



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Jane Sauer, 2005  
July 11

Funding for this interview was provided by the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/askus](http://www.aaa.si.edu/askus)

# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jane Sauer on 2005 July 11. The interview took place at Sauer's home in Santa Fe, NM, and was conducted by Paul J. Smith for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project For Craft and Decorative Arts in America, .

Paul J. Smith has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

PAUL SMITH: This is Paul Smith, interviewing Jane Sauer for the Archives of American Art, at her home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Monday morning, July 11, 2005. This is disc one.

Jane, we're going to begin this interview by talking about your formative years. Could you tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your parents and growing up?

JANE SAUER: I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, September 16, 1937, to Sally Walpert Gottlieb, who was a medical social worker, and to Leo Gottlieb, who was an internal medicine physician. My mother was born and raised in St. Louis and my father was born and raised in a very small town called Pleasanton, Kansas. And I was the first child. Subsequently, I had a sister who was born nine years later in 1946. Her name was Mary Jo Gottlieb, but she has changed it to Mary Gottlieb because she likes that better.

I was born at the—well, when I was about five years old my father went into World War II as a physician, which was a rather devastating time for me. I can't remember a lot before that, but I—except for some really nice trips to Chicago and playing with other children in the family. I remember that, but when my father left it was a very difficult time for me personally, being an only child with my mother. I was very lonely and I was starting school, and my mother was having a very difficult time managing, working, taking care of a house, and taking care of a child. And I found, even at that early age, I did sort of retreat into drawings that I—there were many, and I'm not—I'm confused whether there are stories that I remember or whether they're stories that I heard, but I heard over and over again how I would spend hours drawing, and as long as I had art supplies, I was a very happy child.

During that time my father was stationed mostly in North Africa from about 1943 to '46, and he was—probably it was '45 that he was stationed—and then after the war and just before the war, I went to a number of different schools. We lived in a number of different places. I'll probably go more into that later. But I had been exposed—that was probably the only period in my young life that I was exposed to a number of different cultures by just places that we lived. I was pretty unfamiliar with Southern culture, and we did live in Arkansas and Oklahoma and Georgia, and so I became somewhat familiar with different circumstances.

And it was a difficult life, because we were living on a very limited amount of money and everything felt very impermanent. And so it was very nice for me in 1946 to return to St. Louis and have a sister born. I'd been wanting and hoping for a sibling. In fact, I actually had a very powerful imagination even at that time, and I had made up in my mind what my various siblings would be like, so it was really nice to sort of have what were my daydreams fulfilled by actually having a sister. I was quite delighted with that.

And our life somewhat stabilized at that time, because my parents bought a house and my father opened a practice of medicine, and I had this sister who I really adored. And it seemed like a really pleasant life, except that my parents, having not lived together for many years, being only sporadically together during those years, had a very tormented relationship that continued during those years, and I think that that somewhat fed into, again, my—as I look back, sort of my escaping into art, and also receiving lots of positive strokes for being an artist, for making art. My father had an office not far from where we lived and I used to get dropped off in the school bus at my father's office, and on days that I didn't have school, I was probably mostly at my father's office, and he provided me with an examining room, which he called my

art studio, and I remember very well having a board spread out on an examining table with a big clip at the top, and those were my drawing—my easels. And I learned that I could have any art supply that I wanted—anything at all. I could have the most elaborate setup in there, because it did keep me quiet.

And he had, very cleverly, frames in his office, and they were the size of these pieces of paper that I had, and he and his office manager changed my drawings, oh, probably a couple of times a week to new drawings, and I really thought I was an artist, and I really thought I had a studio, and I had exhibition space. (Laughs.) And this was at a time when doctors were really honored people, and his patients loved him, and they would, of course, want to see who was the artist, because of course he would say, my daughter drew these pictures; would you like to meet her? And they fawned over me for having made such beautiful pictures, and sometimes we gave them away to—who knows what happened to them, but they were given away.

So it was quite an interesting setup, and by the time I was beginning to mature, I really did feel that I did love art. It satisfied so many of my needs. And there was nothing in my life that I was more complemented, more honored for, than making art, and I did—at those very early days through the school, there were some art shows at a department store. They were called "Children's Art," and the art was sold to the general public, for very reasonable prices, as a fundraiser for some children's homes which were popular at that time for children that were in foster care basically, but they were in large home settings rather than individual. And maybe that was one of my first charities too—one of my first sort of adventure into service was doing that. But I do remember my parents—I remember being in the shows and having my parents buy my artwork back for—even though they had tons of it—for a good amount of money, and I remember winning some honors and that.

So I was being honored publicly too as well as privately for the artwork that I was doing.

PAUL SMITH: It sounds to me like you were a child prodigy.

JANE SAUER: Oh, I wouldn't say I was a child prodigy but I did like drawing and I did win awards at that early age, and I did a—it's kind of interesting, because the one thing that I do remember is that people asking me to do their portrait. And they weren't cartoons; I literally did—I mostly enjoyed drawing with colored pencils and pencils at that time, and I remember trying to get the likeness of people, and as I look back, that connects with a lot of work that I've done in later years, is having an interest in people. But I did do a lot of portraits, and many times it was portraits of well-known people or people that I tore a picture of out of a magazine because they sat—of course they were perfectly still in a picture. But I enjoyed doing that.

And it never occurred to me to make dots on the paper, or to hold it up to a window so that I could see the image through on the white paper. It was just, really, all draftsmanship skills. And when I was a teenager I went through a stage which—I've sort of had a theory that a lot of girls love horses. That's the pre-male stage, and oh, my god, I remember drawing horses and drawing horses, and I had ridden a horse a few times but I was so unfamiliar with it, it was amazing that I connected to them. That led to some horseback lessons.

PAUL SMITH: In looking at your résumé, you attended some very, very good schools. Can you tell me a little bit about your elementary and high school education?

JANE SAUER: Well, my very first education was '41 to about 1943 that I went to Julia Goldstein Nursery School, which was basically what we call "daycare" today. Not too many children did go to all-day nursery school at that time, but I do remember liking it a lot. And then after that I went to Glenridge Elementary School [Clayton, MO]. This is all in St. Louis, where I lived all my young years. And when I went to Glenridge, it was the beginning of the war, and I still have memories of that being a very uncomfortable time in my life, because of just my mother's difficulty in getting me there on time and so forth. And I, even at that age, had—I wanted to do it right, but I wasn't old enough to get myself up, get myself fed, and get myself there on time, so I just remember that discomfort at not being there on time.

Then during first and second grade I went to school in many different states. That was my roaming period. It was during when my father was stationed in different places across the United States—Oklahoma, Arkansas, Georgia, Texas. And I did pretty well in school but every school that I went to began and ended in a different place academically. So I have lots of big holes and my parents decided to send me to Rossman, which was a private school in St. Louis, which I attended from '46 to '49, and it was a very good private school [The Rossman School, St. Louis,

MO]. It was excellent. And at that time there were strict quotas about how many Jews they took, so my parents did tell me that I was very, very lucky to be going there because they didn't take many Jewish children, and that I was smart and I had to prove myself when I was there. So I'm sure that has fed into a lot of things that I have done later in life.

From there I went to John Burroughs [The John Burroughs School, St. Louis, MO], another private school—high school, which was—Rossman was kind of the feeder school for this high school, and that particular school was chosen because they had a very strong art program, and it was just obvious, by that time, that that was going to be what I wanted to do the very most, is to be an artist. I had pretty much said that's what I'm going to do. And I was unhappy in that school, because that was another school where I was told I was so lucky that I was a Jew and had been accepted into that school, and that I had to do very, very well.

And by this time I was really wanting to become part of the social fabric of the school also, and there were dances called fortnightly, which I think are in many cities across the country, and they were not for Jews. So I had a very small group of four or five children, who were Jewish, who had their own events during the nights of the fortnightly, but we all knew that we had to have our own event because we were Jewish and we couldn't go to the dances. And there was only one boy in our group of four or five—I think there were five children in it, so it was not a—he was very lucky, but it was not a particularly social thing. We had popcorn and things like that, but there was obviously no dancing. And that—I think some of these early experiences led to some of my activities later in life around civil rights.

But I was very obstinate about wanting to go to the public schools. We lived in a neighborhood that had a good public school system, and there were probably a larger number of Jewish children in this public school than anywhere else in the city of St. Louis. It just happened to be that that had become a Jewish settlement area, and I started skipping school, and I think that that was a way to make my thoughts known—I guess early protesting, how to make my thoughts known.

PAUL SMITH: At the elementary school, did you have any art classes?

JANE SAUER: I had art classes in elementary school. Anytime that I was a behavior problem they always knew: just put me in an art program. And I had a very strong mind of my own. I've heard that all my life, but it was evident then. And so I was given a lot of art supplies, and as I said, I had a lot after school, also, and I did win some prizes, within the school, for various art things that I did. And one thing that I did at a very early age was take—ever since I could remember, I was dropped off at the St. Louis Art Museum. They've always had classes for children, which they still do, and I was dropped off on Saturdays and sometimes I'd attend one class in the mornings and another in the afternoon, and I loved it. It was a pleasure.

PAUL SMITH: Do you recall being taken through the galleries and seeing different forms of art? Was there anything that stood out or impressed you at that time?

JANE SAUER: Well, my father was a well-known physician and he knew Morton D. May. So one of the things that impresses me the most of that age—Morton D. May happened to have been a patient of his, who later gave an extraordinary pre-Columbian collection to the St. Louis Art Museum, and he was a very major collector of German Expressionist art, which really connected with a lot of things I was hearing at home. I did have a number of family members that were killed in Germany, so this art connected with things I'd heard all my life at home. And I was taken there, and I got to see these things in his house, and then it was during later years that he gave this, and I remember the excitement of being in the St. Louis Art Museum and seeing those in the museum. I do remember the German Expressionist—Max Beckmann taught at Washington University [St. Louis, MO], and I actually was able to meet him in the art museum. He came by children's work—the children's workshops and there—I was in love with Impressionist work at that time; it was so beautiful and the colors were so luscious and wonderful, and I can remember a lot of that work being there.

And I'm sure every child remembers the mummy they had at the St. Louis Art Museum. They had a mummy and the toe was unwrapped so you could look in the mummy, and I remember that so vividly. And I also remember Native American work. The St. Louis Art Museum is a wonderful museum. There were many sections, and we were sent to different sections. That was part of the program was that we would go to different sections and draw things in that section, and learn about them. So I remember many things from that time.

PAUL SMITH: When you were at this private high school, that had a strong art program, was there any teacher or teachers who were encouraging or important to you?

JANE SAUER: Not the private school. I think I was not a likable child—[laughs]—and so no one really connected with me there. And I was only there for a year. When I started skipping school, my parents quickly decided that they were spending a lot of money for me to go to a school that I was trying to avoid going to. But when I did go to the public school, there was a teacher there who was the light of my life—Ed Menges. And he was a magnet to students that were interested in art, and he made the after-school art rooms a teen center, almost, for students interested in art. And my friends all centered around people that were in that kind of—that teen center of art. And we—as I look back, we had a lot of control over what went on in the school, artistically. We made posters for people running for school offices, we painted all of the backdrops for every play. Many of us were involved in making costumes, me being one of them. I loved to sew.

And, oh, I remember I did not like biology and I made an agreement with the biology teacher that I would paint birds all around his room for the semester, and if I did it really, really good, I would get an A in biology, depending on the quality of my painting. So I thought that I was like Michelangelo on this—all across the top of the room where the walls met the ceiling. Then the birds were all across the ceiling. And, oh, I spent probably a year and a half doing that. So I made art enter into everything I could.

PAUL SMITH: After graduating from high school you then went on to further education. Could you tell me about that stage?

JANE SAUER: Well, I should back up just a little bit and say that my father died very suddenly—he was only 44 years old—when I was 16. And that was a huge shock to me. And I looked very forward to going to college. And actually, my senior year, my mother and I got along so poorly that I moved with an aunt and uncle, and the aunt was my mother's sister but it was actually her husband, Hy Blumenthal, or Herman Blumenthal, who became my—probably my first real mentor and continued a lot the role my father had played, of encouraging me to do art. And he was actually a very famous medical researcher—researched into aging, and he did many things. He's written many, many books. And he lived far away from the high school that I went to, and we drove—but he'd drop me off and pick me up every day, so we had this—probably spent about an hour and a half every day in the car alone together talking to each other.

And he really opened my eyes to the creativity in art and the creativity in medicine—because he was a researcher, so he was in a very creative—and we would talk that hour and a half straight every day. And I look back on that as such a rich time in my life of talking about how one can be creative in their life and how this can take many roles, and I think as I look back he was saying, don't feel that you have to only be an artist to be a creative person, but keep your mind open. And it certainly opened me to many other ways to be inventive, not just merely with paper and pencil.

And I—almost kind of sadly except, that I felt that it was what I needed to do—toward the very end of my senior year I did move back with my mother, which gave her kind of control over where I would go to college. And the guidance counselor in the high school suggested that I try a number of different places, attempt entrance to a number of different places because I wanted to go to the Art Institute in Chicago but, luckily, he guided me that—he did not think my mother would let me go there because they didn't have dormitories—you rented an apartment and went to school—and she didn't want to relinquish that kind of control. And as long as she held the purse strings, she had a lot of control.

And I did apply to other art schools, one of them being Sophie Newcomb [H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College, Tulane University] in New Orleans, and that is—exactly as predicted, is what happened. She would not let me go there, even though I was accepted, and I did go to Sophie Newcomb, which opened a whole other chapter of my life. I did major in art there and they had a good art department and I liked it a lot, but there were other problems.

PAUL SMITH: And how long did you stay there?

JANE SAUER: I stayed there one year. And I had looked at Washington University and I—they also had an excellent art school, but it just felt like I was just—you know, it was several miles from where I went to high school, and I knew I'd have to live at home and I didn't want to do that. So it didn't seem like a good choice, but I did—I kept looking at the quality of the art school there and the fact that you did take other things besides just art, which I was interested in doing.

PAUL SMITH: So you transferred to Washington University after one year?

JANE SAUER: I transferred to Washington University after one year. I got involved in civil rights when I was at Sophie Newcomb—and I think that will come up later in the interview, but it was sort of by mutual agreement, it was decided that I would leave that school. I was—I got too involved with civil rights for a strong Southern school, and I actually went back there at the beginning of my second year and I just—it was sort of like not getting on the bus to go to high school. I just said, I can't do this; I can't be here, and they said, that's very good; what can we do to help you get into another school? And I called Washington University and I said, please, please, please, and they said, we've already started, and I said, please, please, please, and they said, come on. And that was it.

PAUL SMITH: So what did you study and what was your focus at Washington University?

JANE SAUER: Well, the first two years were foundations, and then after that you had to choose, and I took—during those first two years I took metal smithing—this was all that was available—I took metal smithing and I took ceramics, and I actually ended up working for Florence Dumas in the ceramics department, wedging clay, and helping other students. I really loved it, but it wasn't a major. I had completed the courses that were offered and I went on to major in painting. And I quite honestly did that because that was the most status thing that you could do. And they didn't really have what I really would have liked to have taken, and I did look at some other schools, but by this time I was living at home and money was much tighter. And I really couldn't afford to go away to school.

PAUL SMITH: What did you want to study that was not there?

JANE SAUER: I wanted to study—it's basically what you call crafts, but the University of Illinois at Urbana had many more material-based art offerings than Washington University, which was a much more academically based art program, and it was really quite traditional, and I wanted something that wasn't so traditional. My years at Washington University were not my happiest years, because I really wanted to do other things than what was being offered there. I did love painting. I love the feeling of the paint and what one could do with color, and I made it a material-based art because I always had my fingers in it. I just—somehow that brush between me and the canvas just didn't work, and everybody else could walk out of painting class clean, and I would walk out of painting class very covered with paint.

And needless to say, my mother had bought me all these beautiful clothes to wear to college, because that was where she thought you got your husband, and so she was very distressed that I wasn't wearing them, and I wasn't wearing them because that would lead to another really big argument about I was ruining them. But I did take as much clay as I possibly could, and I actually loved later on taking education classes, because what we were learning to teach students to do was what I really loved, the materials I really loved working with. And I was an excellent teacher, because I loved those materials. I loved setting up little looms for children to weave on, I loved the ceramics that we were able to do there, and we did things with metal; we just did a lot of things. And I could be much more creative in that setting and in the education program even though I did that after I completed my B.F.A. That suited me.

PAUL SMITH: Were there some faculty that were especially important, or influential?

JANE SAUER: Not so much at Washington University. As I said, I wasn't altogether happy in that program. Fred Conway was my painting teacher, and he was tolerant, let's put it that way—more tolerant than the other professors, and so I remember him fondly. And I actually had a printmaking—well, Florence Dumas, who had been encouraging in my three-dimensional work, and Werner Drewes, who was a printmaking teacher, I made a nice connection with him. And printmaking is also more material based. So we just had a nice relationship and he was encouraging to me. And there were some more openings to be experimental in printmaking. I did a lot of woodcuts, which I really loved, which I translated when I taught school into linoleum cuts.

PAUL SMITH: As you seemed to enjoy ceramics; who was teaching clay?

JANE SAUER: Florence Dumas.

And I actually did take some sculpture classes that I would probably have continued, but I was the only girl. It was just a real male thing, and they made it as hard on the females as they possibly could, so most people didn't even take as many classes as I did, and I finally gave up.

PAUL SMITH: During your college years, did you have any part-time jobs?

JANE SAUER: I had many part-time jobs during my college years. I worked for the Jewish Community Center's Association, teaching at camp. I taught art for—I know I taught art for some other private things. I actually gave some private art lessons even when I was in college, but primarily I worked with children in children's art programs.

PAUL SMITH: Did you do any traveling at that time?

JANE SAUER: No. (Laughs.) No, I didn't. I had some early trips with my family but it was the kind of family that went to Canada every summer. We went to Pleasanton, Kansas, to see my father's family and then drove to Canada to the same place—Winnipeg—every year and came back.

PAUL SMITH: So I believe you graduated from Washington University in 1959?

JANE SAUER: Correct.

PAUL SMITH: With a B.F.A.?

JANE SAUER: Yes.

PAUL SMITH: And then did you pursue a teaching position or a job related to the arts?

JANE SAUER: My first job was at International Shoe Company. At that time the designers—shoe designers designed the shoes, and they had an artist that worked with them who drew what they designed and then drew some other—they would say things like, make that with a pink bow, a red bow and a purple bow, and a piece of chain here and so forth. And so I drew those shoes until I was dreaming about shoes. It was just—I mean, that's all we drew were shoes. And if we were not busy, if the designer was working on something and we were not busy, the head of the department didn't want, when his head came by, to look like we weren't busy; so we were told, if you're not drawing shoes for the designer, draw shoes anyway; just at your desk keep drawing shoes so that if anybody comes by they think you've essential to this operation.

So at some point I thought, I cannot do this any longer, and I was very lucky to get a job in a school because I did not have proper credentials to teach, but they were desperate for an art teacher and I convinced them that I could do as well as a credentialed teacher, which they couldn't find, and that I would work on becoming credentialed, which basically meant I had to go back to school and take art education courses, which is what I did.

PAUL SMITH: What was the name of that school?

JANE SAUER: Jefferson Barracks School [St. Louis, MO]. And I had wonderful students. It was in a public housing area, and it was an all-white public housing area, just because of where it was located and the way the city of St. Louis was structured. There were neighborhoods that were Italian, neighborhoods that were German, neighborhoods that were white-only, and neighborhoods that were black, and this was in a white-only neighborhood, and I had some—had an absolutely wonderful principal, and the school was, really, very much like a family. And the students loved art. Many of them had never had—I mean, I had them from kindergarten on to eighth grade, and many, especially the younger children, had never had a scissors; had never had crayons; had never had any of these materials; and I loved to work with various materials so much, and it just fed my more inventive side. I was the scrap lady. I was getting everything from everybody that I could possibly find, and I had a rich classroom of things, and my principal was, actually, very helpful with that too. He was also scrounging things for me. And I had art club after school every day for different age groups. And it was just a wonderful experience.

PAUL SMITH: I gather you really enjoyed teaching.

JANE SAUER: I did—there particularly.

PAUL SMITH: To get the qualifications, you went to night school or summer school?

JANE SAUER: I went both. I did both—Saturday nights.

PAUL SMITH: So when did you complete the requirements to teach advanced educational courses?

JANE SAUER: I believe it was 1960 that I completed that.

PAUL SMITH: And you were still at Jefferson at that time?

JANE SAUER: I was still there. It was—they had a very loyal funding—I'm sorry, they had a very loyal faculty, and they had funding problems. As I said, it was all white and it was public housing, and it was—there were many federal laws coming on board and many government programs that were being funded by the federal government, were being more closely scrutinized, and they said that the school had to become integrated, and there were big fights about that. And the school lost its funding temporarily, and—it's hard to believe in today's age—but most of the faculty went back and taught not knowing whether we'd ever get paid or not. And I actually had a child by that time, but I decided to go back, because when I left, when I did have a child, they weren't able to replace me because they were on the front page of the paper every day as losing their funding so no one wanted to teach there.

PAUL SMITH: The 1950s and '60s, especially the '60s, was a very important era. As we know, so many great things happened and so many dreadful things happened in terms of world affairs. I would like you to talk about that period, and some of the causes that you were involved with, and how that era affected what you were doing in your life at that time.

JANE SAUER: Well, I'd like to actually push back a little further to say what prepared me for the role I played during that time, and that was that my parents didn't get along with each other but they were both, really, humanitarians—my father as a physician, my mother as a medical social worker. And my mother—the clientele that she addressed were traumatic injuries in the hospital, and worked with their families, people that were in physical therapy over a long period of time—paraplegics, et cetera. And my father was a physician who believed in socialized medicine, and had sort of a flirtation with the Socialist Party. But we had maids in our house, but they were always very, very well treated and both my sister and I were trained in treating people extremely well and having a great deal of respect for all human beings. And we lived in, at that time, a very segregated city. There was a huge schism between the black community and the white community, and even though I'd had many bad experiences as a Jew, I remember very well being taught: That's how they're treating you, but that should not be how you treat other people. And you know how that has hurt you, and you should never, ever do that. And there was tremendous pride in having that kind of integrity in one's life.

So, when I did go to Sophie Newcomb, even though they had a wonderful art school and they had dormitories and everything, I was totally shocked at the isolation of the black community and how African Americans were referred to. So that was my early—my really early adventure into being outspoken. I also was trained at home that if you believe in something, then it's worth making sacrifices for. And so it was just a natural thing to—I became very good friends with the editor of the school paper and we wrote all kinds of editorials and all kinds of stories about improper treatment of people on campus, and how workers were treated, and then we tried to do some of our own integrating. And that was basically why I didn't get along with the school, why I was kind of out of step. And there were a few other—we were called Northerners—that were considered out of place, and really the school wanted us to leave, unless we would agree to not do any of these activities again. And I had a particular girlfriend that I was very active with, and neither of us agreed and we both left the school.

So that was just a very natural outgrowth of my upbringing. And when I came back to St. Louis, and there was this time of—well, I actually shouldn't say that. There were African Americans attending the school—very few of them—but I treated them with great respect and I actually dated one, which was quite a shock to my family, I have to say. I remember very well that an aunt of mine said, this is what we taught you and this is what we want you to believe, but you should not date them. [Laughs.] And that—I was so pure at that time and everything was so black and white, that I just thought that was the worst thing and she was such a bigot and a hypocrite. And I had very clear lines of who was a bigot and a hypocrite, and there weren't grays. But it was just really natural for me to fall into civil rights organizations.

And I had my own questions about women's roles, and when I read Betty Friedan and she said something about the woman sitting on the playground, watching children, who is unhappy, and doesn't know why she is unhappy, but she really wants to have a job and she's unfulfilled and she's not intellectually challenged, it was like—it was just like somebody had sent a spear through my heart. I knew that was me; I just knew that was me. And having that articulated to me made me know I had to do something about this; I had to begin this struggle.

And so all of these things were coming at me at one time, and there actually was a huge renaissance, in St. Louis, of teaching art in different areas, and I was involved in what became—



you know, after it died out, it became this famous school that taught art in the inner city, and I was involved both as a student and as a teacher, and it was that kind of school that anybody that had something to teach, taught; anybody that wanted to take a class took a class; and it was free and called—the Free Art School was the name of it. And there were amazing people in it, and the director of the school was Mabel Curtis, who was African American woman, and absolutely fantastic, but it was so unheard of at this time in St. Louis. But I remember it as being just the richest time, because there were so many activities—there were so many plays being written, there were songs being written. Everything had some kind of artistic underpinning in my mind to it, and my first group that I became active with was the United Farm Workers Support Group, which—Cesar Chavez stayed at my house. I had a lot of farm workers who were protesting various things—

[END AAA\_sauer05\_6595\_r.mp3]

[In progress] —And stayed at my house. By this time my first marriage had ended, but I should say that my first husband was also a social worker, and he was head of an economic development center in the city of St. Louis, and we had some wonderful experiences with his job. I had equally as wonderful experiences. I have three children, and I wasn't the working person but those were some of my richest experiences. But by this time I was married to somebody else when I became active in first the United Farm Workers and all of these people staying at my house, which I think he considered to be his house also, and I became very—I was president of the International Women's Organization for Peace and Freedom, which was—both had to do with women taking leadership roles, women being peacemakers, women being negotiators and seeking world peace. And that too was just very close to my heart. I belonged to the Women's Caucus. At one time I had a studio with all women, which was also very unusual. I mean, it was at a time when women could hardly get a credit card in their own name, and we rented a building.

I remember we had to put down three months rent. Nobody was asked to put down three months rent, but we were women so we weren't good for the money. And eventually, I became organized in ACTION, which—I became active in ACTION [Action Council to Improve Opportunities for Negroes], which was an organization of black and whites who came together to fight for civil rights in the city of St. Louis, and our agreement—because there was so little black leadership, that our agreement among ourselves was that there would not be white leadership in this organization, but white people would follow the leadership of African Americans or blacks, in this organization.

But, again, I played the role of the graphic designer for this organization. We passed out flyers all the time. We printed a newspaper. And those were all the things I did. I mean, all this was done by hand. This is way before computers. So we had drawings and—I didn't do cartoons; that wasn't what I did well, but—we had somebody else that did that. But it was this huge brainstorming and it combined art and intellect, and my sense of indignity at the world at that time. And at that time J. Edgar Hoover was head of the FBI and this probably was the most—one of the most dramatic times of my life because I was actually active in these three organizations at the same time and had offices in two of them, and my then-husband got a letter from someone saying that I was sleeping with African American men and that's the only reason that I was active in this organization, ACTION.

And he was not happy with all of these people that were staying at our house and were eating at our house, and all the meetings that we were having, and just everything that was going on that was out of his control, and—he was an engineer so this was all pretty foreign to him. And when he got this letter—and it was written in misspelled words, very bad writing, and—he was sure it was from a black—oh, it said—it was written as if it was written from a black woman, and that she wanted me to get "my ass off of Newstead Avenue," which is where this organization met, and he just went ballistic. He just—that was like the final, final straw. And he actually wouldn't let me see this letter for some time because he was afraid to put it in my hands, that I would destroy it, and he put it in a safe deposit box. He filed for divorce based on this letter. He was just furious, which of course threw me into turmoil because I had anticipated that he was going to be my support mechanism, I guess, which that definitely changed my life.

Many years later, Frank Church's committee, who was a senator at that time, looked into the activities of the FBI, and this was part of a program called COINTELPRO, and the program was to disable these civil rights and other organizations. The Peace and Freedom organization was demonstrating against the war in Vietnam, and how to disable them was to get rid of the leadership, and that letter was written by the FBI. And it was quite a shock that—I mean, it's still

in some ways hard to believe that that could have been written by the FBI. It was successful and there were other people who had the same kind of letter. I was supposed to testify before Congress before the Church committee, except that almost simultaneously they discovered that Martin Luther King—his wife had received from the COINTELPRO the same kinds of letters, and of course his role as a leader was so much greater than mine.

And there was also a gentleman, Charles Koen, who was an African American in a nearby community that had—his wife and his whole family has been destroyed by this also, so they had better candidates. So I never did do that, but kind of my 15 minutes of fame was that I was on *60 Minutes*. At that time that was the most—I was kind of laughing to myself, that I had been working so hard to have this art career all of my life and that I thought the thing that I would be known for would be this letter from the FBI that it would be so ironic—because it was so—it was picked up, here I am a middle-class housewife kind of lady with children and this had happened to me.

And I had actually one other thing, that I think has made an impact for the rest of my life, was that I also realized that one person can do something, and that I kind of realized that in spite of my thinking that what I was doing was so important, it felt so unimportant at the time; it felt like just one grain of sand in a massive beach—that it was viewed as important, and I think that has led me to do some other things that were very challenging, like the chairmanship of the American Craft Council, that one person and one idea can make a difference. And it also helped me reinforce to just follow my instinct and do what I thought was the right thing to do.

And I've somewhat lost track.

PAUL SMITH: Were you involved with marches and did you ever get arrested?

JANE SAUER: Oh, my gosh, yes. [Laughs.] I was involved so much in marches that my children told me they don't want to protest anymore. [Laughs.] Several times they've told me that, because I wanted them to be part of this. This is a very exciting time, and what's more appealing than a mother and—I used it, and the organizations that I belonged to used—that I had these three lovely, really well-behaved children who would hand out fliers, and I was the— ACTION, the organization that I belonged to was very well coordinated. The others were much more loosely run. And they did set up situations where I was arrested, and they always, before that ever took place, had the person that was going to bail me out of jail, and they had who was going to take care of my children, and it was always somebody that my children knew, and they knew what was going to happen.

So my children had a very sophisticated entry into the world, and they were black people, so my children always had this interracial approach to life. And most of the people that would bail you out—because the newspaper would always write who bailed you out, so most of them were professors from Washington University, and perhaps ironically enough, my current husband, who was a well known physician and taught at Washington University, was one of the people that bailed me out, prior to our relationship.

So it was very well coordinated, and I was arrested many times. All the times that I was arrested, expectedly centered around civil rights. I was arrested one time very unexpectedly for the Farm Workers, but that worked out okay too.

PAUL SMITH: So you actually spent time in jail?

JANE SAUER: Yes, I did. I did. [Laughs.] And that was—I just have always loved experiencing things, which I think—you know, that has to do with loving material-based art is that you experience the materials; you experience the materials that you're working with, and I was not—I mean, I'm not going to say I wasn't afraid to go to jail—I knew I was going to go to jail because they were getting very tired or our demonstrations and they were going to have to do something to scare us, and going to jail was what you did with white people who were well educated and middle- to upper-middle- class. And so I knew that that's what I was going to—I knew I would go and I knew I would experience something unusual.

And I have to—if I can sort of separate here and just tell one other story that is very—it's something that I'm very proud of and that is part of the history of St. Louis. This has been in a number of books. There was an organization called the Veiled Prophet, and it was whoever put up the most money, their daughter would be crowned the Queen of Love and Beauty. It had nothing to do with love and beauty; it had to do with money. And these were the people who had very tight control over the economics of the city of St. Louis. And I couldn't come along with a

whole lot of money and say, I want my daughter to be Veiled Prophet queen, because I'm not part of that society. So you had to be part of the society, but if you had a lot of money you would eventually become part of the society, except if you were black and Jewish.

So it fed into a whole lot of feelings that I had, and it was probably one of the most fun things I've done, as well as being very significant. The Veiled Prophet was dressed all in costume—elaborate costume—because he was supposed to have come down to St. Louis from another mythical land, and he was dressed in silver and gold and brocade, and he was completely veiled so nobody knew his identity, although it was always thought that it was the father of the person who had been crowned the queen before, and that was really ironic because sometimes some very homely, very heavyset or, you know, various women were crowned "love and beauty." And a lot of city policemen—this involved a lot of city people. It cost the city a lot of money, and there were streets that needed repairing and blah, blah, blah. And I and another woman—the people that worked for the members of the society could have seats, if they were given them, in the balcony of this very elaborate place where this ball took place.

And another woman and I dressed like we were maids getting dressed up, and we were supposed to go there. We were given tickets by one of the debutantes, who was part of our organization, and we were to figure out how we could disrupt this event. And I threw leaflets over the balcony and the other woman, who was far more athletic than I was slid down a cable and landed right at the feet of the Veiled Prophet and ripped off his veil, and he was exposed. And it was so ironic because it was—just really exposed how humorous this all is, and they were of course shocked that we could have gained entry, and my throwing the leaflets was a distraction—everybody looked at the leaflets while she went down the cable. And of course we were arrested and that was the longest time that I stayed in jail, I think, was—because they weren't going to let us out. It was set up. We had our method to be released rather quickly, our bondsmen were at the police station before we got there, but they wouldn't let us out.

I don't know, I guess just another thing in my past that I'm proud of but I think it also—you, know, it was something that I decided to do and I thought it was the right thing to do, but I didn't know at that time that this would enter into a number of textbooks and that there would be a number of people that did dissertations on this. You know, it was so much a part of the fabric of the society of the city of St. Louis, and if you grew up with that around you, it became acceptable, just as I'm sure that barring blacks from lunch counters became acceptable to some otherwise good people. It was just part of their life.

So it was another event that I thought people could make differences, could make changes by just doing what they thought was right.

PAUL SMITH: Of course, St. Louis was not alone; it was every big city in America.

JANE SAUER: Oh, yeah, St. Louis was definitely not alone, but having—that was my city and—I should say that we almost—we lived either in the city or near the city all my growing up years. So I was in areas that I was never frightened of African Americans or anybody else, but some people were, because St. Louis was kind of a Southern city.

PAUL SMITH: Now that we have some distance from that era—how do you think about it today in the context of our society? There's always a period of the time you're involved and then there's the period later on when you look at it in its historical context.

JANE SAUER: Well, I still look back as loving it I have to say. It's time—maybe when I get a distance from what I'm doing today I'll feel the same way, but it was a time when I really—it was very exciting in so many ways. I mean, I think through my art and drama came in—there were a lot of side activities like there was a group that sensitized other groups to how blacks and whites could get along in the city of St. Louis? How could they be part of the same workforce? And I was active in that. I was very active in integrating housing in St. Louis. I was active in integrating the baggers at a particular grocery store chain, by meeting with them and talking and talking and talking, and—I mean, it's hard to look back today and think there were only white baggers. I mean, it's such a great—[laughs]—position, they should only be white. But I feel like I and many, many, many people really made a difference by stepping out there.

And it was such an amazing time. I mean, how did we picket—all those signs were written. You know, it was graphic arts. It was, what can we say on this sign that somebody driving by will get in three words, and just all sort of the intellect that went into a lot of this. Well, we can't tell everything; what should we tell? What has punch? What should we tell? That's how you make

artwork: what has punch? What should you tell? What should you put in your artwork? So it all wraps together for me. And it was—you know, if you put glitter on a sign, does that look better? What colors look better? And it was just—it was beautiful. And I made friends with people that I'm still friends with today, during that time. I'm not as active, but I just have gone on to do something else. But it was a wonderful time. I look upon it as a very, very important time.

And I look upon it too as my children growing up in that time and being exposed to that over and over again, that all but two of seven children are somehow in the service industry, and the two that are not, they are just great people. So I feel like they are humanitarians and that there's a whole generation of potential humanitarians that came out of that era, kind of a thing.

PAUL SMITH: In terms of your own art, was it mainly focused on graphic work for these causes, or were you also doing some of your own studio work?

JANE SAUER: No, I wasn't doing any of my own studio work. It was during that time that I married Don Sauer, who I'm still married to, and we both had sort of made a pact with ourselves that we felt that time was so important, that I had said, I'm not going to do any artwork that does not feed this cause, and he had said he wasn't going to play golf anymore until the world was a better place. I mean, it's funny that we were so out of touch with reality—[laughs]—but the—no, I only did artwork that fed that cause, period. That was all. I thought artwork that did anything else was frivolous and—

PAUL SMITH: That's understandable. I mean, you had a dominant focus as art reflects real life. It's often connected to the environment of the times; I look at the '60s as seeing art reflecting the turbulence that took place. Along with it of course came a lot of freedom, a break from tradition, but it was an era of individual expression and openness, especially in America, that was so exciting, you symbolize this so well, I think.

JANE SAUER: Thank you. It was just amazing what people were doing and coming up with—and, you know what, the arts were coming up with too was just—I don't want to dismiss that, because I said I can't do that, I have to follow this cause—but I wish I could have done them both because there were just such amazing things. And somewhere during that time I did participate in some of these shows, but there were some shows of women only, you know, which that was really stepping out, to have a women only. And we were very pleased that some men came to those shows. They were crowded with women. And I also look back that I—you know, when that era was sort of dying off for me, I threw out all kinds of posters and things that I had made, all my protest signs, but, oh, I wish I'd kept them; they'd be so wonderful to have today, just a fragment of that. It just didn't seem important at that time.

PAUL SMITH: Were you also part of other aspects of the culture, the music, freedom experiments, and back-to-earth movement?

JANE SAUER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes—[laughs]—I was a flower child. I think maybe I was a little too old to be a flower child. Oh, no, we tie-dyed t-shirts—I don't think we wore anything but tie-dyed clothes. This is what my kids did, and I wore them, and I wore Birkenstocks everywhere. I mean, it was just—oh, I was very much part of that. And along with sort of some other things, I was claiming, why don't we have a free marriage—[laughs]—that that's the only way to go. I've never really liked rules a lot, and so I—when there came a whole cultural movement to break the rules, I mean, I was just a natural for it. I remember even in high school taking sociology, and it was really one of the courses I loved the most in college, and learning that different cultures do things differently and that not only does St. Louis not have the only right answer, but maybe the American culture doesn't have the only right answer. So this was a time of finding out, what are other options? What are other ways of doing things in conducting one's life? And so it was very rich to have companionship—[laughs]—to do that.

PAUL SMITH: Well, as we know, young people were searching and seeking and exploring. It was not just individuals; but large group activities, especially on campuses at universities like Berkeley and Madison and many other places.

JANE SAUER: Yeah, well, when much of that took place I was already at a college, and I really regretted that I was out of college, because I really wanted to be part of that. And I did—oh, I demonstrated at Washington University against some things that were appropriate for somebody that was no longer a student there to demonstrate. It was the days of the food co-ops, and I helped found a food co-op. We had seven children by this time. I was living with Don; we had seven children between us, and we lived in a neighborhood that had great big old houses,

and there probably were five or six in our immediate area, houses that were used as co-ops. I mean, we thought about it but we just had some—we pretty much filled it up ourselves. But I can remember my children saying, how come I only have one mom? So and so and so and so has three or four of them! And it was just—it was a whole new way of doing things, a whole new way of participating in a family situation.

And of course probably my own family situation of two people that didn't get along but stayed together, all these options of having three or four moms, you could just pick the one you liked the best and get identified with that one. That seemed really good to me. It seemed like a wonderful idea to me. [Laughs.]

PAUL SMITH: This is Paul Smith interviewing Jane Sauer for the Archives of American Art at her home in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This is the second session on Monday afternoon, July 11, 2005, and this is disc two.

I want to begin this afternoon's session by talking about Jane Sauer, the artist, and your creative history and evolution of your work. Let's begin by saying, when did you first start to experiment with fiber?

JANE SAUER: Well, I guess my first experience with fiber was—when I was in high school I liked to sew and make my own clothes, and I didn't like to follow a pattern in my life or in clothes, so I did a lot of playing around and experimenting. And I did knitting and someone got me crotch-stitch pillowcases and things like that. And I didn't like following the pattern so I would maybe start with the pattern and then make up my own things as I went along.

So I guess if one could count that that would be early on. When I was in high school, my father connected me with somebody to teach me how to weave and I really did not like the confinement of the loom and all of the—I can't even remember if I ever got pass the dressing-the-loom part. That is all I remember was that part of it was—it just—I wasn't cut out for it particularly, at that particular time in my life.

And so I touched textiles, I played with them, I did things with it, and I think probably my next really launching was when I did art education, that I really enjoyed doing things with fiber with the children. And after I had my own children as I said probably in the '60s, I was doing a lot of dyeing of clothing and sewing and things like that.

But I also began a—I wanted to do something to make money at home. I had children and I bought felt and picked out poems that I particularly liked, or stories that I particularly liked, and I started sewing—cutting out of felt the people—it was a narrative—and designing children's wall hangings. And then I embroidered by hand whatever part of the poem I wanted on this wall hanging, or whatever parts of a story that I wanted on it. And the little figures were actually sown on my hand. And the details—eyes, nose, things, like that—were also embroidered.

I took this to the May Company where I had this earlier connection, and they liked them and they ordered 12 at first, and I dutifully went home and made them and then I got another order for maybe 36, and I went home I had a neighbor help me with the embroidery and we made them. And then I took them back and they wanted to carry them in stores all over the country.

And I actually committed myself to some very large order. And probably three months later I realized I wasn't going to fill this order in my lifetime—[laughs]—because there was so much handwork to be done and my little company went out of business. [Laughs.] I did try to sell them for a little while, sort of one at a time, but I didn't like the selling part, I just liked the making part. So that was the end of that business.

The next thing that they did when my children were in nursery school, I saw a puppet show that I liked on television actually and thought this is just a fabulous idea. There wasn't anything like that in the nursery school they went to. And I investigated, and there wasn't anything like the puppet theater for children. And so I made a puppet stage. And then the most fun for me was making the puppets.

And then over the years—I did that for several years—over the years it became more sophisticated. It was from '68 to '72 I had the puppet theater. So probably the first two years I used stories that were generated by other sources, by other people. And the last few years I started writing my own stories, because by this time I was very driven by my high-moral values and my civil rights, and I wanted to teach a lesson with my stories.

Those were the most enjoyable years, when I wrote the stories. And there was always a villain and there was always a hero and, of course, the hero was the person who believed in humanity. [Laughs.] And I actually still have those puppets because I made a lot of puppets. And it was very creative and enjoyable time working with fiber.

And after that, when I was involved heavily in civil rights, I did not do any artwork at all. And I—because I felt that was frivolous at that time. And it was after the civil rights movement that I was divorced for the second time, and I had teaching job at Head Start. And then I began to again do children's art, that then made me start thinking about doing my own art.

And I—it was during this time that I had all kinds of ideas about a career change. And one of my ideas, because of civil rights, was to go to law school. And then my other idea was that I would become an architect and I would build low-income housing. [Laughs.] So I went to—I took some classes from one of the most creative professors at Washington University School of Architecture, Leslie Laskey.

When I was doing this, John—he had invited John McQueen to come to Washington University and give a lecture about the use of materials. It is very interesting because he saw a very small McQueen basket in *The New York Times*. I don't know whether McQueen was having a show or just what but this basket was featured. I believe he was having a show. And Leslie thought this applies to architecture, because it is use of materials. It is creative, inventive use of materials.

And he invited him to come and do a workshop. And I—because I wasn't enrolled as a full-time student, I wasn't privy to go to the workshop, but Leslie invited me to attend and said you have to really pay attention, that this is something that ought to resonate with you. And it did. John was so laidback and so just comfortable with what he was doing and comfortable with his materials, and had so much reverence for the materials that he was using, that, of course, I immediately thought that I had to be a natural materials basket maker.

And it took probably six months to realize that I lived in the middle of a city mostly with brick and concrete and that I was not going to find these materials—[laughs]—and that I had to find other materials. And this was 1974 and I had some back trouble. And I needed surgery. So prior to that I was trying to find—[laughs]—natural materials but I did have back surgery. Well, actually, even prior to having back surgery I was in traction and I sent my husband to look.

I had—somebody brought me a Donna Milag sort of how-to-do baskets. And I gave him the back of that book and I said buy everything that you can find that is listed on this book. And the only thing that he really came up with in plentiful supply was wax linen. So I followed some of the directions and the first baskets that I made were coil baskets, because I was confined to being at home for some time after this surgery. And I did wax linen coil basketry.

I saw pictures of Ferne Jacobs in this book—her work. Not her but her work. And I couldn't quite figure out what she was doing. They had described how to do some of it. But I also at the St. Louis Art Museum had been very, very taken with Aleutian Island baskets. They were so fine and so beautiful. And I have always had a tendency toward very obsessive repetitive art forms, embroidery and all of that falling in that category.

So I wanted to make beautiful little baskets like I had seen there, and the scant directions for knotting seemed to me to look like those baskets. Even though I was confined to being at home, the baskets were at the St. Louis Art Museum, and I am looking at a book that doesn't know anything about the source of Aleutian Island baskets. But I put them all together in my mind and I came up with making knotted baskets, which I did. And I was supposed to be in a prone position, but every time the house would be empty I would sit up and I just became obsessed with making these little baskets.

And they were all very normal—what one would begin making a basket. They were cup shaped; as I said, they were small. The first ones that I made were just plain natural linen baskets. And I was seeking the shape. And then I—somehow it cropped into my mind, I could knot around something and have a more pure shape. So then I went to that and I began to embellish with some silk threads and some other things that I either had or I get easily. I could send someone to get it.

So that was sort of the birth of basketry for me. And I—prior to that and during that time, I did do other things with fibers, but none of them clicked with me like these knotted baskets did. I did rug hooking for a month. I actually did some weaving again, for maybe three months, four months. But nothing—I kind of learned it. I was—a workshop, I learned it. Then I would be ready

to go on and learn the next thing.

But the situation with John McQueen and Leslie Laskey and this wax—[laughs]—linen in my hands just all came together. And Leslie just said, why are you doing this? Why are you interested in architecture? Why don't you make baskets? Why don't you do something really fantastic with that? That is something you could do with ease and you don't have to go to school for four years to do it.

An uncle that I mentioned earlier, that I lived with during high school, and then again during college, had a lot of influence. I remember one night at a family gathering I was talking to him and I was telling him that I was going to either go to law school or I was going to go to architecture school. And he looked at me in utter astonishment and said, after all those years of being an artist, why aren't you going to do what you're good at? Why are you embarking on something new?

And I suddenly felt like I—why am I doing this? Why am I thinking about this? And I couldn't really assess how I was going to do either of those things, and have children properly taken care of. And I was in a marital situation where I did have a lot of responsibility for a household and so forth, more so because Don was a doctor and he wasn't able to do those things and I had taken it on.

PAUL SMITH: I want to ask about the workshops—or sessions you took with John McQueen. Could you amplify a little bit more about what John talked about? Did he actually demonstrate, and did he talk about the history of basketry?

JANE SAUER: Well, Leslie conducted—this professor in the school of architecture really conducted it from the point of view of materials and used John as a demonstrator. So there was an awful lot of demonstrating. I am going to give you this material. What can you do with it? What are the different ways you can think to construct it into a vessel? And, of course, the line was supposed to be from constructing it into a vessel to constructing it into a piece of architecture, but I stuck at the vessel point.

So John did a lot of demonstrating. And then, as I recall, the last two days—and the time period may be wrong—but there was this time period where everyone was given a piece of material, and it was something that is plentiful in our environment. Mine was newspaper. I actually remember that. And then you were told to construct with it. So the—it was just the whole idea of constructing with material that I got from him. But it was his philosophy, his theory.

He was building a Japanese house at that time in New York, and just the way he talked about trees and the bark. It was just so poetic. It was just so beautiful. And, of course, he is a very charismatic kind of person and the way he approaches life and these things, I was attracted to it. And of course I thought every basket maker built a Japanese house—[laughs]—and lived happily ever after constructing materials. So I thought that sounded like a wonderful thing to embark on.

I really was captured by that, that very moment. And then the other urging pushed me in that direction. And I don't think—I cannot think of one time from that moment on that I have thought about doing anything else—that I have not thought about well, maybe I should be a quilt maker, maybe I should weave. There were parts of each of those things that I loved to look at and I find exciting but I have never thought I wanted to leave what I was doing and go do that. And I have never felt that I have fully explored what one could do just with wax linen.

PAUL SMITH: John McQueen, of course, is so talented both as an artist and as a maker, but so many times these kinds of sessions are about "how-to" but this was much more philosophical and conceptual. I think the fact that it was held in the architecture department is interesting.

I mean, I think to get your mind on exploring material as a concept, along with your finding an interesting in the specific vessel for it, was a very interesting decision. Had you gone—one never knows of course but how do you just learn how to do coiling or whatever. It might not have led to the same kind of result. I think you go the bigger—as I am hearing you, you got the bigger sense of the potential of working with a vessel part.

JANE SAUER: That is very true. And that was always—that was Leslie's main message to all of his students, was sensitivity toward materials. And I—probably the things that I learned in that workshop had more profound effect all through my basket-making career, even though I did this experimenting with materials, different materials all the time, but it was what is the integrity of these materials? What is their potential?

And I was always sensitive to when—and I did at times—force the materials to do something that they didn't want to do. And that was that architectural basis for things. It is a lot more dangerous when you're building a building, but the—it was not a how-to-do. And actually John today—I have taught adjacent to him—and he is still conceptual. And it's more you find your materials, but how are you going to fasten them? What does this material want to do? What is this material capable of doing?

PAUL SMITH: Could you talk about the evolution of your work from those early experiments as they developed in I think the early '80s through the '90s?

JANE SAUER: Well, it was—actually, I began in the late-'70s playing around but they were these little tiny things. I actually apply—I wanted to—

[END AAA\_sauer05\_6596\_r.mp3.]

[In progress]—I knew lots of painters and they were my friends and I had exhibited some paintings that I had done on occasions in St. Louis. And I wanted to get connected with this new group of people and find out what they were doing and what they were thinking, because the basket makers that I knew—none of them were in St. Louis and I didn't really know them. I knew their work because I saw pictures of their work, I read about them, but I didn't know anything about them. And I found out about the weavers guild, and I actually applied to the weaver's guild, and they turned me down because I wasn't weaving on a loom. And I was absolutely heartbroken but it didn't make me stop doing this.

And then I joined a—there were three other women that were renting a space on the third floor of the school, and I joined that and that gave me a place to be doing this. So I was able—prior to that I was working in my dining room, which I had turned into a studio. And when I went into this school with it—it gave me the ability to work larger. So prior to that I was making these very small baskets and embellishing them with lovely things. They were pretty; they were just pretty things. And when I went into the studio, the other people were more—they were kind of being more experimental, more expansive, and I just sort of fell into that.

And I did some other things at that time but I did—just playing around with other things. And I did come back to—this is what I'm going to use this space for. It was all kind of territorial, because it was one large room and we each had a quarter of it. And I remember at one point someone said, well, what you make are very small so you would need a small part of this space. And that probably was as much my generator for working bigger as anything else that had happened, because I said, no, I'm going to work much larger.

And I did begin working larger and that was also based on things that I had—been part of what I studied with Leslie Laskey. How do you make a color change? How does a color change by what is surrounding it? How do certain colors reflect on the surrounding space? How do you go from light to dark? What is the effect of going from light to dark? Those were all things that were discussed formally in those classes, and I began to incorporate them into what I was thinking.

And as soon as I began to do that, I also had a babysitter at home, so when I went there, my mind was on making art. My mind wasn't on, what is this child doing while I'm doing this? And I can very easily get lost in what I'm doing. So it was fractured—my work was very fractured at that time. And having this studio space—I had a babysitter a couple of days a week and I went to this studio. That was my opportunity really to begin to take it more seriously, and thinking about these other issues in making—really changed what I was doing.

And I started growing from making these little cup shapes—well, the evolution was I made these cup shapes. I then thought, I'm very sick of these little cups and how can I get a more interesting shape? And I—after trial and error with a number of different things, I found that I could carve Styrofoam, gesso it, and then weave over it. And so then I began doing that and that just opened up what I could do, in the way of shapes. So when I said I was working bigger, I was probably working eight to 10, 12 inches at that time. But that was a lot bigger than two and half inches so it seemed big to me.

I only used pre-colored threads at this time and the next landmark that happened for me was—well, there were two things that kind of happened simultaneously. I began—well, one of the first things I did was I went to Rhinebeck [Rhinebeck Antiques Fair, Baltimore, MD] completely—

PAUL SMITH: Naïve.



JANE SAUER: Naively—[laughs]—thank you—completely naively. I had a friend that had moved to St. Louis from Baltimore. She told me about the Rhinebeck show. She said, how are you going to get these baskets out of St. Louis? All I was—I was showing at Craft Alliance [St. Louis, MO] and I still hadn't established this connection with other artists that were doing this to fertilize any ideas I had. And she said, if you go to Rhinebeck you could do all of these things. You would meet other people who are doing the same thing as you and you could sell your work.

So we constructed, Nancy and I, in my living room, the booth. We built it. I made the art. We made the pedestals; we painted them. We put them in my van and I felt like it was very ostentatious to be driving this whole van across the country filled with art and pedestals and things. And we got there and I was just astonished to see what people brought—[laughs]—to the fair and how they constructed their booths, and they came in trucks. And I realized there is a whole world of people out there of people who are so much more sophisticated than I am and know what they are doing.

And I have to say that that very—that first fair was when I first met Jack [Lenor] Larsen. He came to my booth. And I met Ivy Ross who bought about half of what I had at that fair, the opening night. Jack was there the next day and he bought the largest piece that I had that I did not expect to sell at all. And he told me, when I come back through New York, I need to stop at his apartment. And I think we'll talk more about that when we talk about mentors.

But I—and that fair—probably the most valuable thing was having Nancy sitting in my booth and for me to walk around, because I sold out very quickly. And I walked all around and saw what other people were doing and met people and that was an incredibly valuable experience for me.

PAUL SMITH: Do you remember the price range on the works?

JANE SAUER: Oh, my god, so embarrassing. And Nancy had made me make the lowest price \$100. I was selling them for \$40 at Craft Alliance. And so she said, no, you have to at least have \$100. Think about how much it is going to cost you to drive across the country. We stayed at Bard College in a dorm room. There must have been five or six people in that room to cut down on expenses, but it was very wonderful. Oh, it was magical.

And I remember Bennett Bean saying to me—and I have teased him about this today—not too long ago—that he said you have got to raise your prices. You shouldn't sell out that fast. And he said don't raise them really high all at once but raise the price of the most expensive thing and the next show raise it a little bit more—things under that a little bit more and just gradually, gradually move them up and your buyers will still buy because, you know, there is fear that if you make your prices too high, well, your career is over; you won't sell anything. And how am I going to do all of this that I have in mind to do now.

And I actually took commissions because I was sitting there for all of those days and people would say, well, can you make me one like that? So I was just fabricating how this was all going to work as I went along. And it was, like, yeah, I could make you something like that. So I never did finish all of those commissions from that time because, of course, three commissions on a singular piece and I was ready to move on to something else by that time.

And I had got my first solo show other than at Craft Alliance out of St. Louis—grew out of that. Rick Snyderman came up to me and said I want—early, like that opening night—and oh, I was flowing. He said, I want you to have a solo show at my wife's gallery, the Works Gallery [Philadelphia, PA]. And he at that time I think was in the banking industry and Ruth was doing other things at Rhinebeck. And I said, oh, okay. And that was my first solo show, which then of course—I have got to make better work for a solo show. So it kind of grew from there.

And I went for many years thinking—for a number of years, every time I would have a show somewhere I would—that would engage a new thought process of how to make work for this show so that it hangs together so that it looks like a new body of work. And each time that would push me into something else. And then sometimes there would be something that would generate an idea. And then I had a striped period and I played with all of the different things stripes could do.

I had a very good friend from my painting days who was a painter, and one day I was waiting for him. He was in the middle of doing something to a painting, and we had a date for lunch and he couldn't leave. So I started playing with my threads and his paints, and that was just like dynamite. His paints were very heavily—the binder was Rolplex because of things that he was doing, the way he was building up the canvas. And Rolplex was an adhesive for acrylic pigments.

And, of course, I had grown up and been educated in the world of oil paints. He wouldn't oil paint fibers, because of the acidity. But it was a whole different story with this acrylic paint and particularly this Rolplex. So that very day, while I was in his studio, began to paint threads and just had a wonderful time. And on the way home, I bought all of the things he had in his studio and I went home and I—well, I didn't go home, I went to my studio—and I spread out this table and I started working on how I could paint threads.

And it went from a sort of heavy, opaque application of paint, which sometimes would chip and break, to what I called glazes, which were very subtle. And that just kept—that was a whole period that lasted until this day, that painting in different ways. I went through metallic stage. I went from using bronzing and brass powders. I went through a gold leaf stage. I mean, just different—the way you could alter the fibers themselves.

I pressed fibers to make them flat. I mean, there were just many, many—I pulled them through my teeth to get the wax off. [Laughs.] Just, you know, whatever. It was always very intuitive and it was always very hands-on. And I remember thinking, iron, that is a pretty good piece of equipment. That was one of my fancier pieces of equipment.

And I was still carving forms. This became more sophisticated as I went along. I found much stronger Styrofoam that was sold by a propane company, that was really used for artists rather than floral. So the materials became more sophisticated as I went on.

In 1982, one of the—it was actually the curator of contemporary art at the St. Louis Art Museum—asked me if I would have a solo show at the St. Louis Art Museum. And by that time I really was one of the best-known artists in St. Louis, but he was—it took him a while to ask me, because he was afraid of what I did and—[laughs]—how that would fit in. And the show wasn't until '86, so I had a long time to stew about it. And I stewed and stewed and stewed about it. [Laughs.]

I remember asking him—Michael Shapiro—I asked him if he was afraid of my work. And he said, I'm scared to death. This could be my career. He said, please do something really sculptural. And I bought, ordered huge pieces of Styrofoam. And that time I had a—we had moved to a different house and the group had broken up. The four women had broken up the school one in—the space.

And I had built a studio in a garage at my house. And I couldn't even carve on this Styrofoam in this little studio. I had to do all of the carving outside and make the things—the bases or the forms—a size that would fit into the studio. And it was very exciting because it forced me to think bigger. It forced me reconstruct my studio so that I could work on these four-foot pieces. They were between four-and five-feet tall.

And I incorporated the painting on some of them. And by the time I had the show, I really liked working on larger pieces. I had two large, really good-sized pieces in the show. And I had upped the size of almost everything that I did to about 36 inches. It took me over a year to construct this show.

PAUL SMITH: Was the construction technique that you used, like a coiling or a traditional basket technique, or did you invent your own process?

JANE SAUER: No, I was knotting. I was still—I was doing the hitch—a half-hitch knot. And I got very facile at it, I could go fast, but that is what I was doing. And the excitement was that, you know, at first I just knotted around and around and then when I started working on these larger pieces, it became obvious to me that these were like lines that wrapped around the piece. They were like a line drawing; they weren't just rows of knotting.

Well, how could I make these lines do something other than go in a concentric circle around and around the piece? And because I was carving the Styrofoam, it had deep crevices in it and raised places, and I have always liked soft curves so it had a lot of soft undulating curves. And then I began to think, how would I draw? In fact, because I was gessoing the piece, the gesso was like a ground and I could draw on the gesso. So I would draw how I wanted these lines to go. And it was pretty wonderful, because if I looked at it and I didn't like the way those lines went, I just gessoed another coat. And then I had a clean canvas to make more lines, to establish a better path.

So I began to figure out ways that I could turn the threads and ways that I could make—build a whole passage and then encapsulate that into the whole of it. So instead of going round and

round and making a whole cloth in a single piece, this opened the door to make segments of this cloth that could do different things, and then connect them and capsule them in various ways. So the lines opened a whole other thought process and then it was the lines and how is the color going to go? That opened a whole other process.

And I have to say at this time, anybody who wove was totally shocked that I was painting on threads. My reasoning was, but people paint on canvas all of the time. What is a canvas made of except a lot of threads that are woven together? So I am now painting on the thread so what is the difference.

And I actually had known from getting paint on my clothes that it was a lot more durable than dye that eventually came out because I would have—I would try to get some of the spots I got on as I said from early days and they would never—the spots would never come out but the clothes would wear out and the dye would be gone and I would still have this nice piece of either oil paint or acrylic paint. So I knew that they were pretty archival—my own investigation.

And I did move from painting threads more heavily or glazing layers on it. So that show at the St. Louis Art Museum was very pivotal in my thought process, and how I pushed forward with new ideas, which—then it became not just the knot that I learned that I thought I had picked out of this book, but then it just became however I wanted to knot, whatever held the fabric together.

PAUL SMITH: What is also interesting is that your earlier focus on painting and drawing entered into this activity as you began to explore the fiber forms.

JANE SAUER: Interesting. I had never thought of that, but you are right. It was all of the pencil. I went back to the pencil in the line drawing, and how you make those lines mean something. How you make them connect, hatch up. [Laughs.] It is very interesting. I have always loved mixing paints. It has always been very—

PAUL SMITH: I'm still curious about the technique. In terms of traditional basket making, was the technique that you used related to traditional Native American, South American, or Japanese basket forms?

JANE SAUER: No, no. And it is not the Aleutian Island, and it is not the Aleutian Island baskets that I thought it was. It is a form of fisherman's knots that I know of. I'm not an academic in the way that I wanted to investigate where did this knot come from and who else has used it. But it is not—in my limited investigation, I don't know of any place that it has been used. I do have a number of people that I have taught it to now that use it and Ferne Jacobs did use knotting. She uses it less now, but it wasn't—the way in which I used it wasn't a full piece that was knotting. She has bounced between—in each piece, it would be constructed in different ways.

PAUL SMITH: For the large pieces, what made them sturdy? Was it the waxed linen, or was it the density of the weave?

JANE SAUER: I wove very tight, which, it's like anything that is tightly woven. And I—so it was the density of the weave, but it also was that I was weaving over Styrofoam, so the Styrofoam was the basis for it. I mean, in some ways I have just left traditional basketry behind. I think, probably, one of my contributions to the field of basketry has been you can do that. It is yours. Use it in the way that you want to use it.

And of course basketry today is so—it's so pushing the envelope, the edges are so wide open, that it can be a use of the technique, it can be what you think is the use of a technique. It can be a form, it can be flat, it can be made of any material. But even then, Rena Peileg was making baskets, and she was one of the people that I looked at and said, ah, you can use anything. She was going in and out with clay and making enormous clay baskets that were fired in a pit that she made to fire them. So that had no relationship to traditional basket weaving.

So all of those people whose work I began to know, and some of whom I met and talked to, we seemed to be in different locales but on the same wavelength, on the same path.

PAUL SMITH: Did the Styrofoam support remain in the work, or did you remove it after you constructed the object?

JANE SAUER: Well, initially, the Styrofoam was removed, and then I actually had one collapse and I thought—[laughs]—it fell to my feet and I was talking to someone and I stepped on it. So it

really did collapse. And I thought, why does that Styrofoam have to come out unless you are going to look inside? But then it is a different kind of construction problem when you're looking inside. It doesn't need to have the stability because it's sort of laying out and gravity is not working against you, gravity is assisting you.

I did pay attention to those kinds of things: when was I working against gravity and when was I using gravity. And as I became more and more ignoring gravity, I began—and I did—there is some, and not that this ever worried me—and it was more brought to me, oh, do you know that this is like Nantucket baskets; they worked over forms. And it was, like, really? Well, how did they get the forms out? I mean, I did have some jigsaw things where I took out one thing.

Most of the time when I did remove the Styrofoam I had just—because I never wanted to repeat the same thing again anyway. Rarely did I do anything other than just take a melon scoop and scoop out the Styrofoam.

[END AAA\_sauer05\_6604\_r.mp3.]

PAUL SMITH: Jane, you have been represented in so many exhibits. Were there any that were especially important to you or symbolic in any way?

JANE SAUER: Well, yes, there are. The "International Miniature Textiles Exhibit" in London, England, was very pivotal in 1980. As I said, I was making these very small baskets, so it was perfect for me to enter something like that and I entered it, and I ended up winning first place and I ended up going—the first-place award and I ended up going to London to accept that award. And it was the first time that I had been in an international exhibit, which was very exciting and very confirming of what I was doing. And it also was the first time that I had ever gone to Europe. To see a lot of art that I had seen in books was very, very exciting because I did travel after that and that was quite thrilling.

The next exhibit that I would say that was a very major step for me was being in the exhibit in Lausanne and that was in 1992 that—it was again an international exhibit and it was for fiber arts and in international way, which I had not actually seen because certainly I did see it in the miniature textiles but they were such small objects, there was nothing like going to Lausanne. It served its purpose, but it wasn't like going to Lausanne.

And two years prior to that, I had purchased a studio in a warehouse building in St. Louis and it was an enormous studio that was 20-by-36 feet, something like that. And so I had a really large space to work in and my mind could go to much larger pieces and I wouldn't have the struggle of how to construct them, which was always a struggle and would always stop me before that. It was actually Jack Larsen that suggested that I apply for this, so it was again how he entered my horizon or ambitions.

And I did apply with a proposal rather than an actual piece—

[END AAA\_sauer05\_6601\_r.mp3.]

JANE SAUER: And I had no idea how long this piece would take for me to construct. None whatsoever, or even what I would construct a seven-foot piece out of, which—this is somewhat typical of how I work intuitively. I got in and then said, okay, now I have to figure out how to do this. So I did have the materials actually specially spun for me, because the year before that I had received a large NEA grant and that gave me the money to do this. And it also gave me the money to buy the time, which is very, very precious to any artist. So I began to construct that.

And then when I went to Lausanne, that show was just magic and it gave me kind of in the art world the "Good Housekeeping" seal of approval because to be in a show like that does that. And I continued making large pieces probably for about a year-and-a-half after that, and then I began to have some physical problems from pulling threads that are that heavy all day long.

And was kind of roaming around thinking what else I would and I was invited to be in a show called "Breaking Barriers." And so thereafter I was invited to be at a show at MIT called "Subversive Crafts." And both of those kind of came together in my mind as giving me the opportunity to bring my social beliefs, my ideological beliefs, and my art form together, and that was when I began in earnest to put text on my work. And the text related to the messages that I wanted to impart through my work.

And I have mentioned—I should mention here too that—maybe not by name, but every time I

was in a museum show, it was a very landmark thing, not just for me, but the baskets were becoming part of museum exhibits. And that was very, very valuable. Each time it would be a celebration. And when the Erie Art Museum made a collection of baskets, that was a landmark. It was so much bigger than that collection; it was so much bigger than that exhibit to have them do that. And I should say that the first piece of mine that was ever sold to a museum was the Wadsworth Athenaeum, and what that does to an artist to think they have made something that a museum would purchase.

PAUL SMITH: Did you always create the work by yourself or did you ever have assistance?

JANE SAUER: When I embarked—I had never had an assistant before, but when I embarked on the piece for Lausanne, I worked on it—I carved the form and then I began working on it, having had some higher-gauge threads spun. And I soon calculated, given the time I had to complete this piece and the time that there was left, that I could not finish this by myself, that I had to have someone help me. And I did have a wonderful assistant during that period of time. And then after that, when I worked on the large pieces, I had someone assist me during the course of constructing those large pieces, and that is extent—I always talked about getting somebody to do paperwork but somehow it didn't happen. [Laughs.]

Another exhibition that was very pivotal to my art life was in 1986—"Craft Today, Poetry of the Physical," that was curated by you. And when you asked me to be in that show, it was another time that I went back to my studio and said, I have to make something wonderful and that it has to be very important to me. And I did make something about my children growing. And I made a three-part piece, which that was new for me. I had not—that was the first piece that I made of pieces that went together, that were—each individual piece wasn't as meaningful as the whole. It didn't really make sense, except for the whole.

And when I went to New York City for the opening, I met people whose pictures I had seen in magazines, I saw the work that I had seen in magazines, I saw it in the flesh. I just couldn't spend enough time looking at the exhibit. And every time I would pass a case or I would pass a pedestal, I would see somebody whose picture I had seen in the magazine and I—people had name tags on and everybody was introducing themselves to everybody else, and it was just this sudden influx of stimuli of the people and what they had to say, right there with their work.

And it was an incredible experience because I had been in St. Louis and there were the weavers who wove traditionally and there were the painters and there were the printmakers, but there was nobody doing what I was doing. And even though I had received recognition, I did not have a community and I really did seek the cross-fertilization of other people.

Diane Itter was somebody who sought me out, because I was doing—she was a wonderful interconnector. And she saw a picture of what I was doing and knew that we were both knotting but I was going round and round and she was going back and forth. And we began a correspondence and we actually were there together at the opening of—and she knew everybody and so she was introducing me.

And there was a press conference. And, oh, my god, I felt so important going to a press conference in New York City surrounded by the stars—is how I felt about it. And there were dinners, and there were receptions. And each time for me it was an art feeding frenzy of meeting people and talking about where do you work? Do you have a studio, how big is it? Do you do this work by yourself? I just learned so much. It was a week of learning in a very informal but wonderful way.

I picked up so many pointers of how to get in shows or where—what galleries were important to look at, and things that you only share face to face, like what gallery doesn't pay, what gallery didn't return the work when the artist wanted their work back? You just have to be face-to-face to get that so that was a very important—to be in the show was another "Good Housekeeping" seal of approval for my work, but it was the opening of this is a field, this is a pioneering field, and I am part of something really big even if it doesn't exist in St. Louis.

And then another important show for me was being in a show called "The Art in the Craft Media" that was curated by Jack [Lenor] Larsen, and it was in 1988. And I came to Santa Fe. It was at Belles Artes Gallery here. And I came to Santa Fe and it was again a situation that I was with a number of other artists that I felt very proud to be in their company in a show and then to be in their company. And loved this city so that was the beginning of my drive to move here some day. [Laughs.]

PAUL SMITH: That of course was a commercial gallery, so it was a selling show.

JANE SAUER: Yes.

PAUL SMITH: Did you sell your work?

JANE SAUER: Oh, yes, I did. And I was very fortunate all the way through. The only time I remember not selling my work in a show was November 2001 and—[laughs]—and I sold what I had sold before the show opened before September 11 and that was it. But otherwise I had been fortunate that I have sold my work many times.

PAUL SMITH: As you are in many private collections, are there any important special collections or collectors that have meant a lot to you and have you developed friendships with some of these collectors?

JANE SAUER: I have wonderful, wonderful friendships with collectors, some just outstanding friendships. Again, I have to say Jack has bought several pieces of my work and he stands out because that was very important. Barbara Rose Okun came to buy a piece of mine when I was still working in my dining room, on those little things. But she was a very mythic figure in St. Louis. She owned a gallery and I knew once I sold her a piece of artwork, I would be selling to other people, because she was a setter of what was good. Her voice was listened to.

Another person who bought, I think, four pieces of mine was Joe Pulitzer who has an incredible contemporary collection. And he came and bought—the first time he bought two pieces of mine, which until he died, sat next to his bed at his nightstand. And then his wife, Emmy Pulitzer, who had been the curator of contemporary art at the St. Louis Art Museum, at Joe's urging, came to my studio, and she bought two more farjos from me, and they—this little cluster of baskets. And I was included in many social events at their house thereafter, and became friends with them. And they were wonderful. And I saw some absolutely incredible pieces of art in the way—in a residential setting, in a way that I could never see them other times through the Pulitzers.

Another collector that the purchase of my work was very meaningful is Ted and Sissy Thomas in St. Louis. They bought a piece of my work early on and it was again someone who owned and had a gallery and I didn't show at the gallery, because it was ceramics only. But it was—we went on to love talking about art together. We still see each other, we still talk, and it has been—she doesn't own a gallery any longer, but it's—the basis of our friendship is far broader than just the purchase of one of my pieces, but it is based in art and artists and collecting.

Another person that has been very important to me has been Erick and Barbara Dobkin. They bought a work of mine early on. It is one of my early gallery situations. And I actually didn't even know that they owned work until they identified themselves to me because some galleries are reluctant to give you the name of collectors. So they identified what they had and I was shocked, and we have gone on to become very close friends and it's based in the art world but it's also based on what wonderful people they are.

And the same goes for Sara and David Lieberman. They had collected my work, and I didn't know that they had several pieces that they had because I wasn't—they weren't identified. I met them, they told me what they owned. They came to my studio, we chatted, and we have been—I count them among my closest friends ever since that time. And each of these people that I'm talking about are wonderful people having nothing to do with art.

Another couple that is very outstanding in my mind are Cathy and Marty Weiss who are incredibly generous in supporting many, many art things. They are St. Louisans also. I met them in St. Louis but our friendship has extended long past that locale. And they have become major collectors in the field of fiber arts, although they began collecting—have many other things.

And then one thing that I do really find—because I did come to this from being part of the painting world and my world, my community in St. Louis was pretty much the painting drawing, printmaking world, that it seems that in the craft world, there are relationships that are developed that go way beyond owning the work of that particular artist, that I know many people who have loaned artists money to do special things. I know so many people who have supported—myself included—supported projects that the artist wants supported.

And I have to mention Paul and Alissa Kahn have supported so many things that I have asked them to support. They are generous in many causes. But it has been a special relationship, because I have known for years that they would—they could be counted on. Barbara and Sam

Wells are two other people who could be counted on to be very supportive of things having to do, particularly with fiber arts.

But it is a special group of people that it seems to be—these are people who had the guts to purchase and collect work that was outside of the mainstream. And it seems like that takes a special kind of gutsy person. And besides purchasing, they seem, as a group of people, to be devoted not just to ownership of a particular artist's work but devoted to seeing this art form continued, and have been very instrumental in the careers of a number of artists, not just myself, but a number of artists, and a number of organizations and programs that they have helped sponsor, have contributed to.

PAUL SMITH: I think that has been very important.

JANE SAUER: We couldn't have had this movement without people like them, and these are just the people that I have come in—should we close the window—people that I have come in contact with. I mean, I'm just naming the ones that I have become close with, but I know there are others that I see their names over and over and over again and we just haven't crossed paths but I know that there is a—are there are artists, who have made a lot of money through the craft media, who have also given back to that media. And there are some who haven't made a lot of money whose names I see, who have given back to the best of their ability, and maybe some of them way beyond their ability but they have assured the continuation of this art form.

PAUL SMITH: In the interview so far you have talked about your successful marketing of your work from the very beginning. But I understand that, later on, you began to develop more formal relationships with galleries. Could you speak about that aspect of your career?

JANE SAUER: Oh, from the beginning I always wanted to have gallery affiliation rather than kind of—I would view it almost as pedaling my own work. I was never comfortable with it but I was always relatively good at it. And Craft Alliance, even though I loved it was a gallery that had few shows and mostly just sold things randomly. And I was wanting all along to have a gallery in St. Louis. My first—I had galleries out of town, as I mentioned—the Works Gallery—and then from that I went on to be asked in other galleries and be in group shows and so forth, and to join galleries.

But it's always nice to show in your own city. And Barbara Okun came to me one day in the late '80s and said, show me everything that you have on basketry. I am very interested in it. and that was the beginning of her exhibiting baskets and selling many, many baskets and beginning wonderful basket collections in St. Louis. She was in St. Louis at the time.

And eventually I showed with her, and went to new art forms in the late '80s with her. And that was my opportunity to sell other people's baskets, because I helped her with sales and I learned more about sales, new art forms, than I had previously known. And I had shown at a particular gallery in St. Louis and then the manager of the gallery left to begin his own gallery, which was our Duane Reed.

And I joined his gallery just because it was what I wanted to do. He had no space, he had a scant list of artists who were saying they were going to leave Elliot Smith Gallery and go with him, but everything was sort of in flux and nothing was solid. And I really liked Duane and he had supported my work for many years when I showed at Elliot Smith's and even supported some zany things that I did. Like, I did wood sculpture for—I had a period of that.

And he came to look at them and he told me they were wonderful and he brought them into the gallery and was always supportive when I had a new idea. And that led to many years of affiliation. I showed with Duane probably from my 10 very important years of my exhibiting life, and pretty much showed all of my work with him. We would have numerous discussions about my showing with somebody else because he wanted it all, but I wanted to be outside of St. Louis also.

And he played a very important role in supporting me, in helping me establish prices, in bringing my work to SOFA [International Expositions of Sculptural Objects and Functional Art], which I think is an extremely important venue for galleries. And for artists it's just essential. It is a wonderful place to show new work and have a very—the largest audience I think that you can have other than in a major museum exhibit, and maybe more.

PAUL SMITH: Jane, you have had a very ambitious career as an artist, but you have also accomplished so much with associations and organizations. I would now like to go over a few of

those that were of special interest to you and that were meaningful experiences. I know that you had a deep involvement with the Craft Alliance in St. Louis. Could you talk about that organization?

JANE SAUER: Well, I have a long history with Craft Alliance. In '72, I first started exhibiting with them and they were my first connection with craftspeople, although I was doing something very different than what they were doing. But it was a place to exhibit and it was quite wonderful. It began in someone's kitchen talking about the craft artists—I was not a founder of it—but talking about that craft artists need a place to exhibit as well as painters and drawing people. And it goes back to those wonderful late-'60s days. I just happened to be doing other things.

But I really still love Craft Alliance because of what they do, and they have always taught classes, they have always exhibited, they have always had shows, and it has always been a non-for-profit, even though it began as an artist-run, but it was very non-for-profit. And it covers masters and gives young people a place to exhibit too. And it gave me lots of opportunities besides exhibiting. I taught basketry there. I took classes, some of those other things that I tried out. I learned how to do them at Craft Alliance. I served on the gallery committee.

The first basket show that I ever was involved in, I wasn't in. I was too new to the field to be in but I was the gopher for a basket show and I got to see all of these baskets, from all over the United States, of people trying to enter this show. And so that was a wonderful opportunity to see them even if I didn't get to meet them. And it kept going and I was able to curate several basket shows, which—almost from the very beginning—curating a basket show grew bigger in my mind. What would it be like if we had seminars? What would it be like if we invited collectors to come. Well, if we are going to invite collectors to come, we have to show them other basket collections, we have to have a wonderful show for them to see. We have to do something to get the artists here so that they can talk to the artists.

So it became a weekend and it was quite enormous facilitating all of this. But I was hired for special events of which this was one of them, and we did several of them and they were very exciting and it was really, probably, one of the first events like that of which there are many now where people who were interested in a particular art form come and get together. And it certainly wasn't at that time—thought we could do that around something like baskets, but it happened; it worked.

And I have actually—I have never served on the board of Craft Alliance. I have always been a worker or sort of a minor participant. But it has very helpful.

PAUL SMITH: As you have given many workshops all over the world I would be interested in knowing a little bit more about these workshops. So could you talk about the value of conducting a workshop and what it means to you?

JANE SAUER: Well, it has always been—I felt isolated making baskets with—you can imagine the jokes that went around that in the '70s and '80s. And once I became really deeply involved, I wanted to open this up as an art form. I wanted people to look at it as an art form. And that necessitates people doing it and continuing to do it as others move on to other things. So I felt sort of an obligation to do this. And I also—there were not other knotters. And so I have little—there are knotters all around now. And I felt that—I just felt some passion about sharing this particular construction method with other people.

And as I saw needs in the field, just from my perspective, from my point of view, I tried to offer workshops that would fill those needs. I felt that there were only technique workshops for a long period of time and I just decided I was not going to teach technique any longer; I was only going to teach concepts so that the people that were making baskets—there would be more meat to what they were doing.

And I have to say, for me, it's been also that wonderful connection with other people who were interested in baskets, which made me feel less isolated. And I was not a traveler and it was a wonderful way to connect with people in other cities and see other parts of this United States, and the world.

PAUL SMITH: What countries, other than the United States, have you given workshops in?

JANE SAUER: Well, three times I have been to Australia and various parts of Australia to give workshops.



PAUL SMITH: In 1984, you had a residency at the Artpark in Lewiston, New York. What did you do there?

JANE SAUER: I don't even know how I had the nerve to apply for that but I did. I called what I was doing "sculpture." It's a wonderful program. Some people made very large things, sort of out in the field. These were things that were to be made over a summer and stay up for another six-month period and then be knocked down and make way for the next group of artists to come the next summer. And we lived in A frames or in a very cheap hotel, or some people just camped out. So it was a wonderful community of artists to be together.

And it was—it seemed wonderful in the beginning. I sat in a little house with a tin roof. And I carved my forms and I did my knotting over them and I talked to people that came through the park. It was an art park. I talked to people that came through the park about what I was doing. And I would say for the first month it was wonderful and I would say for the second month it was torture—[laughs]—to keep talking about my work over and over and over again. I remember thinking, I am so bored with my work—[laughs]—that it's—it began to feel very hollow. But it was a wonderful experience primarily because it was the richness of other people and their ideas for me.

PAUL SMITH: In 1992, you joined the board of trustees of the American Craft Council and served for eight years, and towards the end of your term, you became chair of the board. I would be interested in knowing more about your association with ACC and being a trustee. Specifically, when you became chairman in 1997, were there specific goals that you hoped to accomplish?

JANE SAUER: Well, the—well, I had—just to go back a little bit. I have always taken—I had a leadership role with a number of organizations so I'm sure that was probably why I was asked to do that. And I remember being very complimented at being asked to do it by the two people who asked me—two trustees met with me and asked me to do this, and said how important it was for artists to take this role. So that sent me on a mission that this is the role I'm supposed to play. I think I did play that role the entire time. I think I made decisions fairly, but I always had the artists' mind in my mind and voiced that opinion.

And I did think it was a wonderful opportunity to be able to make a difference in the lives—to hopefully make some difference in the lives of craftspeople. That was my goal—that if I could make anything better, because craftspeople work incredibly long hours, for the most part, for not much money. There are certainly some who have benefited financially from their work but the majority don't. And there are so many different levels of craftspeople, people who are making sort of what I would call very small production and people who make one of a kind, and they are all part of the same—and I saw divisiveness between those two groups, and that was something I hoped to be able to change.

And when I came in as chair, that was—when I knew I was going to become chair, that was when the museum and the council had split and were trying to firm up legal situations that had not been properly vetted at the time of the signing of their first agreement. And I think probably it's because they couldn't. So they wanted to make some agreement and they went on and everybody agreed to not agree. Everybody agreed to just close their eyes to certain situations—the museum property, which was one very major part of it.

And I was afraid of that role. I did not have any background to prepare me for that role whatsoever. That might have been my greatest failing but I was very lucky that the then chair, Bob Libby, was much more knowledgeable about real estate and legal matters and banking matters than I was. And he really worked out the agreement and was—he wanted to bring this to closure during his term, but we spent many, many hours talking about it.

And because of his experience, he was very, very hard. And I think what I brought to the table was somebody who was more neutral who did not have bad experiences, and I'm still very much this way. I don't hold grudges, or I'm ready to put down what happened—I mean, it's just the way I am. I'm ready to put down what happened in the past and say, okay, but here we are today; now let's move on. What can we do with this?

And I hope that I softened his resolve on some issues so that it was—who knows ever whether this will all—in many years from now—whether we made the right decisions or we made decisions? But we did do the best we could and we did give it our all to make those decisions. And I played some role in that.

And then I felt as chair of the council that my biggest role was to bring the position of the

craftspeople to the board of trustees, and sometimes to the staff, to some of the staff. That, you know, with any large organization, sometimes staff loses sight of what they are doing and why they are doing it.

You know, in terms of the council, I have to say that—I really want to say this—that Lois Moran was, as she has with many, many people, offered great guidance to me of ways to go and things to—to hear things in a certain light. Or she would amplify what was being said so that it wasn't—I heard more than just the words that were said.

There were some very, very trying times. I think I grew a lot when I was the chair of the council. I felt like it was an opportunity. I have to say that my family was not 100 percent behind me doing this. And my husband, who was usually extremely supportive of everything I want to do, was not extremely supportive of this move. [Laughs.] But I did, in my mind, what I thought is, how many times in your lifetime do you have the opportunity to really affect the lives of other people, and that that this is an opportunity? So I took it. I just decided to do it.

And looking back, my own art suffered tremendously during that time, because Don used to say, she spends eight hours a day on council business, and two hours a day making art. And I would always be angry when he would say that, but there was a lot of truth to that; that there were just things that came up all of the time and there was, over and over again, trying to figure out was right and what was wrong and whether—[laughs]—you were being told the truth and it's a big job. It is really a big job.

And I still kind of look back and think, how did I live through that—[laughs]—because it was such a big job and so many decisions to be made. And I feel like I did give up a lot of my own career, and looked very forward to my time being over.

PAUL SMITH: Did you ever meet the founder, Mrs. Aileen Osborn Webb?

JANE SAUER: No, I never did. I never did. My time was after her time. [Laughs.] But I wish I had and I so respect—I mean, where would we all be today if she hadn't had her dream. And if she hadn't—I have to say, I did know that she countered her family many times and what she did for craftspeople, and I did think many times, well, she did it and she had a lot more to lose than I do, so I'm just going to go ahead.

PAUL SMITH: Tell me about the Textile Art Association that I believe you founded in 2002.

JANE SAUER: I came here to Santa Fe and this is the land of fiber art. There are ethnic fibers here, textiles. There are the strong, strong tradition of Hopi and Navajo textiles here. There are three museums that have very rich collections of historic textiles true to this area, and then there's a pretty large group of people who are making fiber—contemporary fiber today, and then there is a gallery that sells some of the finest wearable art that's being sold today, and that is Santa Fe Weaving, and the owner is Jill Heppenheimer.

And I had an idea, and I have to say simultaneously Jill had this idea: Why don't we bring all this together and how could we do it? So I was fairly new to Santa Fe at that time, and I didn't have the deep connections that Jill did, and we just got together and dreamt up this organization, and she took part of it and I took part of it, and we sent out some kind of notification—would you like to be part of this organization, and if you would, send \$25 to this post office box—and now there are something like 175 members, and every time we have a program, which is about once a month, the smallest audience I would say we've had is about 35.

PAUL SMITH: Are the members mainly in the state or are they from all over the country?

JANE SAUER: No, the members are mainly in this state. There really hasn't been an effort to broaden that. There was thought about it, but we probably would capture people once and then they'd go on and—so we needed that solid base.

PAUL SMITH: As you are talking about being in Santa Fe, could you tell me a little bit about why you relocated here and when that happened?

JANE SAUER: Well, I grew up in St. Louis—I was born in St. Louis, I grew up in St. Louis, I married St. Louisans, I had—only later, in my later years, did I travel, and I was just hungry to experience another culture. And every time I would give a workshop someplace, I would say, I want to move there; that's where I want to be. And I did, a number of years ago, give a workshop here, and of course came home and said that same thing, and was laughed at for the umpteenth time, but

then when I came back I did really want to move here. I thought the environment was absolutely magnificent; very, very different than St. Louis, and I wanted something really different than St. Louis. And I've always been interested in different cultures, and there are three cultures that exist side by side here: Native American, Hispanic and Anglo, and although I knew African Americans really well, I really didn't know the two cultures that were here, and that was very interesting to me. That made me think I would like to do that.

And it's the only place that I've ever been where something about the arts was written in the front page of the newspaper almost every night or every morning. Now, sometimes they don't cover national news very well, but it's very exciting to have the arts mean that much, and the city is driven by the arts. So if you get to pick anyplace you want to go—and the climate is wonderful—then you do it. And I was able to talk Don into doing it, so -

PAUL SMITH: You first had a house here and then you eventually acquired a studio. Is that correct?

JANE SAUER: The year we moved here I acquired a studio here. We owned a house from '93. We came and we—I had convinced Don to move here, and he came and he—this offered things he liked also, so we—it was probably the only time in our life we had a little extra money, and we put it down on a house here, not quite being sure how we were going to bring the rest of it together. We luckily rented it to someone immediately, and so we forestalled our move here, but we eventually brought things together and the time was right. And I have to say it was quite a shock. I act very intuitively and I just said, this is all going to work out. And I got here and—you have to picture somebody that had lived in the same community all their life that couldn't go to the grocery store without seeing way too many people that I knew and couldn't drop things off at the cleaners without it taking 15 minutes of conversation. And I said, I don't want to see anybody I know. It'll be wonderful. I don't have to keep chatting.

And I got here and I could not believe what I was like to not hear my telephone ring, ever, and to go everywhere and not know anybody. And it was really a shock also to find that Don and I were here together, and we had never really been alone together because we've both had very busy careers, and we've never had empty nest syndrome, because we just folded into the next level of activity. And so he didn't know anybody here either, and it was—I think I suffered from that much more than him, and I definitely, in the beginning, had ideas about, okay, this was great, this was a wonderful experiment, and now let's go back. I've done it and now I've done it and I'm ready to go back. But I kept trying it a little while longer, and it kept feeling better and better.

The reasons that I moved here revealed themselves, and it felt more and more right. And I actually was isolated again, though, because I didn't have the deep connection with the art community so I was working my way into it, and I was in a studio, I did buy a studio. There weren't—that I could locate—artists' studios, and I have to say I also had owned my studio in St. Louis that I bought for 19,000 and paid \$125 a month on maintenance, utilities, everything. So when I came here and they wanted, like, \$800 a month for a studio smaller, I was—I am not doing this.

[END AAA\_sauer05\_6602\_r.mp3.]

I was just, okay, I can't. And I ended up folding the money that I sold my studio for in St. Louis into buying a studio here, which was good and bad because, again, I was really isolated in a singular situation.

And after 9/11, when I took the job part time to do the same kinds of things that I had done at Craft Alliance at Thirteen Moons [Jane Sauer Thirteen Moons Gallery, Santa Fe, NM] was when I began to meet—more in-depth—meet other artists and other people in the arts, because I sort of had a place from which to operate.

PAUL SMITH: Well, from what I've observed you no longer have isolation. [They laugh.] You have the same problem you had in St. Louis.

When you moved to Santa Fe I know you were very productive in your new studio and created some really exciting new work. Did the environment here in Santa Fe have an effect?

JANE SAUER: It did have an effect. It definitely had an effect. I have never lived with nature in my life, so I was like, oh, my god, I don't like it; it's dirty and there's too much of it and blah, blah, blah, but I began to love it and I did a lot of things that centered around growth and nature and colors that you just—the color of this area just—you can't escape the impact. But I also did—oh,

it was a time of reflection, and I did a lot of work that centered around—the pieces that I was doing—and it began before I came here but it was kind of my thought about coming here—pieces that I had done prior to that seemed to stand up, and they had a relationship with each other. That negative space between them was very important to the piece, but as I was getting ready to come here, I was making pieces that leaned on one another, pieces that if you took away half of it, it didn't make any sense at all rather than being just better as a whole. And I was thinking about, as I left St. Louis and I left all of these connections, how interdependent am I, and are we all, on old associations and connections, and some wishing that I had done this when I was younger and fear that I was doing it too late to make these connections, and all those fears that you have that sometimes can keep you from working.

But also it was, this Don and I being here and that he was the only person I knew, and what that meant. So the work became all about all of that, and it became about growth, too, because the one thing that I definitely experienced is that when you move someplace where people don't know who you were, it is—and it was something I wanted; it was something I was looking forward to. It is an opportunity for growth.

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

PAUL SMITH: This is Paul Smith interviewing Jane Sauer for the Archives of American Art at her home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Monday afternoon, July 11, 2005. This is disc number three.

Jane, in 2001 I understand that you began to work part time at the Thirteen Moons Gallery on Canyon Road. What motivated that decision and what did you do there?

JANE SAUER: Well, I was approached by the director and somebody that worked there to help them because the owner [Mary Anhaltzer] had died very suddenly—and her vision was that the gallery should be purely art quilts, and they were looking for someone who could help them have an expansion beyond art quilts, and they didn't really know where, how, what. So my job was to bring some new artists into the gallery, to curate some shows. And of course the first thing I said was, I'll curate a basket show, and they agreed that would be a really good idea. And that led to, well, could you get us a weaver, can you get us a—and it just grew from that.

And I took the job—it was right after 9/11 that I took the job, and primarily it was dealing with this issue of isolation in my studio. It happened that at 9/11, my husband was in St. Louis taking care of a brother who was in intensive care and he didn't even know 9/11 was happening, so I was really by myself around the clock pretty much, and I thought, this is a good opportunity to be connected. And the shows that I started curating were successful. And the art market was really, really down still for everybody, so part of my motivation at that time really was, well, how wonderful can it be, how much better can it be? Then I remember one month we sent checks to 26 artists, and I thought, it just doesn't get any better than this; this is really wonderful.

I can't say I was getting tired of my studio because that's not really true, but I was getting—I was looking for that new challenge; I was beginning to think, what's the new challenge? And it could have been something to do with knotting or—this just came. And Canyon Road is the arts and crafts road of Santa Fe, and it was like a dream come true to bring baskets, first, to that location, and then it was to bring all these other things that were connected with textile arts. So the first mandate from the owner was that it couldn't go beyond being textile arts. And I started out curating shows, then it became I need to install these shows, and then it became, can I install other shows? Can I install everything? And it was just each of these things—I had never been an installer, so each of these things I didn't know that much about. Each of them became a new challenge. And I've always had sort of a love of business, so making things work in a business sense in just an odd kind of side way.

But that was also another new challenge. I learned lots more about computers, which that was still another challenge. So it was like—it was kind of like this book turned to a new paragraph, and I liked the paragraph so I just kept reading. And I never in the beginning thought that I would want to work full-time, but it began that I was there so much that my hourly wage was becoming difficult, so I agreed to work full-time, viewing that as I would take a one-year sabbatical from my studio and I would really get this gallery solidified. I would stabilize it and then I'd go back to my studio. But I liked it more and more and I kept seeing the next challenge, and before I knew it I'd just—I became co-director.

And then the owner had decided that he really no longer wanted to be in the gallery business; he just wanted to be a property owner, and the opportunity to buy the gallery was there, and I took

it.

PAUL SMITH: That just happened?

JANE SAUER: That happened three weeks ago.

PAUL SMITH: So now that you actually own the gallery, what are your thoughts and plans for the future?

JANE SAUER: Well, still, to make it the best craft gallery in the country. That's one of my plans and ambitions. And I want to keep selling artwork. And I love the challenge of thinking, how I can market this work, how I can bring it to more people. And I feel like I'm just ideally located in Santa Fe because so many people come here to look at art, and if I were to only try to sell to people who are interested in art and crafts, I would have a limited market, but I think our whole future as craftspeople rests on enlarging—continuously enlarging the taste for what we do. That's my mission. And people come in the door who don't know what this material is and listen to me go on and on. And many of them buy and many of them get attracted, become attracted.

I'm just completely enjoying marketing other people's work and talking to artists about their work, and I kind of have entered on another level. I still think it's an incredible creative endeavor but I just—maybe I'm like the grandmother now, that, you know, I want to see my children all go to college and graduate and have careers, that maybe that's the difference. I don't know what it is and I don't know what the future is except that I really want to have a wonderful gallery that makes people look for crafts and fiber arts everywhere else, in other cities.

PAUL SMITH: From what I saw during this week when I visited your gallery, you're on a very good path.

JANE SAUER: Thank you. Thank you. It's exciting.

PAUL SMITH: We've covered your career quite well, and it's been fascinating to hear about all the different aspects of your life. Now I would like to do ask a few general questions. Who are your mentors?

JANE SAUER: Well, I've had a lot of mentors, and I have to go back to this uncle of mine that I think was my first mentor that I've pretty well covered, but I would say that he was a great encourager. Maybe I'd even say my father hanging up all those pictures around his office, was my first mentor. And then an uncle, who actually paid my tuition to go to Washington University School of Art, all \$250 a semester, but let me live with him and encouraged me, and it was very generous, and he has continued to encourage me.

And my next mentor, or somewhere in there, would be Ed Menges, who I have mentioned, my high school art teacher. And then my next really major mentor was Leslie Laske, who was a teacher at the School of Architecture, who I still am in contact with and we still talk about what I'm doing, and he's not always pleased with what I'm doing, like this gallery thing, but I still think that he gives excellent advice. I don't follow his advice totally, anyway, so he's no different.

And Jack Larsen—my first opening—which I don't think I've said anywhere in here—was that I went to a neighborhood bookstore regularly and the owner of the bookstore said, I just got in this wonderful book, and it was Jack Larsen and Mildred Constantine's first book on fiber art. And I had a child on my hip and I immediately started turning the pages of the book. It was absolutely mesmerizing, this book, and my child tore a page and we decided I should buy it. I bought it and I went home and said, I'm going to read every word in this book, whether I like it or not. And it did cost \$35, which was a whole lot of money at that time, and went home and it just made a new—it just opened new doors for me. And when I met him at Rhinebeck it was—I knew there was somebody important in my booth.

The name of the book—actually this would be in 1976, and the name of the book that I'm speaking of is *The Art Fabric: Mainstream* [New York: Von Nostrand Reinhold, 1981] by Jack Larsen and Mildred Constantine. And I actually didn't meet Mildred until much later but I just happened to have continuous contact with Jack, and he put me in shows that were The Art of Fiber, the Art of Fabric. He kept in touch with me. One very, very significant thing that he did when—I came to New York and I had a plan to meet with him, and he said, I'm going to Long Island for the weekend; you stay in my apartment; open every—he had sliding doors and had art behind them. And he said, open all these doors, take things out, study them. He told me to go to the Greek section of the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]—I was all hot to go to MoMA, and he said,

no, no, no, you need to go to the Metropolitan, you need to go look at the Greek art there, and you need to study form and proportion.

And I did everything he told me to do and it benefited me tremendously. My first trip to Japan, which I think had a lot of effect on my artwork, and purifying my form was—my first NEA, I called Jack and I said, I want to do something important to my art with this money; what do you think that should be? And he said, go to Japan. And I went to Japan, and it was very important. And as late as probably two weeks ago, three weeks ago, I got a telephone message—no, an email from Jack, giving me some directive about the gallery. So he's still very much a part of my life, and as many times as happened I thought, what is he telling me to do that for? And yet, when I think about it, huh, okay, I understand why he's telling me to do that. I don't know if I can do it or I want to do it, but I completely understand his point, and he's probably purer than I am.

PAUL SMITH: Other mentors?

JANE SAUER: Other mentors. It's been very much—I kind of want to say this someplace, but Don is the third husband I've had, and now it's like 34 years old, and he's been a huge stability in my life, and I could not have—I don't know if we call this a mentor, but he has encouraged me to do things, and when he hasn't encouraged me to do them, like become chair of the American Craft Council, he never stood in my way. He never—after I made the decision he never once said, I'm angry with you. He never acted like he was angry with me. I made the decision and he became my support apparatus. He never harbored any—he has always stood for the same things. We came together during the civil rights movement and we've always stood for the same things. We've always had the same sense of integrity and honesty and speaking out for what you think is right. So I think that having a companion in the value part of my life has been very important.

PAUL SMITH: You have mentioned in this interview so many different events and activities. Are there any others that have not been mentioned, or any special thing that happened that really had a great effect on your life?

JANE SAUER: No, I think we've covered everything, really.

PAUL SMITH: Okay. Then what I would like to do is to get to your reflections on the so-called craft world. I would be interested in knowing what changes you have seen, specifically in fiber art.

JANE SAUER: Well, I really see fiber art as just now really kind of blossoming, coming into its own, and I think—to me the—and maybe this is because I was so much an intimate part of all of it almost from the beginning—boy, these people are just pioneers, myself included. I mean, I look back at what I did myself and I say, boy, I had so much guts, because what I was hearing was, oh, you took underwater basket-making? Did you enjoy the mental hospital that you were in when you learned how to do this? And so I look at how far we've come from that. I mean, nobody would say that today, I don't think; they wouldn't say it to me. And I think the people that are buying it are sort of taking a chance, are pioneers too, and I really commend them, but the exciting things that I see—I just came back from two days with Sara and David Lieberman and Heather Lineberry from the Arizona State Art Museum because there's going to be a show at that art museum of the Sara and David Lieberman collection of baskets, and I couldn't have dreamed in my wildest dreams in the 1980s that that would ever happen.

So we have come a long, long way. I know some of the people that I've sold baskets to who are sculpture collectors, who are painting collectors, who think this complements the material, who wouldn't have bought that in a million years before, before maybe the last few years even, and I really see some—it's ebbing and flowing. Some things are dying out, other things are coming to the fore, but I've seen that happen in the other media of craft world. I feel so excited about the craft world, and I'm so happy that in my life I had something to do with it, that I was a part of it. I think it's just been such a privilege, because I love the people that are involved in it. I mean, I really—I could have had a different kind of life and I just love these people. They're all adventurers, they're all inventors, they're all willing to take a chance. And money hasn't driven them, because it's not there for most of us, and so they've had this sort of same value system of seeking something else.

And when you think about how old painting is, how old printmaking is, this is a new art form. This is in its infancy really, and all these people have been attracted to it, and I had a part of it in its infancy.

PAUL SMITH: You're talking about the more recent emergence of studio work.

JANE SAUER: Yes, but I'm also just talking about how old hanging paintings in your residence, how old that is; how old having a print for pleasure that you look at every day, and how new it is to have a basket, how new it is to have a lot of the kinds of weavings that we have today, that that's very new.

PAUL SMITH: What changes have you seen in the market?

JANE SAUER: The market is very tied to the world. There's just do doubt about it. After 9/11, the market plummeted. But as far as changes other than that, I think it's really moving forward because I also really think that the price point is growing, there's no doubt about that, but I think that—the good thing about that is I think that makes more people be willing to take a chance on doing this because they can foresee that they might be able to make a living doing this. It was so low-priced that you couldn't make a living; you had to have many other financial supports. But I think young people particularly are—I sell a lot to young people who want something different for their house, who feel a little more adventuresome, who like the tactile quality of it, and they can afford a lot of it.

PAUL SMITH: Have you seen any general changes in the bigger picture? We've been talking mainly about fiber, but what about the craft world overall that encompasses the ceramists, the metal smiths, and all the other disciplines?

JANE SAUER: What I see is that it's not—more and more people are talking less and less about it as medium-based, but are talking about it more in conceptual way, that this is narrative, this is abstract, this is figurative. And to me that's—and it doesn't really matter what it's made out of, and I'm finding that with other gallerists, too, that I talk to, that we're giving less information about it was fired at so many cones, or it was woven with black ash, and that we're talking more about the beautiful form, and talking about it in that way more.

PAUL SMITH: What artists have been an inspiration to you? It could be major historical figures; it does not have to be contemporary.

JANE SAUER: Well, I guess a standout event is going to the Rothko Chapel and sitting there, and how the work—it was all dark and then the work began to reveal itself, that it just washed over me and that was just a magical experience. And I connect with that—Dominique de Menil's work—and he I'm sure doesn't even know this because I haven't shared it with him, but from the first time I saw it in the old fiber arts—it was like a newspaper then, it was on the cover—it took my breath away, and he has continued to take my breath away every time that I have seen it. It's not—it's never failed me, whether it's a piece that I saw in a magazine, it was even more wonderful in person, or a new piece in a magazine where I could only see one view of it, it's so—it always took my breath away, I would say.

And of course John McQueen's work has not failed me either. I could name a lot of people whose work takes my breath away. John Reese's work takes my breath away, the perfectionism and now ideas keep flowing through him. Every time I get something at the gallery from him it's new. It's a new idea, you know—even if it's a similar shape, it's somehow a new idea. There are lots of people—I'm amazed at the creativity of so many craftspeople. I'm just amazed. And of course it's always so exciting when you see new work from somebody that you think you know what they do, and then you see they've done something new. It's very exciting.

PAUL SMITH: And of course there are always new people emerging.

JANE SAUER: Yes. Yes.

PAUL SMITH: I know you have in recent years done a fair amount of traveling beyond St. Louis and Santa Fe. Have there been any travels that have been especially important or an influence on your life and work?

JANE SAUER: Well, I would say they all are because every time I've traveled to a new culture, which I—my greatest joy has been to travel to cultures that are not like mine, and there of course are differences in going to Italy and going to London and going to Switzerland and so forth, but they feel so much a part of my culture that when I've gone to Guatemala, which I've done several times, it's another culture, and that's just so exciting to me. And the few times that I went to Indonesia, each were extremely exciting and rich because of such a different culture, and it makes me appreciate—well, it makes me respect other cultures and other ways of doing things to really feel them.

PAUL SMITH: Has it inspired your work?

JANE SAUER: Most definitely. I mean, I think I went through the—when I came back from Guatemala, each time I went through a very bright stage. And pattern—I started doing pattern on pattern. And my stripe period came from classes in architecture but it also came from Guatemala and the weavings there, and the warmth of the people too. And then the Ecot (ph), even though I never did Ecot but I did things that were based on just the feelings that I got from the Ecot in Indonesia, and I'm still so much in awe of how people produce things of such extraordinary beauty and such extraordinary skill level that don't have all of the support mechanism that I have and that we have in this country—oh, you need a table to do that, and we'll go to Target and buy yourself a table. You know, they're doing it under such rugged conditions and yet they come up with such beautiful things and how things are passed on from generation to generation.

PAUL SMITH: As you have accomplished so much in your life already, and I expect that you're going to continue to be active for many, many more years, I would be interested in knowing what are some of your goals and what you hope to achieve in the future. I realize that it's very difficult to think of tomorrow, but what are some of your objectives in terms of future projects that you want to take on, or even those that you currently have that you want to continue?

JANE SAUER: Well, right now I feel like I want to continue with Jane Sauer Thirteen Moons Gallery, and I want it to grow and blossom, and I want it to be so wonderful that somebody, when I do reach the age of retirement, that someone will want to carry it on. I mean, I hope there will be a number of people that want to carry it on. And I hope that I will change the lives of some craftspeople with the gallery. I always hope that I have room for the masters, room for the new people coming into the field, and that being located in Santa Fe we do have so many people coming through the city to look at art that I hope that in my small way I will make a difference in how people view craft and how they purchase it and how they integrate it into their own home, and I hope that each one of them will become—a thing in somebody's home will become an impetus for somebody else to want that kind of material.

And I would love to continue being able to—particularly in the field of baskets just because I feel like I know it so well—to have the experience of helping other people pick out basket collections, or helping museums select some things or put together a show. That's very, very exciting to me. And of course I love seeing fiberwork and I love seeing craft in that venue. It's very thrilling, so I hope I'll be instrumental in making that happen. Part of the way to make that happen is to build some wonderful collections and educate people.

PAUL SMITH: Do you have any unfulfilled dreams?

JANE SAUER: Well, I want to do everything, so my unfulfilled dreams are that I would love to have more than one Thirteen Moons Gallery, and I would love to go back to studio work, because I have to say that when I see someone else's artwork, many times I get an idea—what about—or sometimes I can just see a beautiful form anywhere and I want to capture that. I want to carve that out of Styrofoam. I want to somehow capture that in my artwork. And this has been a lifetime problem of mine, that my mind is greedy and it wants to do too many things, and sometimes I fail in some of the things I do because I'm putting too much on my plate.

But I don't think I'm going to get to change that. So my mind is still very greedy and I would really—I would love to have a full-time studio life also. But then I have to say I'd love to be a full-time grandmother and I'd love to bake cookies and I'd love to take my grandchildren on trips and all that too, so I just have to prioritize here.

PAUL SMITH: What about practicing law?

JANE SAUER: [Laughs.] I've given that up. I've given that up. I'm not building buildings. But this is all—actually, having a gallery and installing shows is very connected to architecture because you do decide on the light, you decide on the placement. You're just constantly deciding on architecture and how this room configures with what you're putting in it, and are two of these much stronger than one of them? And it's sort of constantly making architectural decisions, or spatial decisions.

PAUL SMITH: Jane, I admire all that you have accomplished in your life, as a mother, as an artist and as a teacher, and one who has shared your expertise with so many causes and arts organizations. I really look forward to observing all your new ventures in the future. I want to thank you for all the help you have given me in preparing for this interview, and for taking time



this morning and afternoon to do this very extensive interview for the Archives of American Art.

JANE SAUER: Thank you. I'm so happy you were my interviewer—very happy you were my interviewer.

[END AAA\_sauer05\_6605\_r.mp3.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]