there was prototypes that were made, and there were drawings that were done, and there were maquettes that were presented. And that meant, you know, dressing up, taking my briefcase and going to this meeting and not dealing with one person making a decision but you had five people at the table who were putting money in or who felt that they should have some decision on how to do this.

But the pieces that I – that I think of – of all of that or – I've had the opportunity to do a number of chains of office for presidents – for universities, for their presidents or batons and maces for – again for the academic circle because at commencement some universities – and not all, but some universities, they have the procession and they have the marshal who – you know, who leads the procession. And he or she dressed in the academic gown with a mace which is like a processional cross or a mace that oftentimes has a handle with a finial at the top that celebrates the institution and then the – the people in pursuit and oftentimes the chancellor, perhaps, or the president of the university will wear a chain of office and a chain of celebration of the institution.

And maybe they might have gone so far to have commissioned the silversmith to make a baton for like the school of music or – and the person who leads this – the faculty from the school of music, the faculty member who leads the school of pharmacy or the school of business. And sometimes they have a – what they call a baton which is again a – something to carry in the hand with a handle with something recognizable at the top.

And so those commissions have been enjoyable and also long and I'm proud to say about – about, you know – and then some of the – the pieces for the church. But I think that those – that era was got on to a – on a roll. You know, if the University of North Dakota has this well, then the University of Nebraska feels like, you know, they're – who – who do the presidents and chancellors hang out with? They hang out with other presidents and university – or the board of directors hang out with other board of directors from other institutions. So it kind of

gets like, you know, if you get in the main stream of the water all of a sudden if the Feinsteins have it than the Goldsteins would like to have something, and then – so it – it ended up being kind of by word of mouth and, of course, the institution would also fluff the PR quite well, you know. In their – in their magazine they would have photographs of the president wearing this, that, et cetera.

So, I have found that – those commissions rich and – and wonderful.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Did you ever have to compromise some of your design intent with a piece because of this design by committee?

MR. EBENDORF: No, I mean if you do your homework – I mean, like for example if I was doing something for an institution, the first thing I'd want to find out is, you know, do you have a mascot? Do you have – your colors? Do you have something that's unique about, you know – that's your – like the oak leaf or maybe something that's very unique to that – and if you're doing something for the school of music well, then you would – how would you verbally tell the story that is the school of music different from the school of chemistry or pharmaceutical?

So, you know, doing the homework and asking the institution to send – or asking the church to send, you know, me things about the institution so that I can read about, so I can draw up on that. And that's where I'd also maybe go and use – you know, go to the engraver and have him be engraving – maybe they have a motto or a slogan or University of Kansas, the Jayhawkers, et cetera, you know, things that can – the committee can tie into very easily.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It sounds like your experiences of working with design by committee or design by team in Norway really prepared you for those experiences and for success.

MR. EBENDORF: The thing that was a – a difficulty for me, that I never learned to render when I was at – at a university experience, and the rendering, the drawing the design on paper that you could understand became more and more important when I began to get involved with design by committee or approval by committee, you know, the call, the presentation. And there were times when I would actually put together the – I would have the drawing on flat paper and graphite and colored pencil but I'd also even go and make one side of the – of the chain of office in paper and construct it in paper and then I'd maybe do one of the – one of the segments in actually – in metal and if it was gold I would spray paint it yellow to – you know, so there were all these different ways which I could lead the committee into a better understanding of where I was headed.

The drawing – because I was not articulate in showing dimensional and rendering, et cetera, I – what I found out is if I went to the architectural office and said, you know, in – in my town and to the one that maybe is the most – that I thought was the most receptive to my question. I need someone to do these drawings. Here are my marks on paper but is there someone that I can pay night-wise to – to do the rendering? And always there was a young person who was on the boards that were willing to – yeah, I'll moonlight. I'll charge you $100 to do – you know, to put the boards together. So, I would – I would find myself at times hiring another person to do – to do the renderings because I'd never learned that.

But when I was in Norway that was something that was very unique about working in the David Anderson firm because they had an archive of all the drawings – original drawings by the different designers. So there were watercolor drawings, there was wash drawings, there was just pencil, and I would sit at night after the – everybody else would leave and – in the library and look at the different designers presentations on paper. It was really very wonderful to – to – and I got to the point where I could lay out all these drawings and I'd say, "Oh, this is Thor Bjorn Lie-Jorgensen, this is Johan Lund, this is Bjorn Sigurd Ostern," because I could tell by the way they actually did their color on the paper.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So you had real models for –

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – how to put those presentations together and –

MR. EBENDORF: And that was after – that was after the fact when – because that was when I was with – came as a designer with this firm and I'd already gone through some of the, you know, hiring people to do the drawings, but I just never – but if I'm with you one on one I can do – you know, I can – I can bring you around by my ability to draw and to put pigment down. But if I'm gong to a presentations where there's a bunch of hard noses sitting around, you know, and I'm not too sure if I can win them over and I want that job and so I thought well, how can I do it? So I'll pay if I need to to try to win the game.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You had a commission to do a chair which was encrusted with wine bottles and I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what the parameters were for that very playful assignment?

MR. EBENDORF: During – when I left New Paltz and arrived in Santa Monica, California in 1990 – 1989, I moved – into 1990, I had lost – I had stepped away from the university and my workshop then was in the kitchen on a very, very small table in the kitchen and that's where I did all the work. But I then got involved with a Santa Monica junior college school of art and design and architecture and I was – got a job given to me in the school, and it was in the furniture and product development department. And so anyway, I started – because I was around the woodshop all – I started working in furniture, and I would work in the ally where the condo was at because I didn't – it wasn't big enough in the house.

So I started making chairs but the chairs were again a large piece of jewelry. They were chairs, kitchen pipe – you know, the Formica tables and the – they were chairs that were thrown out in the alley, like a TV chair, stuffed with springs. I would take and pull all the stuffing and springs off and just take the wooden frame home and begin to rebuild around that.

The wine chair – a very good friend's husband was a wine connoisseur, belonged to a wine group. They met every two weeks and every – the 12 men, everybody was – they would team up and they would bring different bottles of wine for tasting, wine tastings and, you know, talk about the wines. She, Ruth Summers – now living in Asheville and – with her husband Bruce, said, "You know, Bruce's 50th birthday is coming up and I'd like to make – have you make a special wine chair for – for him." And she said, "The only stipulation is that I want it to be able to – somehow you must not – design into the chair a way for it to carry five bottles of wine – four of wine and one of champagne and I will give you the bottles."

So I said, "All right, I would love to do this." I said, "Now what I want you to do is would you please talk to the wine group and every time they meet have the men save the empty bottles of wine and all their corks and all the – the pull-off labels, et cetera or the tabs, you know, that – to open the bottles." So, every month I would get this paper bag of empties and pull tops, you know, the – the lead pull tops at that time, and the corks. And for many, many months I saved all this, soaked the – the labels off the bottles, took all the corks. So the chair was fabricated in ebony, ivory, cork, the wine labels and I – the chair was built in wood but then I brought all of the particular materials back on to the chair as – I – like découpage but I brought the back in with – with adhesives, et cetera.

So the chair totally had the ambiance of the – these men coming together, and then she gave me the bottles that would sit in the side case on the side of the lower arm where the – the wine rack would be. And at his 50th birthday there were like a hundred people for dinner and before the band was to place for dancing I – she wanted me to present the chair to – to him as a surprise. So, I had gone out and gotten a dolly and clothesline rope and a huge empty cardboard box from the refrigerator that had been thrown out that the refrigerator had come in, put it over the chair and in the middle of the – before the band started I was in one end of the room and had this cord and I started pulling and the kitchen doors opened and out came this cardboard box on this dolly on these four wheels creeping across the middle of the floor. And then Bruce was invited to come down and to take the box off and the chair was his – his birthday gift from – from Ruth and his memory from the wine club.

So, it was a wonderful chair and fortunately it is – it did travel with the Retrospective ["The Jewelry of Robert Ebendorf: A Retrospective of Forty Years"] now so it kind of came full circle, again that passion of materials and bringing different textures and colors together the way I do with the jewelry.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, you've added something too in with the mixture. You say that the chair is jewelry and I'm wondering if you could talk about that a little bit and also just in general your idea about functionality with the objects that you make?

MR. EBENDORF: The – the chair – you know, it's the same way when I – they are like a big piece of jewelry because I'm using rivets, I'm nailing, I'm using some adhesives, I'm taking torn pieces of paper and it's just in a larger scale. I mean, if I were – if I were given a certain segment of this room and said, you know, make it – personalize it. Well, I might go and – and take loose papers and old pieces of wood and so forth and totally begin to encrust that wall. Instead of wallpaper I might do the whole wall in – in all these different materials and do a composition and nail things on or to wire things on. So when I'm making a brooch or making a necklace or – that oftentimes I'm using some of the same technical manipulations.

And there was a time that in New Paltz I was doing a project in the woods where I would take big pieces of copper and the boulders that are – that were in the country, so there was some very nice rock climbing. And I would just take and make these big bands of copper around them and take the hammer and bring the – set these big stones like in a bezel out in the woods and just walk away and leave them. Or do projects – do art projects in the wood and spend the afternoon with – with sticks and paint and – and string and do this assemblage in the woods and take my lunch and then I would just leave it there as – as an ornament – as a surprise for the deer or for the person walking in the woods.

So, I think that – that the sensibility of doing the chairs, since I wasn't a skilled woodworker and not having that

information about dovetailing and things of that – but I could nail things together. I could wire things together. I could cut slots and slide things in. So in a way I was just taking and blowing up the scale of the techniques that I use oftentimes in the workshop.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Was there anything – any part of that statement that you made about the chair being a form of jewelry that also had to do with this object being an ornament for the body? Or does that not enter into your – your statement?

MR. EBENDORF: I hadn't thought about that but it's a great way to look at it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: I love that one. I'll – I'll take that one! I'll – I'll appropriate that one.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Okay! [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: I didn't say it, but my voice just slipped into the feminine side. But I like that because, you know, in a way the chair, when you're sitting in it, it does become – gosh darn, it does become an ornament. It does become – now, if I were to strap that chair around my waist and got up and walked around, it's like those wonderful postcards you see of men wearing the sandwich billboards –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.] It's true.

MR. EBENDORF: – walking around – coffee, five cents and toast or scrambled eggs – you know, from that sense. So, you know, but that – that gets us into a wonderful area about body adornment. Where are those boundaries and what do we – there's a person I want you to look up because when you spoke the other day I just wanted to say oh, you've got to go and get some images of Pierre Degen where his jewelry – he would take a ladder and paint the ladder and put this huge balloon coming off the ladder, a weather balloon, and hooked the ladder over his shoulder and walked through the gallery in a white suit – jumpsuit.

Or then he would take – and take the – another ladder and put it over his head and walk through the gallery, a different one, and he would take the ladder off and then lean it against the wall and come back and take another ladder. So by the time his performance was done, all the pieces of adornment, which were ladders, were one, two, three, four, five, each one painted different but we have visually experienced the experience of he walking in a white jumpsuit with the white socks on, no shoes, with a different ladder and then setting it – great.

So, I thought about – that to you and I said I've got to treat her to that. I'm sure she –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That'd be great. That's great.

MR. EBENDORF: If you don't know the work – I think he was a brilliant maker and fortunately he was celebrated for his intelligence and his forward thinking about body adornment in a contemporary sense in the UK.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: When you were talking about your – I want to come back to in a few moments your whole – where you position yourself vis-à-vis the Europeans. But let – I was very reminded – I want to continue with a thought right now because when you were talking about setting these stones and bezels out in the middle of the forest for the surprise for the deer or someone who might be hiking, I was reminded of some of the projects that are undertaken with the guest or resident artist at a place like Haystack [Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, Maine]. And I was wondering if you could talk a bit about your experiences with some of those very, very rich residence educational programs of Penland [Penland School of Crafts, Penland, North Carolina] and Haystack and others that you have been very active with over the years?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, of course when I leave the studio and an invited guest to – to a new location and supposed to generate some kind of different thinking to prime the pump or to freshen the – freshen the water in the bathtub, you know, to generate new – another way to think. Much like you did yesterday when we sat and talked with the young people at the studio.

And there – there are things that I've enjoyed doing but let me take it to the family for more because this plays into this. At Haystack – after Haystack, Brittany and Ivy and I and another family who had children, we went to an island off the coast of Maine and camped for four days. It was Ron Pearson's cottage – fishing shack on this – on Baker Island, but what we would do in the morning is that we would all pack our lunch and walk on the path and then we would all break off and split and each person would go to wherever they wanted and find a place and make it personal – [Audio Break, tape change.] – and we would give each other – give the project an hour, and of course we would all tippy-toe off into the woods in different places where you couldn't see each other. And then you would make your statement. And of course what you would make your statement with would be the things that you find: broken shells or pine cones or maybe a group of leaves – it would be like a [inaudible] –

where you would come and also – then we'd all come back at a certain time. We'd blow a whistle and we'll all come back and re-gather. And we'd all look and we'd all smile and shake yes, we were done, we were done. Then we – the children and the adults, we would walk together – we'll say – let's say, "Brittany you're first so we'll follow you."

So Brittany would take us in the direction to where she had done her project, but she would not tell us where it was at but she would lead us to the area and we would have to visually – "Oh my goodness, it looks like a spider web! Look, those sticks have all been propped up against the tree! Someone did this!" So, we would have these wonderful environmentally artistic – or environmental experiences and then – adults would take us to – so, of course, we'd find stones or we'd find moss. And so those kind of things were so wonderful because they were done so honestly and just from – from the mind of putting together something that was precious or personal or a surprise.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah. Well, and also just building the community between you and making the community's mark on this special place that you'd gone to.

MR. EBENDORF: I was in the U.K. and I had – it was a design project, and we were working inside but I happened to look outside the window and I saw a trellis, a trellis that end up being in squares. Like, you know, the stakes were in and then going across it – it was like a checkerboard but there was no vines on it. It was down but it was against the cinderblock wall and it was in the garden. And I saw these – it was like a game board but up on – so I saw it and I thought about it and I thought, hmm. So that night everybody left, so I went out and measured the squares and it was – they were in wood.

And so the next day I came in and I said, "Okay, write down this dimension," so they did. And I said, "With your illustration board you are to take – and each one of you to do 10 squares – let's just say they were five – let's say six inches by six inches, cut out the illustration board and to personalize those six squares – or those 10 squares." So they did, not knowing what was going on. And they made them all personal. Some did drawings on them, some did a collage of faces or whatever.

So then I took them all outside, each one carrying their 10. We stood – we came to the – to the square – the grid and I gave each person a number, so then I said number one reach into and take and go to the wall and place one of your squares in position. So what we end up doing was one, two, three, four and they started filling this grid up with their personal pieces. So it was like doing an art project in – art in – a piece in progress. But what we had a great conversation about how the colors worked and so forth.

So, I find that at – at Penland and Haystack I've done several of these – well, many of them where I will take out of studio, take them into the woods, and maybe I'll tell them, "You bring copper wire. You bring this spool of red string. You bring these tin cans." And what I'll do is take them to an area which I've pre-found and say, "Red string, you have five minutes. Work within this boundary with your red string." "What do you mean?" "Take the red string and personalize this area." So she'll walk up and – so, you know, "What do I do? Do I break it off and hang it in the" – so then – then red string, number one is done. Number two, you go and add to this. Number three, you go and participate.

So during the period of time – that space that I have – that I have laid out then becomes – becomes – begins to be defined, and each one makes their mark in that given space. And what that does is it taps into their energy source, it taps into their creative thinking so much differently than – you'd never get that on a drawing paper. You would never get – you know, so it's a way to let them know there's so many ways in which they can tap into their own creative sources. And so it's not a game I play with them but it's a great way to – that I find when I go into the woods and do a project that I just walk off and leave for someone to find. And I don't care that it's a – if it's well done or, you know.

I go – I used to go in New Paltz and on Saturday mornings instead of going to therapy – I hadn't done enough therapy – I'd take and give myself an hour and I'd buy maybe 50 of those paper sacks for – penny candy paper sacks and a ball of string of a certain color and masking tape. And for an hour do nothing but explore these three materials, blow them up, tie them up, pin them on the wall – I had a big pin board – open them up, fold them, re-do them, put them back up, and just explore these three materials and have a good time. And then sit back and listen to opera, have a cup of tea and then begin to explore them visually. What – what has transpired in a playful manner?

And I find that's the way I dig into that inner – dig into myself to bring new ideas, to bring freshness, to cut an edge differently than I normally cut it.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What kind of atmosphere was there at Penland and Haystack between the other guest artists? And did you find you drew on them for inspiration or kind of creative energy that would spur you?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that that's one of the – that's one of the not only are the students a gift for those two

weeks but, you know, all of a sudden usually the faculty are people who are – been in the trenches for a good time, they've got some notoriety of the type of work they've done as teachers or as makers. If it's a printmaker to a furniture person to a glassblower – maybe it's the guest artist who – at Haystack this year he was a juggler. He won the international juggling competition. What the hell was that about?

But I'll tell you, the night that we were given – the faculty was to show, you know, our slides of our work, well, the guest artist, the juggler internationally – and when they were introduced Mark had this year – last year won the international – well, he got up and did this whole thing with juggling that just blew us away. And all week – for the two weeks every afternoon he would practice juggling in the studio, the guest artist studio, but at 4:00 in the afternoon until 6:00 at dinnertime he has open studio. And my students would go up there and he had not only 100 tennis balls but he had like 600 tennis balls and my class, by the time – they started with two and by the time they left, those people were so drugged and hooked in. He would – they were juggling six at a time, you know.

But – so what do they bring? Yes, I think what – I mean, experience with the guest teachers have been, again, networking, making connections with them, knowing something about their work, being able to reconnect with them, and I do stay in touch with them. I'm excited to pass their name on to another – you know, to another – to Penland as a guest speaker – or speaker or teacher. Much like I've enjoyed finding you. I mean, I was sitting in an audience hearing you speak and I tracked you down, you know, two years later because I wanted once again for my audience or the people I was working with to hear what you had to say.

So, the – the cross pollination both from the objects and the artistic activity, but also being able to sit down on the rocks at Haystack and have a conversation with a person from Poland who's a – an installation artist and to better understand the work they're doing. So it does come full circle.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, what we're talking about here is just that really essential process of building a community of like spirits and maybe a community of people that will challenge you. But, anyways a community of people who is concerned that you do the best work you can possibly do. What have been the community's that have been most important to you over the course of your career?

MR. EBENDORF: I would say that – and I'd have to go back to what you just asked, that I realize that coming to Penland School of Crafts and Bill Brown, who was a former director, it's his second year so it must have been 1963. I came to teach one class in jewelry from Florida. I end up staying after my teaching two weeks. He said, "Bob, why don't you stay on? You know, the studio is – we have plenty of room." But Penland – so I stayed on for the summer and just worked on things and became part of that community.

And I will have to say that Penland opened the doors to me in so many ways. I met people who had been major, major figures, a sea of people: Toshiko Takaezu, Lenore Tawney, Ted Hallman in weaving. Men and women who I had read about, they were there as teachers and those friendships stayed in place and still are in place today with them. And Haystack has offered the same gift and Arrowmont [Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, Tennessee].

So I find that when I have done these summer experiences, or guest artisan visits where there are other guest artists coming and presenting a concept or an idea or a lecture, they have – they have helped me push my bar higher in critical thinking, and in language for discussion, and oh definitely, you know, material investigation. So that has been a wealth of surprises as well as gifts.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Now, a community that you were very instrumental in developing was, of course, the Society of North American Goldsmiths or SNAG. Talk about that experience a little bit, and particularly what it was that made an organization like SNAG so necessary at the time when this group of men was coming together and saying we need to have an organization for metalsmiths.

MR. EBENDORF: In '68 I got a letter – I was at University of Georgia [Athens, Georgia] – and the letter came from Philip Morton who was then – the letter was postmarked from Canada. He asked if I would like to join him in Chicago, and he gave the hotel and some people who would come together and he said, "I thought it was time that we should discuss about our field and there are concerns that I have that perhaps you also are sensitive to. And the areas that I'd like to talk about would be education, would be exhibitions, would be dialogue, it would be – is it not time that we should take responsibility for our own destiny, for our own journey?"

The American Craft Organization [American Craft Council], which is still today functioning and offering leadership, the – at that time *American Craft* – what's it called? The *American Craft*? Their publication – their magazine was servicing, you know, weaving, all the different medium.

So when we came to Chicago, the meetings for those three days were discussing should there be an organization that we could be intimately involved with and give it our leadership – our leadership? What had just began to happen was that NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts], the clay society, began

to form. There was – you know, all the different mediums began to break off from the American Craft Council and form their own organizations. We see it today with GAS [Glass Art Society], meaning the glass society and then there was NCECA, the ceramics, there's the weaving, and then now there's SNAG. So, everybody began to kind of look in depth about their own work and their own area of interest.

And so we discussed and we realized that we could give leadership to scholarly thinking. We could also give leadership to exhibitions. We could give leadership to education of the young people coming up in the academic experiences, and the richness of archivally tracking our own contemporary movement and also exchanging ideas. So these were some of the – but then what do we call this? What would we call ourselves? Well, we spent a long time logistically trying to figure out what – are we goldsmiths? Are we metalsmiths?

But basically out of that we felt it was time to take responsibility and as we plowed through our thinking, then in 1970 in St. Paul, Minnesota we had the first conference where we came forth with the charter and we had an art historian, Harry Bober, spoke from the Metropolitan Museum on medieval work, enamels and reliquaries. A wonderful man and so he brought the scholarly – Albert Paley made a presentation. Stan Lechtzin made a presentation. And we had an exhibition that was – one that was competitive and I think Olaf Skoogfors, Ron Pearson, and Stan Lechtzin were the jurors of the competition. And we had a fest, basically celebrated a new beginning.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Who were the original – the original group that was involved? Do you recall all their names?

MR. EBENDORF: I can give you – it was Olaf Skoogfors, Kurt Matzdorf, Brent Kington, Phil Morton, Ebendorf. Those come quickly to mind. If I went to my files I could –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I have to note there were no women.

MR. EBENDORF: I believe you're correct on that and I – but then we also acknowledged that and when we came together the next time in Boston, it was an open meeting but we – that group particularly invited – we each one were responsible for inviting some new people to come and discuss this. They were not in that – but Arline Fisch was at this time. Miye Matsukata was also there. And it was the second gathering of more discussion as we began to build the charter and thinking about our direction. Alma Eikerman.

I would have to say that it was – you know, the earlier time it was driven very much by the academic teachers, but there were people like Ron Pearson that, you know, were – had their – his own workshop. Of course, Ron is a major figure in – if we look at the American studio movement. I mean, here was a man who until his death had his own studio and did one-of-a-kind pieces and production and was a very – a very important voice in the growth of the organization.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I'm struck by the motivation that this group of men had when they came together to talk about the necessity for what would become SNAG and that they needed to support education and help students. And this was so much a period of American history when the crafts were being quote "institutionalized." I mean, not in a negative sense, but in that people were coming together. They said we need – we need to formalize our relationships. We need to become part of the academic community.

And what are your reflections on how that academic community has influenced the direction of metals and what it has meant to you personally as a metalsmith through your career, being part of an academic community?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, I was just honored this past conference in St. Petersburg, Florida to be one of the presenters – one of the speakers and speaking about the 40-year Retrospective and a little bit about my journey and personally reflecting a bit. And I will have to say the times that I've gone to SNAG conferences, after leaving the presidency – and I was the president for seven, eight years in the very rough, early, early days.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What period of time was that?

MR. EBENDORF: 1973, I think, for about seven years, eight years. And it was a rough time for – we were hanging on by a thread because there was so much dissension and, you know, we weren't that well-organized but we were all donating time to make this work. And so a lot of things fell between the cracks and then someone would be upset because someone's ego was hurt or whatever. And were we doing the right – making the right decisions? And we needed a – you know, we needed a better publication, et cetera, so forth.

But I will have to say that in – after the leaving the presidency, coming to the SNAG conferences, quietly standing back, and now 40 years of its existence and some hundreds and hundreds of strong members, both professional people who day by day do their work, as well as educators, as well as – educators meaning faculty that teach at institutions – and the young people who are finding their way. I do quietly stand back and have this smile of joy, realizing we did something wrong because if the organization wasn't meant to be there at the present it would have died on the vine. So something is doing – we've done something right that is still healthy

and vital and growing and still servicing the organization members as we set out to do.

So, at St. Petersburg with some 600 people attending the conference and having all the different speakers of different genres of thought – scholarly, makers, et cetera – it was a proud – once again, a proud moment to realize that I was the babe in the wilderness at that table in Chicago because I was the youngest person at the table. And very shortly after we became – and the conference in – Brent Kington was the first president but he served only momentarily until the conference in 1970 and at that moment the board voted me to become the president. And I remember talking to Brent and saying, "I can't do this! It's way over my head!" And he said, "No, no, no, you can do it. We'll all be there to help you." And I now look back and kind of chuckle. I was the youngest one and I was kind of the lamb being led to slaughter in that, you know, pruning my ears or pruning the organization until we got through.

But the one thing that was so important that we did and with great pride I look on quietly now, but we – the newsletter. We did a newsletter that was basically by that old crank Xerox machine, you know, the blue –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: The mimeograph machine. Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: Yes, the mimeograph machine. That was our first and then we geared – we ratcheted up to what we called Gold Dust, which had a gold color with black, again, still the mimeograph machine. But the importance – I kept pushing and saying we needed to get a more formal publication and so the *Metalsmith* – we gave birth to the *Metalsmith* concept publication and today we see it as one of our major voices for us to stay in touch.

And that was the way – that was a good – that was an investment that was necessary because the organization – we were able to discuss scholarly things. We were able to discuss history. We were able to present people's work and to acknowledge certain movements in the field. And so today *Metalsmith*, I think, is a very, very important, cogent part of the existence and the strength of the organization with good writers and looking for material.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And departments – metals departments really rely on the journal to educate their students, to – and also to provide them a window on what the professional world beyond the classroom can mean to – in a certain limited sense. The people that are doing one-of-a-kinds, I mean, how they organize their studios. *Metalsmith* has that kind of information between its covers.

Talking about that academic context, though, that you've kind of – you've gone back to that context, and now you're at East Carolina University. When did you begin your employment here?

MR. EBENDORF: I came as – I came to do a workshop not knowing that there was an agenda. John Satterfield, who is – who started the metal program here at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina – that's in the eastern part of the state and the – not so far from Ocracoke or the Outer Banks. But John and Linda Darty were the faculty members in the metal program here and that – Linda Darty was to take a creative leave of absence and they needed someone to hold her position down just for that spring semester.

So, the two of them had known me professionally from both Penland and from SNAG and John Satterfield said, "Well, maybe, you know, Bob is available. He's no longer teaching. He's now living in Rosendale, New York and, you know, why don't we invite him down to do a workshop and he might be a person that would be available for taking that position for just the spring year, Linda, while you go on leave of absence."

So I came down and did the workshop and not knowing that I was really being looked at very closely to see how the students responded to me and how they responded to me. So, finally, getting ready to leave to go to the airport, at lunch John offered me the opportunity to come as a guest for one semester, the spring, while Linda Darty went on leave of absence.

I came for that and during that time John fell ill and was having health problems and needed to spend time in and out of the doctor situation. So Linda came back and I stayed on for that time, for the spring. Getting ready to leave, to leave Greenville. The dean said, "Look, could you stay for one more year? We'll give you this amount of money and we just don't want to lose you. Would you stay for the year? And I can offer you that," and then I said, "Well, yeah," because I didn't have a full-time job and I was available. So, I said, "Yes, I'd be happy to," because I had enjoyed the time and particularly enjoyed working with the students again because I had been away from the academic circle for – since 1989 when I left New Paltz. So this was kind of – this was like, you know, bread and butter. This was like a wonderful evening with friends, working once again with the students and being a part of the academic circle. And –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What sort of – I was going to say what kind of haven has it offered you as an artist?

MR. EBENDORF: It's offered me support, both financially and also comrades of people who are creatively thinking about their work and pushing parameters. It's offered me the opportunity to give and share – give back

things that were given to me such as techniques and ideas of thought to the student, or to the people I work with. So it's offered me that opportunity to enrich the journey.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you see differences between jewelers who are trained inside an academic context and those who have their training outside academia?

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah, I think that those who are trained outside the academic have a much more real picture of the – of the goldsmith, of its really challenging – its challenge. Where the student coming through really has a very, very narrow window of it, even though many of us try to broaden that window. But it's nothing – the real heroes here are the practitioners, the men and women who get up every morning and open that front door and pay their rent and develop a product that the public will buy, at the same time and do it with honor.

And, you know, we in the academic circle – I can take a piece of bamboo stick and wrap it with a piece of iron wire and put a piece of broken glass on it and put pin stem on the back and I have an opportunity to exhibit that. And that's – that's pretty bogus when I really think about – bogus meaning that in the real world I'd probably make more money making icebox magnets than the jewelry that I choose to make. But if – you know, if I want to go with a bang I should use my – really skills that I know using diamonds and pearls and silver and gold and make beautiful things.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I know a part of – a good part of your own teaching philosophy and your motives have come from some of the experiences that you've had. You had academic training but you've always tried to have experiences outside in these workshops, as you had in Norway, and as you've said you've tried to give that back to your students, to open up the windows.

And I'm wondering as you've had with contact with lots of different academic institutions around the country – and I'm thinking here too maybe of places where you haven't taught like Cranbrook [Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan] or the Oregon College of Art and Craft. How do you see – what are their teaching philosophies like? What are the differences between their teaching philosophies and how would you evaluate them?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that we – those of the people who are seriously educators and in the metal field, I think we try to stay somewhat abreast of our other colleagues who are teachers. Definitely there are schools that are more theory driven than others. There are some schools that their leadership is more about making jewelry that's functional to the body. And there are some program's leaders – or some programs that deal with installation – you know, an object can be – using a goldsmith technique, it could be anything. You could use a sewing machine and get a metal degree, which is kind of strange. I mean, someone who their MFA exhibition is paper and sewing and they get a metal degree, an MFA in metals from John Doe University, you know, how do you – how do you equate that?

So, I think that there's quite a lot of differences in the way we find our academic experience, and it ends up being the call of whomever's giving that captain leadership.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right.

MR. EBENDORF: So, I think those are some of the things that when we come together at SNAG we bump heads with each other and discuss and care and compare. And from that – and some faculty, they don't care – I think that – no, I won't say it quite like that, but they have a philosophy and that's what they enjoy presenting.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What's your – I mean, given the fact that you've come – you came through a very rigorous training in traditional craftsmanship with metals, and you in a sense sought that out yourself. What's your feeling now as you look around and you see certain programs abandoning that, or making that of less importance to keep up with more kind of conceptual trends in the field and the desire of students to have access to more materials and more freedom in the classroom?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, I think that – I'll come ground it here where I'm at at the moment enjoying this wonderful position of the Belk Endowed Chair position, which is really very unique, for many ways, for me and for anybody who sits in this position, in the chair. But I would hope that with the student that I can give – or talk broad enough and – and present to them as real a picture as I can because there's no teaching – the teaching jobs that are out there become far and few between.

There is great talent coming out that – of the young people but they're not going to find the teaching jobs so I've got to be real with them and say, you know, you build these beautiful – make these beautiful things that really maybe only this studio understands. If you take that piece into the jewelry store that to – let's say to Tiffany's, they would look at it and say well, what – where – what is this thing? So, I'm trying to give them the overview of – that it's a hard – it's a hard profession to stay alive in.

And so I think one of the best things that I can say to them is that, you know, if you finished with an undergraduate or graduate degree in metals, I think one of the next most wonderful step is to go work for somebody. Be a worker bee and see what it's – I said well, if you're a worker bee and being paid x amount of dollars an hour and maybe benefits, maybe not, you don't have to pay the rent of a store. You don't have to pay health insurance. You don't have to pay the electricity bill. You don't have to worry about you make these things and who the hell is going to buy it? You don't have to worry about that.

But if you sit there for a year, two years, three years making a wage and observe how this man or woman runs this organization, that's just another whole level of – at their expense. And then if you want to spring off and do your own work you'll be so much better – you know, in the school you don't get that, and it's frustrating for me how to share the realism and the honesty of the challenge. I'll talk about it but it's kind of like, you know, they say, "God, he's just beating that horse again." I hear – you know, it doesn't make sense because they're not paying the rent and they're not – they're not trying to figure out who's going to buy the earrings, et cetera.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, they'll learn quickly enough when they walk out those doors with their diploma. But those lessons – I think those lessons do find their way into a brain and they'll remember it and –

MR. EBENDORF: And some teachers say, "You know what? I'm not worried about the attrition rate. I'm not worried about who's going to die and who's going to live. I mean, that's their responsibility. I can only do what I can do here and Bob, I'll tell you, probably maybe 35 percent of them who are getting degrees don't even – they'll never make it. They'll be selling doublewide trailers."

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Given the richness of the field in terms of the established professionals and the emerging artists who are starting to become movers and shakers now – I'm thinking here, you know, young people who are – have just been employed in academia or who have just been successful in starting up their studios. How do you see the field of American jewelry ranking internationally? I mean, there's so much going on, how would you compare it to what's going on in other parts of the world?

MR. EBENDORF: Boy, I was hoping I could sit down and ask you that question because – it's – it is – it's a biggie because, you know, I enjoy watching the young person go into the library we have in our department and they start looking at the European work and – or the work from Korea or from China or Japan and – or the U.K. They're just blown – oh, look at the – you know, and same with the galleries here. They – so there's a lot of different kinds of work being done. I mean, there's a lecture I give on, you know, what 10 ways a jeweler can you make – as a metal person can you make a living today and we talk about all the different fragments.

But when we talk about jewelry, there's just so many different levels of jewelry. During the time that I enjoyed the relationship with Ivy, we were very much involved with the fashion industry. I mean, high rolling, making things for Claude Montana, for Halston, you know, the runway, the glitz that – you know, that pumped the – pumped with the music and the ladies hitting the runway. At the same time, you know, Bendel's, Saks Fifth Avenue – how many accounts could the company Small Wonders – which was Ivy Ross's jewelry company, it was Small Wonders. And then in turn here I was making one-of-a-kind pieces and so there's – so the question is, you know, what is the differences?

I know many European people who work very intellectually about their work, extremely – not esoteric but extremely bright people who chose to take their wisdom and their – and their smartness and make jewelry that tandems that language or that thinking. Then there are jewelers that I know in America here who make beautiful things that work beautifully on the body and are greatly celebrated but still have a personal voice.

Is the – how much do I see of narrative work in Europe? I don't see that – I mean, I don't think I see that much from the catalogs and things that I'm looking at. I don't think I see a lot of narrative work. I think America people do enjoy the narrative.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's always been considered the American genre of jewelry.

MR. EBENDORF: You said it, I was just waiting to see if you'd bring – I was curious so that was something I was going to ask you later today –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah. Yeah, I mean there are conferences in Europe given on narrative jewelry from America. I mean, they are bringing people over to talk to them about that new thing that was happening, you know, 30 years ago, 15 years ago and began to heat up 15 years ago.

And I think there are some European jewelers who have begun to experiment that but always in the light of the American pioneer – pioneering of that – of that field.

MR. EBENDORF: I don't like to – and this might be shortsighted but I – from my experience internationally and my experience being a very active American both educator and maker, I think that the American jeweler and

silversmith have been so welcoming to our foreign guests. I mean, once they arrive – I mean, we just end up picking up the phone and calling Chicago and saying, you know, Mary Jackson is going to come to Chicago and could you put them up over night? And she has wonderful work with her, and we just pass them right on, you know, and even pay them to do a lecture or whatever.

If you go to – you don't see – when you go to Europe, if you have a contact, you will go see that particular person but I – very seldom do I see them pick up the phone and parlay you to this next person, next person. That's just a different –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: A different cultural style.

MR. EBENDORF: – a difference in culture.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: But I will have to say that I think the Americans have been so embrace – have so embraced the – the artist community and we welcome – you know, we welcome – give me your tired, give me your poor. We have welcomed –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Give me your jewelers! [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: And in turn we're eager to share with them what we have. And it's been – so, a little different.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: It's quite different.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah.

MR. EBENDORF: The American phenomenon of the workshop syndrome – this all came out of American in that sense. I mean, Europe – if you go to someone's workshop, they're not going to call six or seven people and have them come and have you do a presentation. You'll do a presentation or talk and be with them but it's – it's a whole different – and that's where – you know, we're always giving away, giving. It seems like we are great, great givers of information and celebrate the joy of exchange.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you see any specific trends that American jewelry itself is exploring right now and has – has the – have the trends changed over the course of your career?

MR. EBENDORF: I think it's – I think it swings around in different ways, and I think right now there's – I think that a lot of the young people are looking at installation work because they think that – because they see so much of it in the art journals, et cetera, and so forth. And all of a sudden, you know, the jeweler is starting to think about pushing those parameters or can I play in that arena as well as – and so I think that.

And I think there's also a very interesting pursuit in scholarly work and being intellectual about the pieces. Taking the body and actually working inside the body instead of, you know, an object that fits on the body, but using the – using the vascular system, the heart and different parts of the body as perhaps a springboard of where these pieces come from and what they are.

And then there are those who enjoy making just good wearable jewelry. The narrative continues to be a part of the heart – the loud voice. I think that I see a lot of mixed media work still being very much visually – and color. I think enamels have risen in American makers. I think that there's a lot of freshness in the enameling arena. I think that the Enameling Society has been welcomed and made this crossover into the Society of North American Goldsmiths. The last four – the last three conferences there's been this hard – there's been speakers who are heavy enamel – you know, contemporary enamel makers. There's been surveys being shown. So and our next conference is going to be – be piloted by a heavy enamel voice.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: There's also – I see a lot more freedom in enamel now. You know, it's not so much the oh, I've got to get the pigment on this little micro line and it's going to be perfect, perfect, perfect, kind of a skill – a showing off of skill. There's a lot more we're going to be spontaneous, we're going to be experimental, we're going to be free.

MR. EBENDORF: And I think – and I think that has come because a lot of the very spunky jewelers who have great skills have been looking on to what the enameling group was doing and realizing that I could be – you know, let me get some of that glass on what I'm doing and starting to run with it. I think that Linda Darty and being – putting the two conferences that she did and making them, the society, to do color catalogs have been very rich in opening these doors to the jewelry makers – the contemporary jewelry makers.

[Audio break.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: This is Tacey Ann Rosolowski interviewing Robert Ebendorf at his home in Greenville, North Carolina. It is April 17th, 2004. I'm conducting this interview for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number five, session two.

Bob, do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition of jewelry making or one that is particularly American?

MR. EBENDORF: Internationally and American combination. A double dip, I'd say. You know, I – traditionally I come from the heritage of, I would say, probably a European extraction of – you know, of the history of metalsmith – I mean, jewelry and goldsmithing to the U.S. But as we take a more contemporary twist of that, because you've heard me speak about – I believe I belong to a history and to a family.

The contemporary jewelry movement in Europe or in Asia has influenced my work in a sense of visually being aware of work and, of course, this has all come by a piece of paper or a postcard or a catalog, and maybe never oftentimes have any opportunity to go to the international exhibitions. But, because of personal communications, letters and exchanges, I feel the energy and the creative thinking. Also too the number of European guests and Asian guests that have come to be guests in my home and to speak to the students and to bring objects, that I could handle them or so we could physically touch them and move around them visually and have a physical relationship to them.

So they have influenced but I think that in my own work there might have been a time where that was more influential such as I spoke about the experience with Claus Bury. There is a good example of how deep that experience and that conversation and those objects touched me.
[Audio break, tape change.] But I think today that it's not quite the same format and experience as I did in my younger time. Not that I was – needed – that I could be impressed – an impressionable situation, but I think now I'm comfortable and I make what I want to make and I have a very strong grounding of my aesthetics and the way I orchestrate my creative thinking.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What do you think are the links between U.S. and Canadian and European jewelers right now and how does that influence the field of jewelry making and metals in the U.S.?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that connection is very fluid and it's about publications. I mean, critical writing, the catalogs and we see more – like, for example, at the SOFA [The International Expositions of Sculpture Objects and Functional Art] – Chicago SOFA, New York, you see one or two very strong presentations by Charon Kransen, for example, where it is very strong, where we can walk in and see a body of a European work that has been very carefully selected. So, I think that internationally we're beginning to see more and more exhibitions here being generated by a gallery or by a museum taking and bringing an international jewelry exhibition.

Where – and the catalogs float in and out of here, but the catalogs usually come via from Europe or Asia to a professor or to the – that network, and that professor or those students see the work and are highly in touch with the – with the catalogs. I don't see the catalogs going so much – if they come to the individual artists like myself – if I weren't in the academic field and dealing with students, the catalogs that I got would probably end up being enjoyed one-on-one and then on my shelf. But so many of the teachers that receive these, right away bring them in and share them to the students. And so there's a quick drain off, a quick crossover that's going on.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I want to ask about that connection, but first I want to capture just some details. What in your career have been some of the most important and influential catalogs for you in your work and you understanding yourself within this international context of jewelry makers?

MR. EBENDORF: I think the – of course, now some of these – for example, I'll just use Tone Vigeland for instance because of the Norwegian relationship. Knowing her as a young girl coming right out of the academy and being this young, new spotlight but now, you know, working many, many years. We exchanged catalogs and exchanged letters. So, I always enjoy seeing the work and the continuity of her work. So that's a personal – but when those catalogs or those images come to me on paper or postcard or a poster, I kind of keep abreast of how – now, she's moved from jewelry format where she's now making – you know, she's being celebrated in the sculptural realm of the fine arts, as a sculptor but she's coming definitely – they're just – definitely her jewelry larger and her love for the iron and the metal the way she does.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I can understand your appreciation of her work just because of its extreme texturality. I mean, all –

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah. I mean, and, you know – and Tone has stayed true to her – to her drum in a sense that black rusty or etched – or nature treated materials and they're – they're gorgeous and they do have a thread, a continuity.

I have a very close relationship with her and it's one that I am very thankful for and we spend much time together by letter or by a piece of paper of a catalog. But then there's catalogs such as – come from Pforzheim, the – one of the jewelry capitals of the world that has this wonderful Schmuckmuseum which is the jewelry of the – a museum of historical jewelry and contemporary jewelry. And for – for an American to go to that museum – which I've done a number of times visiting Pforzheim – it was like I just – you know, awesome to walk in and the whole museum was just historical, old pieces, Greek and moving forward, but then the contemporary – besides the contemporary exhibition.

And their archives and library is – you know, it's all about jewelry. It's the history of the makers and the work.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And one of the important tomes that they produced was, of course, the catalog that accompanied the "Ornamentum" exhibition.

MR. EBENDORF: And that was a monumental undertaking and it was across the board, U.S., Asia and Europe and the U.K. And going to that exhibition opening in 1970 – 1989 in Pforzheim, it was, you know, four days of objects, lectures, drink, fest and sitting down and talking to people that I've only known by the catalogs. But the work was very thoughtful, but it was also very much of the moment of the time and, you know, breaking barriers.

And if I remember right there wasn't a lot of high-end traditional diamonds and gold work and platinum. There was, you know, a real parameter pushing: string and paper and rubber and mixed media –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Performance pieces.

MR. EBENDORF: – gem stones, some silver, pieces that were very much about narrative. They even actually took and selected certain artists and let them have their own space to make a statement. And I can remember Robert Lee Morris who was an American from – who had the very high-end, high rolling art ware exhibition – gallery space in SoHo that dealt very much with fashion. I mean, he had *Elle* magazine and *Vogue* always coming to SoHo to get jewelry to put on the runway models and shoot.

Robert Lee Morris, his piece for that invitational exhibition special artisan – he took the black motorcycle leather jacket and instead of putting Harley Davidson insignia on it, he adorned the jacket all with metal medallions that – and so it was laden – a set of buttons, it was laden with metal medallions that he had designed and made. So it was – had a very special flavor for the whole exhibition for those four days.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You mentioned earlier that when American professors received these catalogs – that they're kind of the conduits and they pass those exhibition catalogs on to their students. And I wanted you to reflect a little bit on what you think is the place of universities in the American craft movement, as they become these relay points for this kind of information.

MR. EBENDORF: They – you know, they serve a wonderful opportunity for the student in a university setting to be artistically involved and – with the jewelry and silversmithing. I think that the different teachers try to underpin the education in different ways. But, you know, also too you and I know in the real world oftentimes a talented graduate student – let's speak on the – on that high end – stepping out into the mainstream of economy and starting to make a living one on one with their work is very, very hard because oftentimes the things that they've made during graduate school are made very – technically very intense.

Also too the understanding perhaps of the objects they've made – maybe the jewelry is something you actually climb into or it's a piece that ends up going around the neck, down the arm and part of it coming down the thigh. Or it might be just ink drawings on the body, not tattoos but just basically drawing on the body and getting acknowledgements for, you know, getting a degree in jewelry – in the metal department at University of Oshkosh [University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh], shall we say.

Well, you know, the practicality and the realization of that in the mainstream of survival is pretty thin. So, the university does a very unique job in the way they talk about jewelry and the aesthetics and design, but also too it's very hard for – I think for the graduate student or the serious metal student to step out and to turn their education into a financial return right away.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That kind of ivory tower protection is really important.

MR. EBENDORF: Because we don't have the apprenticeship like the Europeans. Still today the European young man or woman can work for six years and go through the hoops, and the jumps, and the paperwork, and the exams because they have to actually take an exam with the masters grading this exam. And where does that put them? It either puts them working as a master in their own workshop or a master working with – in another workshop and we don't have that kind of system here at all.

There are some people who might be in rehab or might be not the type of person that likes going to an

educational experience, and finds in a major city a jeweler that will take them on as a gopher and kind of bring them up day by day in their workshop. But we don't have that piece of paper as a master goldsmith, but there are some men and women who still find that but it's not – it's not the same kind of apprenticeship experience like the Europeans and Asians have.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: One set of events that you were part of that was attached to the university system was the "Conversations" series that was inaugurated in New Paltz and I want – wanted to make sure that you talked about that –

MR. EBENDORF: Oh, thank you.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – because not everyone knows about that.

MR. EBENDORF: "Conversations" – you and I are having a conversation as we sit here today and it's been a very rich conversation, exchanging ideas, difference of opinions, and perhaps different philosophies. "Conversations" was a concept that I thought would be – would work very nicely of the moment in New Paltz in the academic setting. So what our students decided to do – and I piloted this totally by myself. I had to get the dean to say, "Okay, if you think you can pull it off, we'll go for it. I'll give you x – $500 to help make it happen."

What I wanted to do was to invite five schools that we would be one – four schools, four metal programs to come to New Paltz and to have a conversation. And to help generate that conversation we asked each one of the schools to pick – to make an – to send work for an exhibition which we would put up and it would represent their students' work. We also asked that there be one spokesperson for each institution to do a presentation about their school and their metal program, and at the same time our students would welcome them and the faculty would welcome them. Jamie Bennett and myself would welcome them. We would put them up, find housing for them and the students – we would cook for the whole week prior and put things in the icebox. We would do all the cooking, made it as inexpensive as – but those were the – and great fests.

But what it was – we then invited in certain people that would come talk, someone who wrote for *Metalsmith*, Barbara Rockefeller came and spoke at one of – one of the conferences or conversations. A museum person would come from New York to speak and make a presentation. So it was about exchanging ideas and coming together.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: When was the inaugural meeting? What year?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that must have been in probably '81 – '80 or '81.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And how many years did it run?

MR. EBENDORF: It ran – it's still running but now they do it every other year. While I was there, before I left we did it every year and it's – it's like throwing stone in the water. Cranbrook would come, RISD[Rhode Island School of Design, Providence] would come, Mass College of Art [Massachusetts College of Art, Boston] came, University of Wisconsin came, and when these schools – and Philadelphia's College of Art [The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania], these are just some of the new people who came to New Paltz. But when they went back, the students had had such an enrichment that then they began – like pods, they began to also create one in their institution and invite people of their – you know, within geographical locations. And so it's been kind of interesting to look on and see that that – that energy is still blossoming and enrichening the young person.

It was really rich for – because it was – all of a sudden this young student could talk to somebody else in another part of the United States and they're all being challenged. And what are you going to do with it? Where are you going to go? Do you like your program? What don't you like? So it was a conversation that would take place for those days.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Was it not only about practical matters of that sort but were there also elements of the discussion that were talking about more aesthetic questions or those broader issues?

MR. EBENDORF: Yes, and, you know, as it ratcheted up – as it got better grounded, Jamie Bennett would put the bar a little higher and there would be different – and we would try to think of more thoughtful kind of presentations and maybe more intellectually challenging than just talking about technique. So, the technique thing began to slide away; the object was there to look at but we were engaging more with the dialogue of intellectualism and criticism.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It impresses me that – I mean, like the founding of SNAG, the inauguration of this "Conversations" series – I mean, both of these have been directed toward a concern that continues to be alive in the metals world, which is that there's not a lot of vital criticism. I hear so many jewelers saying, "Yeah, we're making all these really great objects but we don't have a rich history of criticism." It's kind of like talking to the

choir or friends talking to one another or a buddy sitting over a coffee table arguing about something, but there's nobody stepping back and bringing a critical perspective. And it seems to me that "Conversations" and SNAG have attempted to raise the level of discourse, if you will.

On that vein – or in that vein I'd like to ask you about what you think about critical writing in the field and who have been some of the writers that you think are particularly influential in craft.

MR. EBENDORF: Well, I'll just speak a little closer towards the metal and also towards our publications. I personally find it interesting and I enjoy when a non-maker – not a metalsmith, a jeweler writing a criticism of another jeweler's work. It might be a little ingrown to a certain extent, but I think – I find it's interesting when my work is set – the challenge is set before let's say a person who – that writes criticism for sculpture or write criticism on paintings – or maybe they're an architectural critic – because their eyes will look at and they will discuss the object or the work far differently than another maker looking at another makers work. And I find that very refreshing.

I might not – I might not understand the language they're using because I think what is – what is a critical writer? One of the most wonderful things that they bring – he or she – is their creative – their creative work is their words. Their creative work is the way they weave the fabric and that is with copy and text, as well as their – you know, what they're trying to underpin and the prognosis of the object and the way they want to – want me to view the work. So, sometimes I don't catch up with – because I have to work and re-read and sometimes I understand it and sometimes I don't. But I do find it wonderful when the magazine or the museum will have another person look at the work.

Arthur Dante is a very good person who is gifted and has taken – said yes to looking at different exhibitions that deal with jewelry. And Heather White who is in Massachusetts at Mass College of Art had a project that she wanted to do, and just on a flippant whim she wrote him a letter asking if he would come and would he review or would he write something for the catalog thinking, you know, I'm nobody who – he is – he is a person who is very important in the field, she felt. And all of a sudden she got this wonderful warm letter back and he said I'd love to do this and what a bingo ringer for her.

I mean, that was just – made her day in the sense that here is a gentleman who has done so much for the – for the field of art and thinking that he said sure, I'll take your project and do something with it. And I don't even think there was something about money. I mean, he just found this young energy and he said I'd like to – yeah, I can – I would work with you on that.

So, you know – and I also think that the *Metalsmith* has ratcheted up and are always looking for good writers and we don't have enough good critical writers for our field. But I think we – we've gained. We've come a long ways and so hopefully we continue to stretch.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Are there other journals that have had an affect on you besides *Metalsmith*?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that – I know that I enjoy very much standing before the – at our media center – the different publications that come in monthly and, you know, zip through them and so forth. *Sculpture Magazine*, *Wired*, *PRINT*, the – the Walker Center of Art in Minneapolis is it? [Walker Art Center] They have a monthly – a quarterly. Also too the *American Ceramics*, I enjoy their thoughtful pieces.

But it gives me a quick flavor of not only images but also I do look – it's amazing now that I think about it. When I'm looking at publications, I think one of the first things – now that you've asked this question, I do – I think I look at the title of the article and I look who wrote it. Interesting that – you know, and me who struggles so much with reading and, you know, being able to assemble exactly what this person's saying. I – maybe because I know how hard it is to find good writers in the field, and so when an article that – that I find myself really quickly drawn to, I go very quickly to who and where are they from. And all of a sudden I see this name appear and all of a sudden I'll be oh, my gosh well, here – well, again –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Do you recall –

MR. EBENDORF: *Aperture* is a very – another publication that I enjoy very much from – it takes me to the world of photography which I do enjoy, and *Metropolis*, *ID* magazine. So these are – these are – they all, I think – without getting real critical because I don't know them critically that well, but I think that they all contribute to the blend and keeps the – keeps the agitator moving around.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I mean, I think it's – it's significant to me that you're mentioning magazines that range really widely in terms of form and media and that really reflects the way that you range over a huge territory in the materials you bring together, the kinds of forms that you're interested in –

MR. EBENDORF: Well, you know, it's funny because – interesting that when I was being interviewed for the – for

this Belk position here at East Carolina, in my interview with the committee, they said so, where would you draw upon enrichening our community if you were so fortunate to have this job? And I started naming these publications and I can remember the committee just looking at me and – like where – I mean, they knew me from my portfolio as a metal person with some kind of presence in the field. And here I was moving to the architecture, I was moving to *ID* magazine, I was moving to *PRINT*, to *Wired* and they just kind of looked at me like – you know, so I know that that's – I wasn't playing with their head but I realized that – that they said this person is informed. He is looking at a broad sense. And as you pointed out, because it's like that workbench in there, there's a broad range of materials that I continue to vacillate and bathe myself in.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, it's reminding me of that decision that you made when you were an undergraduate and also in graduate school that you weren't going to focus, focus, focus, focus yourself down, but to keep yourself broad and kind of open to the full palette of what was going on out there in the art world. You've always been very attuned to that.

I wanted to shift gears just for a minute and think a little bit about market, which you've had a very long time to observe in this country, and ask how has the market for craft, and particularly jewelry, changed over your lifetime?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, you know, I think that when – in the – in the earlier time the gallery was the space where a body of work could be presented, a group exhibition or an – two person exhibition, whatever. But then, you know, as the craft fairs, such as Rhinebeck, and such as those early marketing ideas that began to – we need more ways for the studio artist to find the public. And so the craft fairs – and I think a good one to start with, you know, would be – well, there was one major one, of course, was that we – maybe have a better handle on or comes into contact with many people, was the Rhinebeck Craft Fair in Rhinebeck, New York. And that was definitely in the late '70s and where you were juried in by slides. And, of course people came, put up their booth, and for three or four days you had, you know, people wandering through the tents and through the grounds, looking at all the different craft – it was all the way from what, you know, they – from jewelry to wood, ceramics. And that was a way to bring the studio artists – studio craftsmen out of their workshop and to set up an open air, or in open air – open air and meet the public and sell.

Then that started – that was successful, it was off and running and people would come home with their orders, would come home with money in their pocket – the successful ones, the ones that seemed to be making something that people enjoyed. And then now we see how that's ratcheted up to there's so many different kinds of marketing, craft shows. I mean, the Smithsonian Craft Show – they still use the word craft – The Smithsonian Craft Show is opening this coming weekend in Washington, DC, and many people say that's the primo. You know, some people do that show, make – through the jurying process and make enough money to – that's half their sales during the year. But it doesn't mean that they'll be back – juried in, be one of the lucky 50 show people – people showing their work next year.

But so, the craft fairs have ratcheted up and there's many different levels now of them in the – in the convention centers, et cetera. But, you know, at the same time that this – this thing was beginning to happen at Rhinebeck, you – if you were down into Florida during the good weather, all of a sudden there was all these street fairs – the, you know, sidewalk art fairs where you'd put up the card table or the – or the table and cloth, and you had a judge come in, walk around, give blue ribbons and prize money – but meet the public that way as well.

So, things have shifted from – or have grown from the gallery to the one-of-a-kind commission work for the – coming to the studio and talking and making a commitment for a commission, to the humble beginning of the craft fairs, to now the more sophisticated ones – walkie-talkies, walking around – Booth 704 needs, you know, 911. Someone's passed out because there's so many people – so hot, we can't get around – where it's become a business and it's a way that many people find their market.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: As it's become more of a business, do you notice any changes in the work? Has the edginess of the work been softened because of market pressures?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, what I think that – where – what has happened is because – has become such a popular and immediate way to – to come to the public that, you know, different craft – exhibitions or fairs, they definitely are of different levels. Some of them are so low-end, meaning it's dangerous to see the kind of – the kind of things that appear and that people buy to where they say – such as the Philadelphia Craft Fair or the Washington Smithsonian Craft Fair – are supposed – you know, high-end and quality and design sensitivity. So in some ways there's the good and the bad of that. But it is – I see it from the young person coming out of school, many of them do – that's their first shot and trying to still be independent. Their slides are strong because they've learned to take good slides. They get accepted to the craft fair – the local craft fair, or let's say one of the ACC [American Craft Council] craft fairs and, "Oh, my goodness, I've got accepted." Well, all of a sudden that means like, by the time you walk into the – to the coliseum to put your booth up, you're in $1500 to 3 – 2000 for your booth plus your lights, plus your table, plus – you know, stack your hotel for three days on top of that –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Right.

MR. EBENDORF: – et cetera.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You got to sell to make your money back.

MR. EBENDORF: It's – it's quite a surprise, but it's one way in which I see many young people starting out in the real world.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: How did you – I mean, how have you negotiated that world? What's your relationship been with –

MR. EBENDORF: Coming back –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – dealers on the one hand and museums on the other?

MR. EBENDORF: Yeah, coming back to – from the Norwegian experience with the Fulbright, teaching at Stetson University on the weekends during a certain, you know, five or six – four months in a – of the year, I would load up with my friend in the station wagon and go sit on the street at street fairs and market my work that way. And what I would do is that – that was one way to meet the public, give my card out, knowing that the work was more expensive, but I would hopefully get a commission or get a blue ribbon.

And so, there – I had that experience, and then I was fortunate enough that my work began to be invited to a show in New York at the American Crafts Museum and so that began to parlay the opportunity for my work being sought after to be in a group exhibition or in a theme exhibition.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What was it like being in those first exhibitions?

MR. EBENDORF: I still have that catalog, it was Paul Smith, had – "The Art of Personal Adornment" and I was on page 37 –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.]

MR. EBENDORF: – and the image was the plique-à-jour hair comb [1960] that was made in Oslo, Norway, at the academy which is now in the Smithsonian's permanent collection. So, I remember – and in that catalog, there was, you know historical pieces, toe rings from India to feather headdresses from Africa, from Brazil, and to Margaret De Patta's work to Elsie Freund's work, Earl Krentzin.

So that catalog was, I think, one of the first exciting – and thinking here I was in Deland, Florida and my work was sitting in the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York City. And that was very exciting.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What was – what year was that?

MR. EBENDORF: Must have been '63, '64.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Wow. And you did not attend the opening.

MR. EBENDORF: I did not attend the opening. The local paper had my picture in it and talked about Deland's Stetson University professor is in –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Is in –

MR. EBENDORF: – exhibition. It happened to be also at that moment in time, there was another very wonderful woman – who has passed away – Elsie Freund, she was also in the exhibition. And Elsie would not have been in the exhibition, but when I read the interims – you know sending slides in, I went to Elsie, who was in this town. I said, Elsie, your work is so wonderful, why don't we send our slides to New York?

So we both got in, so it was quite a wonderful experience for two artists in this very small town in Central Florida to be part of the exhibition. So, the – and then, you know, the Mint Museum [Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina] – the old Mint Museum, not the new Mint Museum – they had a craft exhibition. Then, of course, there was the "Fiber, Clay, Metal" exhibitions in St. Paul, Minnesota.

But I think the first exhibition that was an international one – no, national, was the "Wichita National" when I was in the University of Kansas, when I had those cast rings in the exhibition there. And there was a catalog, and I did get a photograph, a black and white photograph, there was not a color at all, it was all black and white. But seeing my name along with, you know Fred Miller and John Paul Miller – and all of these were metal people – you know, that was quite – and that push, or pat on the back, that validation, you know, just gave me the energy

that there was worthiness and there was exciting things potentially ahead if I just worked harder.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Was there a radical kind of spirit about those? I can only imagine that there would be since many of the objects that were being drawn together at this time – I mean in the early ‘60s – and bringing new forms, new materials, and putting these in front of the public eye. I mean, people had never seen this before.

MR. EBENDORF: But, you know, I don’t think that my eye and my sense of cutting edge and critical changes and radical kind of jewelry thinking – I don’t think that really began to fester and conscious awareness until I started meeting with SNAG. I mean, I just made jewelry. And you made jewelry and Jerry in Wisconsin made jewelry. And there was this exhibition and there were some pieces that were cast or they were fabricated. But there wasn’t this critical dialogue going on and – because we didn’t have the communication.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: So it took the organization to suddenly give the message you guys are all – or we are all doing something that –

MR. EBENDORF: That we should talk about –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: – is radical. Yeah. Huh.

MR. EBENDORF: – and that we should dissect and is it – you know, why are you making this? Can you tell me why you make this? It’s interesting that I didn’t sense the critical assessment. Now was I in a vacuum? Or was I just making things because I was known – because I wanted to be – because I was a jeweler?

But you know, man, I don’t – except I remember making a menorah for a family, a Jewish family in Florida, there was definitely information concerned, what that was supposed to be. And they had – because being non-Jewish, they had to lead me down the path, what I needed to do to make this menorah or to make something for them. But now that I’m thinking about it, I don’t think that stuff started coming up and my questions didn't start coming up until I started talking to people like – when the organization began to sit down and say it’s time for us to take – not control – time for us to take – give some direction to our own journey.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: What about the issues of social commentary and political commentary that some critics have attributed to your work? When you sat down at that period to start making some of these pieces – I mean, for example, the presentation pieces that had radical elements in them or the work that had imagery and text or had some kind of political or spiritual significance – did you set out with the intention of making a political piece, a piece with a social edge?

MR. EBENDORF: I think the first time that that began to bubble up on my stove was when I had made – and had Jerry Uelsmann, a photographer who had become a friend in Florida – I had made in Georgia these three – I had bought these tin types in the tin type boxes, the folding – the carry-type boxes. I’d taken the photographs out and then I made the four *Portable Souls*. And those *Portable Souls* were – had religious medallions in it, bottle caps – Pepsi-Cola bottle caps, broken glass, mixed media, but you’d shut them up and they would look like a photograph case. I could put them in my pocket and I titled them Portable Souls. And I can remember people sort of saying, “What? Why? And I said, “Well, they were like my, you know portable – they’re my religious information, they’re my spirit I can put in my pocket and carry.”

I had also started to make those assemblages to put on the wall that had old photographs in them and “Digit Bigot” was the name of one of them and had battleship with American flags and military buttons on it. And the title alone, *Digit Bigot* [wall piece, mixed media, 1969] – I was living in Georgia. So was it about rednecks? And remember, that was right when we were getting involved with war again with Vietnam, et cetera. And so, there was this bubbling unrest politically in the U.S. and many people were questioning, you know, what are we doing, should we really be there? And also to the severe losses of our loved ones.

So I think that that was being all turned around even though I didn’t feel like I was out there on the streets with a placard, with a poster, or bumper stickers. But it was definitely a troubling time for us and maybe that was surfacing and I guess, what consciously wasn’t there.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: But so you didn’t set out with the agenda. It was just entering in a real subtle way.

MR. EBENDORF: I didn’t set out with an agenda. No.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I wanted to go back because we had talked a little bit about the exhibitions, and I wanted to follow up with that and ask about your relationships over the years with galleries and dealers and also with museums.

MR. EBENDORF: I’ve been blessed in this situation. I’ve learned a lot. I’ve made mistakes. I’ve had my hands slapped because of acting inappropriately with the gallery. So it has been special. I guess where I would say –

let's go to the galleries. I've had good relationships with galleries. I've had relationships with galleries go askew because perhaps the clientele coming to that gallery had bought enough pieces of my work that they had moved on. You know, the collector's circle, the collector relationship to the artist is – you're good in bed as long as they want more work but as soon as they got two pieces or seven pieces, they are out looking for a new – a new friend, a new relationship. And that's called growth. Perhaps that's called just getting tired of being across the table from me.

So you can – I can never rely on – however, I've had three people who – I've been so rich, I can pick the phone up at any time and tell them I have new work, and they will be there saying, "Well, let me see the work. I'd be interested in adding another piece to the collection."

The galleries – you know, after a while they'll – you know, maybe a one, two person show once every year or once every two years. Susan Cummins was a rich experience for me, and I enjoyed that relationship very much in her support of my work. And that became – it was very active, of course, when I moved to Santa Monica because being in California at that time and close. That was rich. And the Mia Gallery in Seattle had also been there for me. The Bruce Summers was a very important gallery, curator, director, of the Kurtland Summers Gallery on Melrose in LA. And the young Sienna Gallery, which I think is one of the new pioneers in – for the jewelry arts, and she has been very supportive of the work. And then there – you know, I've been fortunate because I've had a lot of exhibitions – two people exhibitions or group exhibitions. The Yaw Gallery also in Birmingham, Michigan. Nancy Yaw was there for me. The Hand and the Spirit [Scottsdale, Arizona] was also a very supportive gallery. So I've had good experiences – and the Snyderman Gallery in Philadelphia.

But I've also been able to say early on – and maybe it was not to my advantage, but I was very honest and up front – said, you know, "I'll work with you on this exhibition, you'll have the work for a month plus the second month and at the end of the second month, I will have the work returned to me because I need to make a living. I need to – I have other opportunities with the work and I'm requesting that. If we want to go further with our relationship, this is how I would like to do it." And if they said, no, then there would be a struggle and we'd have to come to some kind of agreement.

Another difficult situation that I ran into but I was very, very strong about this. When pieces were sold in the gallery, I would ask them – before I made a commitment to them, I said, "If any pieces are sold in the gallery, I will request the name and the address of the person who purchased the piece." And, "No, we – I won't do that, we don't do that." I said, "Then I'm not interested." "Why are you – no, we just don't do that, Bob." And I'd say, "I do this archivally because I would like to know where my pieces are at and who has them so that for a scholar or for a critical criticism, that they know where these particularly go."

You'll be surprised – and I've been continually surprised. There are certain museum directors who will say, "Bob, what about – do you still own, or do you know where?" And they will name a piece, they will tell me the year, and I'll look at it – oh, my god, how do you remember that? And, what do you know, I can tell you. Let me go to my file and there's where it's at. And I said, so that is why I want that, and this has proved itself out now with the retrospective how important that information has been. So I have not done well sometimes with the gallery in that request, but I've been very firm about wanting to know that.

Swinging to the museum, I've had wonderful experiences with the museum men and women. They have been so wonderful to get to know and have criticism from, and often times having the joy of getting a phone call and say, "We're making this project, what input can you give us? Or do you know where such – where we can find such and such?" So I've felt like I have been able to be in tandem with these men and women. I'm a great believer in the importance of the museum and the collections.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: And have you been collaborators also in acquisition of your pieces?

MR. EBENDORF: I've had experience with the museum, said, "You know we really would like to acquire this piece. We don't have much money this year in our acquisition committee. Do you have any suggestion how we might do this?" I said, "Well, let's sit down and talk about this." They said, "Do you have a collector who might be there for you that would be interested in working with us on this?" So I've been able to work with them that way.

There's also been collectors that said to me – maybe even not fond of my work all that well, but if this ever comes up, "Bob, I'm here, give me a ring. I'd be more than happy to help that museum acquire that piece." So there's been very interesting business, experiences I've had that way.

And when I have talked about this with the curator, the museum directors, oftentimes they'll say, "Bob, every great museum, every great collection that we know of – they have all been built on gifts." The Medici Family, the different foundations, et cetera. And, you know – but I said, "But how in the world can you pay $90, 000 for a Greek vase or something and you can't even buy a piece of jewelry?" [Audio brake; tape change.] "And you asked me to give it or can we find someone? I just think we're out of sync here." So that's been on ongoing

question of – and I get a lot of criticism from my artist friends about being so closely connected to the museum but I oftentimes think that museums are the best keepers of our history, and it's sad when we see someone pass away and their footprint has not been captured because they – that's never happened.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Thinking back over your own history, how has you work been received over time as you've gone through all these different phases?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that I've been blessed in the sense of people finding an interest in pursuing and watching the changes. Many of the museum directors have said, "Bob, you know, if someone were to ask me about you and your work, I oftentimes just say you're the outlaw, you're the person who works with unusual materials and you have a passion about the process."

And so I think that the exhibitions have helped create that knowledge of the work and the documents – the catalogues, and the critical writings or the reviews. So I think that the public, those who enjoy jewelry have been informed and have grown with me – however, sometimes I will move too fast, because my work oftentimes is changing a quite a bit, and so what you might enjoy today of my work, the next body of work you might see might not be too your palate. What happened? When did he make this radical change? I really don't like these pieces.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yeah, you have gone through many transformations. What is the value of working in a series of work, and what have been your most important series?

MR. EBENDORF: If I want the work to get stinky, if I want the work to really begin to have a presence, doing one-offs for me just doesn't get it. But if I hook into – let's say like the cross-reference exhibition in SoHo in '95 or '96, where I chose to work with the pectoral cross. And after 27 different crosses, from gold and pearls to sticks and stones, the work had a presence. So I find that working in a series brings about that kind of odor or that kind of voice.

A collection that I think has been important or a body of work that I think has been important is the *Lost Souls and Found Spirit*, and that body of work came very much from the inner gut – very much from my heart of pain and passion and loss, and it dealt with a marriage that was falling apart, a family that was being broken up, losing a sense of identity and also a sense of security, and all of a sudden finding myself in a very dark tunnel, and looking at the calendar and realizing that I had to have an exhibition ready for the Hand and the Spirit in Arizona in something like two months, two and half months, and there I was in therapy three times a week and so forth, and I wouldn't answer telephones; I was totally under the radar. So I just started making things, and strangely enough what I gravitated to and picked up were all of these body parts of roadkill that I had gathered months ahead of time – for what reason? Who knows why I'd stop and tear off the paws of the red squirrel, the gray squirrel that was hit by a car on the side – in the middle of a road, and take the paws home and hang them in the studio to dry, or pack them in salt, or go to the beach and start bringing home crab claws and bird legs and skulls and so forth.

And I was just gathering these pieces, but now, many years later, that the sunshine is out and my body feels warm and I'm smiling again, and the tunnel – the darkness of my life at that moment, at that time, is now being blessed with laughter and sunshine, I really realize what I think was going on was like the phoenix; that it had things that crashed and burned, and I was trying to – the bird was trying to find its way out of the ashes and to rebirth. And it was through that – that work was about that journey and that resurrection, or that coming full circle and re-finding myself.

So maybe I speak about this with a great deal of passion, a great deal of sadness, but also to – I think I can reflect on it now and see that it was a joyful rebirth and coming – being worthy again as a soul and spirit.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: I think a lot of critics certainly have been uncomfortable with that work. They haven't known quite how to deal with it. Some critics have, I think, put the work aside, saying that it was too personal and they didn't understand it, but I'm attentive to the fact that the work does sit within an historical context. I know you've spoken about Clare Phillips of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who was very supportive to you and aware of the fact that the use of animal parts as trophies is well established in the history of Western and particularly European ornamentation. I, when I first saw the work, was also amazed at the way it resonated with the memento mori on the one hand, which is the memory of death, but I loved the twist that you were putting on it, and I remember particularly the pieces with the crab claws, because on the one hand, yes, you do have the part from the animal, but the crab claw always has this rosy, glowing blush to it, almost like the sun is coming up; there is a dawn coming up on this dead animal's part, and I thought, you know, this isn't simply about darkness, though the darkness is there; nonetheless there's color, there's light coming out through here.

I thought from the beginning that those pieces were very rich emotionally and that there was plenty of room, not simply for the personal statement of the artist, which would create a barrier with the viewer because I as the viewer don't completely understand what they're about, but I thought it offered plenty of visual cues for me as

the viewer to explore the meanings that I might bring: you know, what does it mean to put the pearls together with the particular textures of the crab claw? They resonate so beautifully together and make a new artistic statement. What does it mean to have a cross mixed with a bird claw, when the bird claw suddenly becomes a kind of cross?

So I thought that work was very, very fertile and beautiful and I think will continue to be a very important part of your legacy.

MR. EBENDORF: I look back at that and I smile now when I see those works and think about the presence and the power and the magic about that. And the bird head with the pearls spilling out of the mouth and the bird claw coming out of the top of the skull, pretty strange assemblage of parts and so forth, but what was going on at that moment was very dark and also kind of wandering through the maze and trying to reconnect the body with the spirit.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yes, I mean, my language for it might be, given everything that we've talked about over the past couple of days, is a soul in pain that needed to play, and that play brought together a whole new set of references and materials with their own richness of meaning, as you step back and look at it.

MR. EBENDORF: And as I've said, playfulness, we don't do enough of that, so here I was perhaps being playful and – but my workbench is the playground now and being at this time in my life, it is wonderful to sit there and to have that state of mind of if a – you know, it doesn't have to be precious, Bob; it doesn't have to win the next award, or another – you know, another piece of jewelry doesn't make my life that much richer, but it's about – and also to – how wonderful I'm doing something I can make gifts. What a beautiful thing, making a gift for somebody and giving something to somebody. If it's a bouquet of flowers or if it's a wonderful meal that you share with your friends and you make it. I mean, what a gratifying – what warmth that brings. And so I'm at my workbench and if I'm making a pair of earrings for this teenage girl that – for the aunt to give to the niece, it's a great – it's a pleasurable opportunity.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You're a jeweler but you're also an educator, and how do you see those two parts of your roles and your persona coming together? What does it mean to you to bring the educator side into the jeweler part of you?

MR. EBENDORF: I think that now at this time I sometimes ask that very question: was my journey about education or was my journey about an artist, or did you have the pleasure and found the fluidity of moving and wearing these different hats and coats? I think I'd rather find myself, or feel like I slide hangin' 10 on that board and – with the toes over the front, and some days being an educator and some days being the artist, but having the pleasure of keeping my balance as the skateboard goes rumbling down the way. So I guess I'm hangin' 10.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: [Laughs.] This is my last question for you and –

MR. EBENDORF: Be careful, now. [Laughs.]

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, I thought it was an important question, certainly in the context of –

MR. EBENDORF: But I don't want it to end maybe. I'll just put it that way. So I won't –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: There you go.

MR. EBENDORF: – go ahead.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, that's nice. It's been –

MR. EBENDORF: The ball's in your court.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: It's been a wonderful conversation but I don't want us to finish without acknowledging the fact that you've had this very important retrospective, which has allowed you to bring together work from the totality of your career. So what – talk about the retrospective, what it means to have it – I mean, as you look at the retrospective and see all of your own work spread in front of you in this very formalized way, what do you see? What do you take away from that?

MR. EBENDORF: The day that I walked through the space the first time I saw it assembled by the curatorial and the preparators' hands in Raleigh, North Carolina at the Gallery of Art and Design at NC State – and they were the people who generated the exhibition and gave it its life for the next two years as it traveled from space to space. And so walking through that I found that it humbled me, it brought sadness, it brought celebration, and it was like revisiting chapters of my life, and I will have to say that being in good health and being able to walk and stand before each piece and each display case, and each one of those pieces were like I did them yesterday. So it gave me a sense of life and growth, and saw – each one brought me to a moment of memory.

And the curatorial people saying how wonderful it is today that museums are doing retrospectives of people, not dead people but people that can enjoy – [Laughs.] – can enjoy the fruits of the long, hard journey.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, also – not dead people but also on the other side not people who have only been working for, say, seven years or 10 years. I mean, this is a retrospective of someone who has had a full life, a full career, and is still around to reflect on it and speak about it.

MR. EBENDORF: And because it has the furniture, it has the drawings, it has the – my workbench is there, my – they reconstructed my workspace, which was wonderful because that brought the public – the going public and the children, as they walked in it looked like, you know – and I wanted to sit in one of the places and, you know, I should just come on Saturdays and sit here and repair jewelry, just sit here and just be a work in progress. It would have been perfect because I felt – I saw that – I just felt like I wanted to go in there and sit down and make a piece of jewelry or repair something.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: That's wonderful.

MR. EBENDORF: So to have the full gamut and not just the jewelry, but to bring together the – all the facets of the gemstone. And I was very happy to see that opportunity come forth, because it is the full story of the moment.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Actually, I lied. I have one more question for you.

MR. EBENDORF: You're on, dear.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: A snapshot, please, of what you're working on now and where you see yourself going.

MR. EBENDORF: The snapshot of the moment is – as a matter of fact, at the moment – this morning when you were still asleep I was in making a ring for a former student who wrote me a very touching letter that she had enjoyed seeing me at SNAG and just reminiscing about her moment in time with me at school, and a thank you. So I thought what I could say to her was, here, have this bauble, and I enjoyed that time too.

So having that opportunity, and also to make you ready to – I'm going to be doing a project in the U.K. this summer, so I'm building pieces to take there to talk about the use of unusual materials. And that would be jewelry that I can carry, and they would be brooches and – probably brooches because they'll be less complex to work with.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Are there specific materials that you're using for this?

MR. EBENDORF: It will be, again, from the materials that I've picked up and worked with, and iron wire, and aluminum, and glass, and some pearl, and fragments of enamels. And probably – maybe I'll take them and give them away as gifts. But I was – after the retrospective it was a long haul and I'm very – right now I'm also very tired because I've had the opportunity to fly and be at each one of them, and that stop, start, stop, start – but it's been so kind of recharging and kind of looking at the – what option I want to enjoy participating in now.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: You had a number of really wonderful spoons exhibited in the retrospective. Is that a series that you plan on continuing as well?

MR. EBENDORF: The spoons were wonderful, and the spoons really grew out of my conversation with Herman Junger that collects spoons, and we had this wonderful conversation. But that was some years ago. You know, it just took up until just recently, a year and a half ago, till I started making spoons. I'm not a forger, I'm not a person who does a lot of forming of metal, but it was assembling these units. And it was so nice of people to have the curatorial people select a group of the spoons, which I'm quite proud of. And if you look at them, they are a lot about different materials being brought together. And, yes, I will continue making them.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yes, I like the way that when you look at them in a series – and I don't know what order you made them in, but you can mix them up and they have a different kind of progression of aesthetic relationships, and each one, they tell a little story of artistic exploration of this form.

MR. EBENDORF: And also, too, remember – at least I remember going to my grandmother's home and this spoon collection, like from Canada –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Oh, how cool.

MR. EBENDORF: – from all the curio – or not – each state –

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Souvenirs?

MR. EBENDORF: Souvenirs – the souvenir spoons, you know. And in Norway – in the Norwegian company, every year they did the Christmas spoon, the Scandinavian Christmas – in Sweden and Denmark and Norway they have this big – yeah, and a big market for them. And so, also in America, many of their grandmothers, you know, have the souvenir spoons. They're a hoot. They're wonderful. And you start looking at them and the different material that – for the state or the flower or the bird or the flag. You know, it was – they have a great deal of charm and personality. So these I think also kind of grew out of some of that, because they're of the size.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Yes. We have a few minutes left. Is there anything else that you'd like to add at this point?

MR. EBENDORF: Well, I'll have to say that having this opportunity to sit with you and play tennis back and forth with the thoughtful questions that have been presented, I'm really proud and happy to have been a part of this gathering of stories and also gathering of history, because the Archives, they are the footprints, and it's nice that somewhere along the way maybe someone might run through these again. But to have been asked to be a part of this project is very humbling and one that I'm very proud of.

DR. ROSOLOWSKI: Well, Robert Ebendorf, thank you very much on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution and the Archives of American Art, and also, thank you from me as well.

MR. EBENDORF: It's a friendship I've cherished. Thank you.

[END]

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