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# Oral history interview with Joey Kirkpatrick, 2005 August 17-18

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## Transcript

### Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Joey Kirkpatrick on August 18, 2005. The interview took place in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Lloyd E. Herman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Joey Kirkpatrick has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

### Interview

LLOYD HERMAN: This is Lloyd Herman interviewing Joey Kirkpatrick at the artist's studio with Flora Mace, in Seattle, Washington, on August 18, 2005, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This will be disc number four of the interviews with both of the artists.

And I will start by asking you to tell me where and when you were born.

JOEY KIRKPATRICK: I was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1952.

MR. HERMAN: Can you describe a little bit about your childhood and family background, what your parents did?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: My father worked in the insurance business in Des Moines, very Midwestern job, and my mother was, when I was very young, a homemaker. Remember, this was the '50s.

MR. HERMAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She had four daughters and we lived in the city. So in contrast to Flora's upbringing—even though I came from Iowa, a farming community, we were in the city and—

MR. HERMAN: How big would Des Moines have been then, population?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I'm going to guess 250,000.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, big, big.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, biggish, maybe not that many then, but I think now it's about 450[,000]. So a city, I mean, it had all the parts.

MR. HERMAN: Did your parents already have other children before you were born?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I was the third daughter.

MR. HERMAN: Third and any more afterward?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: There's one more after me.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So there are four girls.

MR. HERMAN: Four girls?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We didn't need any gentlemen in the group. [They laugh.]

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah. Well, that probably had its benefits and challenges, too.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Absolutely.

MR. HERMAN: How far apart in age are you all?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, actually, I'm very—oh, gosh. My oldest sister [Patricia Kirkpatrick] was born in '49. Then Kris was born in, I think, early '51, and I was born in late '52. So we were right, boom, boom, boom.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And then there were like five years and then my little sister, Tracy, who works actually with me now. She lives in Seattle.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of family life did you all enjoy? Your father worked in insurance, so I would guess that you would—but I shouldn't put words in your mouth. Where on the kind of socio-economic spectrum—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Actually, we were very middle class, very—I wouldn't, even barely, consider us middle class when were really young, because he was a traveling salesman at the time.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: When I was really young, he would leave on Monday morning and go sell insurance, and come home on Friday. Now remember, this is the mid-'50s—

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We lived in a tiny, little two-bedroom house. So my little sister slept in a crib in my parents' room. The house was in a little neighborhood called Beaverdale, where my memory is that you could go outside. You didn't have to worry. The ice cream man came every day in the summer. We swam every day. We had huge woods outside behind our house that we used to play—

MR. HERMAN: Where did you swim? Was it a municipal pool?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We went to a pool. Actually, we took swimming lessons at the Jewish Community Center from a guy named Gabby Hayes, who was this big brute of a guy, who had a heart of gold, but being that he was a big brute, you know, he scared you.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, intimidating?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah.

My mom didn't drive. Because the neighbors were all really close, we'd go to the store in the neighbor's car, and all the kids would get in the backseat and go to the A&P and—

MR. HERMAN: So did you play primarily with your sisters, or did you have other friends in the neighborhood?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It was a neighborhood group, slash, family. I mean, the neighbors were like family, and all the kids. But I actually had a best friend, Jimmy Daniels.

MR. HERMAN: You'd all sort of grown up together, or was it much—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We all grew up together, and in the woods in the back, we'd play army and have mudball fights with the neighbors that we didn't get along with. Depending on your rank, you could climb a tree higher or whatever. We'd build things, and it was very, very active. I mean, when you think about today, it wasn't—we didn't sit around and watch TV and play video games.

MR. HERMAN: Listen to the radio?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We'd listen to the radio, and being that my sisters and I shared a room when we were very young, at night, my older sister, who is now a poet, used to have a radio program that she would, you know, create from that bed.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She would give the reports from what was happening with the parents out in the summer evenings after we were sent to bed. She had various characters that she would tell stories about, Andy the Candy and several other characters.

So we obviously had our little world that—

MR. HERMAN: Well, it sounds like a creative world, at least from her point of view.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Very creative, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of opportunities did your parents give you for creative pursuits? Did you have art in the home?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: My mother, although she was not an artist, was a very creative person. As you know, she just

passed away, and a lot of what we reminisced about and talked about in her passing was that we would often be at the table, the dinner table, not at dinner, but at the living room table or whatever. We would make homemade valentines, or she would get out her art supplies, and even when she had grandkids, she would turn her bedroom into a library for them and then they'd go in and check out books.

So she created a very creative environment where we were offered the opportunity to draw and read and paint and imagine.

She had a sister, an only sister, Elaine, who really was my mentor in terms of an artist. She was a wonderful painter. Again, I always remind us that this was a period of time that women didn't really go out and have careers in the way that they do now. She lived in Chicago and took lessons at the Art Institute of Chicago. When I was very young, like I was eight or nine, I visited her by myself for the first time, and she took me to the adult classes at the Art Institute.

So my world was one in which I knew about art, and my aunt would come and visit. My biggest thrill was when my aunt visited us in the summer. She'd bring her camera and we'd drive to—I can remember once when we went up to Ames, where Iowa State University is. They were building a large football stadium and theater. She wanted to photograph the building, and she often wore nontraditional clothes for a woman at that time, you know, army pants with the pockets on the side.

Everybody has them now, but it was very different in the '60s or late '50s. I knew that—if this is what it is to be an artist, you get to just do whatever you want. This is what I want to be. So we were surrounded by art.

MR. HERMAN: Did you have pictures at home, pictures on the wall?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yes, but it wasn't original art. I remember my mother had—I think she got them through stamp collecting. You know how you collected stamps and then you could turn them in for a—

MR. HERMAN: Oh, sure, S&H Green Stamps. I remember, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Something like that. She got two prints by Utrillo, I remember. They were in the living room, and let me think if I can remember what other artists. But they were all manufactured prints. It wasn't original art, but—

MR. HERMAN: But it was good art. I mean, they were good reproductions—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: They were reproductions of good art.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, mm-hmm.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I'm not even saying they were good reproductions, but the point is that I was given a window to the world, that there was something else out there besides this very humble, small, brick house and then the next house, which was just a tad larger.

MR. HERMAN: Your own creativity was nourished at home?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, right, right.

MR. HERMAN: As you started to school, were there opportunities then to begin to experiment in art, or was that more extracurricular?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, when I was in first grade, I had an art teacher named Ms. Kinney, who was a joy. I mean, you have a handful of teachers through your whole educational experience that you revere, and Ms. Kinney was one of them.

I remember loving her. She was an older woman at the time, even then. She was in the last days of her teaching, and my memories of first grade, second grade were of the art class. I couldn't tell you who my other teachers were. So, obviously, I was dialed in.

When I was in fifth grade, I think it was, I started—my sister Kris had started working at the Des Moines Art Center when she was in grade school, as an art monitor. So when I was in fifth grade, I started working at the Des Moines Art Center.

That, of course, opened up my world, as it's a very fine museum. James Demetrion was the director—

MR. HERMAN: I was going to ask you if he was director when you were there, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So he was there. So when I was growing up, I got to go see Morandi shows. I remember, quite a bit later, they had an Egon Scheile show, which—to be honest with you, to see Egon Scheile's work when you're in high school is pretty exciting. I now know that that was a big deal. James Demetrion was a great director.

But anyway, I started teaching—not teaching, but I was a monitor, and so, in other words—

MR. HERMAN: What did a monitor do? Describe that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I got out the supplies, and I cleaned up after the students, and put them away.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, because as an art center, as opposed to an art museum, there were classes?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yes, I'm sorry. Yeah, I was a monitor in the art, the education program. So, in other words—

MR. HERMAN: I was thinking about Junior Docents or something.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right. No, it was a job helping teachers teach their art classes.

It was a particularly rich program, educational program, because they did a lot of installations. The education director at the time was a guy named Bill Lobel, who created wonderful installations. I don't even know what to call them, in a sense—because I'm not sure now, when I think back on it, how it fit into the program of the education versus art.

But I can remember, one time, we did this installation of the Lascaux Caves, and we spent weeks with papier mâché, literally, in this sort of hallway between the basements of the Art Center building, creating caves and then painting the Lascaux Caves on. So you literally entered a world—the whole thing, dark, dark, dark—were the caves. There was no evidence of it being a space other than you were in the caves.

MR. HERMAN: You would have been about what grade and what age?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: When we did that, that could have been sixth or seventh grade.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So I worked on Saturdays.

MR. HERMAN: Well, it was papier mâché, then, you were doing?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, yeah.

Then I worked on Saturdays and then maybe a day, a night or two a week after school for an hour or two.

MR. HERMAN: Did you ever think—if you remember thinking of whether you would be an artist?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Oh, absolutely.

MR. HERMAN: Oh. So that was always—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Oh, yeah. It was already a done deal.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, really?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: So there was never any desire to be a nurse or any of those things that—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Much younger, there was a desire to be, you know, some kind of baseball player probably. I'm teasing now, but—

No, I would say probably when I was in fifth or sixth grade, I knew I wanted to be an artist. Flora and I, we both have nieces and nephews who always are going through one angst after another with what to do with their lives. I always turn to Flora and say it's just one place in my life I never had to have angst about, because I never had to make the decision. It just was there.

MR. HERMAN: Was it always accepted that you were going to college? Was there any question of that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, it was always accepted that I would go to college, but because of family finances, I

didn't go where I would have liked. I went to the University of Iowa, which, frankly, had a great art program. Byron Burford was there and James Lechay. It wasn't the college of my choice. So it was accepted that you would go to your state college.

But before I went to college, I worked through high school at the Art Center. Then after college, I went back and I taught adult classes, and I was the assistant education director for a while. So the Art Center was really a significant part of my life.

In fact, one of the education directors, Peggy Patrick, who is a very well-known figure in Des Moines, Iowa, because of her relationship to the arts and education, gave the eulogy at my mom's service just recently, and we've kept in touch with her over the years.

There were other teachers that I worked with at the Art Center. I can remember a wonderful woman named Reba Cohen, who has passed away now, but who, when I was in junior high, sat down with me, told me what brushes, what size brushes to buy, what paints everybody should have in their palette no matter what they're going to paint. I still have all those brushes today; I still paint with them.

So I had mentors all along the way.

MR. HERMAN: Was it always painting?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: At the time, it was pretty much two-dimensional work, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Drawing, I suppose, too, because that—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, actually, drawing more than painting, but sort of drawing with washes.

MR. HERMAN: Was it always sort of a figurative experience? Did you try for realism, because in the '50s, certainly with the Des Moines Art Center, you would have been exposed, I would think, to Abstract Expressionism and kind of new stuff coming out.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It was more figurative—when I was really young—again, I apologize for keep referring back to this, but given that I just went through my mother's house, I came upon—I don't even know what to call it—a drawing of, I think it was a lion head. I probably did this in junior high. It's all framed. My mother had it all these years.

I turn to my sisters—this is like three weeks ago—I said, "What am I going to do with this?" It's beautifully framed, and what do I want to do with this?

But we got to chatting, and I said, "When I did this drawing"—and I can remember this so well—of a lion, that I'm embarrassed of today in a way, but when I did that drawing, by completing that drawing, I knew. There's something about it that I knew, past that drawing, that I could be an artist.

It gave me—somehow I found something in that drawing that—it was kind of a realistic drawing. I knew that I had the talent to go forward, if you know what I mean.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. No, it's a really—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It was like a seminal thing.

MR. HERMAN: That's really important to be able to recognize what that was.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: What other kinds of things, activities did you do as you were growing up?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Again, I was very athletic. I played golf. I was a really good golfer. My father wanted me to be a professional golfer. But that was more in high school. But when I was in junior high and grade school, I was a fiendish swimmer. I mean, we just went swimming everyday.

MR. HERMAN: Were you more athletic than, say, playing with dolls or houses, toy houses, and stuff like that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Absolutely, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Other than painting and drawing, were you involved with either construction or making things? I think about Flora. Flora is more manual in what led to sculpture—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, right.

MR. HERMAN: I'm just trying to see whether there's any part of that in your background.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not so much. When I look back—it's interesting that you asked that question because I haven't ever thought of that particular comparison. When I was really young, we would make things like go-carts, but it was more like our making things where—building forts and stuff like that. So it wasn't an appreciation of object-making in the same way. Hers is so specifically object-making.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Mine was just more physical activity, like you dig and build a fort that you'd live in for four days, and then you turn to your next project, that type of thing.

Then when I got into high school more, or junior high, I did more drawing—really until I went to college, it was pretty much two-dimensional work. In college, I started doing ceramics, and I used to do sculptural shapes in plaster, and I got involved in more sculpture. But my degree was really in drawing.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I got a B.F.A. in drawing. The University of Iowa was, at that time, one of the few schools in the United States that offered a degree in drawing.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, just to draw. Yeah, I guess that would be true.

During high school, were you involved with other extracurricular activities? Did you play in the band or sing or act in plays or sports?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: A little bit of sports. Well, golf, I was on the golf team. At that time, I was taking it really seriously and taking lessons. My dad was a golfer, and he had four daughters and I was the most athletic, although the others were pretty athletic.

MR. HERMAN: So you competed?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not with each other, but in sports. He was willing to support my sports, I think, in a way that he might not be able to support my older sister, who is a dreamy poet, because he couldn't relate to that. Again, it wasn't part of his world.

My father didn't belong to the country club, but I find it sort of moving that he would take me to the country club for golf lessons. That must have been something hard for him to do, being that, you know, his ego.

So I kind of have an appreciation of that that I probably didn't have at the time.

MR. HERMAN: That's interesting how reflection really does make us think a lot about those things.

What other kinds of—I guess I'm getting at a kind of a circle of friends and the sorts of things that you might have done for fun?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I was very involved in the art world. Well, that's stated too strong. I didn't know what the art world was, but, again, I went to high school. After school, I went to the Art Center and taught. On the weekends, I taught at the Art Center. So it was really around that.

I graduated from high school in 1971. So that gives you a time frame in terms of the politics of our world.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. Well, I'm very interested in your response to all that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: My background is much more political than Flora's. Probably when she was doing her 4-H stuff and shearing sheep, you know, when I was in high school, on the weekends, if I didn't work at the Art Center, I would go to Iowa City and visit my older sister, who was in college. We would go to some thing against the Vietnam War.

I graduated from high school early. The last year, I only went for three periods, and two of them were art. So I was ready to move on at an early age, and my group of friends were of a similar state of mind.

MR. HERMAN: I'm sure you were thinking by then where you wanted to go to school. Was it always given that you would go to a state university?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I wanted to go to Antioch, I remember. I can't tell you why, I mean, not right now. My dad just wouldn't hear of it, because it was expensive and he wanted me to go to the state school and get my teaching

degree. He figured that's what I would do.

MR. HERMAN: So that was part of it, too?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I didn't, by the way, but he wanted me to.

MR. HERMAN: That whole kind of thing that parents are always worried about. How will my kid be able to have a job?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, right. That was definitely part of—

MR. HERMAN: But even though that was something they wanted you to do, had you always thought you would make it as an artist?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I guess—

MR. HERMAN: Or did you think about that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I don't think I thought about it. I've been having this argument with my nephew right now, because he's like 21. He just graduated from college and didn't get his teaching degree. I'm trying to get him to get it. Boy, my thinking has changed!

I didn't get my teaching degree on purpose, because I knew that then I would teach. Yet I can't sit here and say I didn't get my teaching degree because I knew I was going to make it as an artist. I just knew that I would fall back on it. So I might not have the opportunity—I might not be compelled to try and make it as an artist.

MR. HERMAN: You didn't want that crutch?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I didn't want it, uh-uh [negative].

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Of course, in a way, it was a mistake, because I never went on to get my M.F.A. either. Now it doesn't make any difference, but it has had some minor impact later on.

MR. HERMAN: Well, you didn't have an M.F.A.?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No.

MR. HERMAN: It would have made a difference, certainly, if you were teaching.

Well, you sound really directed as a child. Did you have to help out around the house?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not that much, actually.

MR. HERMAN: With three other sisters, did your mother—did you learn how to sew—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No.

MR. HERMAN: —and cook and do any of that girly stuff?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: My mom was—she was a pushover. My mom was completely supportive of her kids. I mean, she loved what I did. She was Flora's and my biggest fan.

MR. HERMAN: Well, in a way, your older sister had broken ground already because she was a poet, another esoteric—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, exactly, who makes even less money than I do as an artist. To me, poets don't make anything.

I think I probably—talking like this, it sounds like I was more directed than I considered myself at the time. I don't know which is the answer. I clearly knew what I wanted to do, and I clearly wanted to get out of Des Moines.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I wanted to make my way. I thought I'd go to New York for a while, that type of thing. I can't say if I was directed, but I certainly knew what I wanted to do.

MR. HERMAN: Were there artists whose work you knew that you admired or any kind of role models that—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Do you mean that I knew personally?

MR. HERMAN: No, no, no. That you knew of.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Out there in the—

MR. HERMAN: If because you were at the Art Center, you would, I would assume, see quite a lot of art and get an idea of somebody's work you really liked.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: One person I always taught—and when I switched from monitor to teacher, which didn't take much, actually, in high school; I mean, at the Art Center, they didn't have a requisite of a teaching certificate or anything—we always used to teach Alexander Calder.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I loved Calder. I thought he was—

MR. HERMAN: What an interesting link; Flora has identified Calder as well.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Oh, she has? Now, that surprises me, to be honest with you.

We used to teach kids this high, you know, three feet high, little kids. We'd take in the big, old—I finally got one here—book of the circus, and then we'd read the whole thing of the circus and set it up. Then we'd have the kids develop a huge Calder circus.

The classes were really, really wonderful for children. And the Art Center, the program really supported all of that kind of creativity where you—again, the Lascaux Cave thing, or you would create this circus that you might work on for a whole semester with the kids.

MR. HERMAN: Were you kind of encouraged to explore what the meaning of this was, or just a kind of visual aspect of it?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: You know, I think it was more of the visual aspects, teaching the small kids.

For me personally, there was some exploration of meaning. One of the things that we always used to do with Reba Cohen—she used to take us into the Art Center, and then we'd go around and look at paintings. And we got to sit in the Art Center and draw from those and whatnot. So I mean, I'm sure there was a discussion of meaning at the time.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: There was always a lot of discussion with meaning with kids, when you go up to a Jackson Pollock or whatever and you say, Well, I could do that. That's the big thing you learn as a budding artist no matter how old you are. I can remember being at the Art Institute in Chicago with my aunt and saying, "Well, God, I could do that." Again, I was this high [motions with her hands].

She said, "Well, the first thing is, you didn't." You know, that's the first thing. [They laugh.] So that's probably about as deep as we got.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of things did you draw? What was your subject, other than the lion?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, in high school, actually—I probably have to go back on what I said about mostly drawing, which was, there was a lot of, you know, small woodworking. You cut out bowls and stuff. But drawing in high school, I can't really remember. I really can't remember.

Again, you have to remember the time. I think there was a lot of psychedelic stuff happening—

MR. HERMAN: Sure, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: —because of the time period.

Ironically, as I think of it—and I haven't thought about it before, sitting here this moment. There isn't a lot that I have. I have a lot of artwork from college and just after college when I went back to Des Moines and actually lived with my grandmother—

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: —and worked at a daycare center and was the art—I don't know what you would call it. I didn't take care of the kids at the daycare center. That wasn't my responsibility, but I would pick one out who was having a bad day or who was being challenged at home—

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: —and take them over to a picnic table and draw with them. So it was almost like art therapy.

MR. HERMAN: It would be a little like art therapy, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I certainly didn't have that background, to work as a therapist. It is actually where I met Mark Doty, who was the director at the time. He is writing the essay for our book.

MR. HERMAN: And he was director of what?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: He was director, or the head of this, you know, what do you call it? I'm having a senior moment—for kids when they go to—

MR. HERMAN: Daycare.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: —yeah, daycare. I'm sorry, a daycare center. So I have more drawings and paintings from after I got out of college.

In college, I did a lot of ceramics. That was probably more of my own creative output. But I took hours and hours and hours of figure drawing.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And I took two days of figure drawing a week. So I worked a lot from the model.

MR. HERMAN: Because all of the paintings of yours I've seen—of course, these are as an adult—have all dealt with realistic subjects. That's the reason I was asking whether Abstract Expressionism, or even the graphic styles—I think that, in the '60s, Peter Max designs were everywhere.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, right.

MR. HERMAN: And that was such a distinct graphic style, as well as the psychedelic stuff you remember.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And that's kind of what I think of. I probably played around with it in high school. I don't have the connection, even though I remember my teachers and stuff so well. But I can't really remember as well what my interests were.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Again, when I was in college, I did figure drawing and ceramics, and then during the summers between college, I started doing those doll drawings.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And part of that was, we used to do a lot of still-life drawing at the Art Center. When I taught in the summers between college, that's what I'd go back and do to make money to go to college the next year. I was teaching either life drawing classes or still-life drawing. So we'd set up big still lifes.

The Des Moines Art Center has these beautiful classroom rooms, big windows and just your—what you think a place to take an art class should be like. They're huge, and great for setting up really complicated still lifes.

So I was teaching a lot of that to adults at that time. I'd graduated from the young kids. There was a collection in the storage still-life area of old dolls, beautiful old dolls that a woman had just brought over. She worked at the Art Center as a receptionist.

I started drawing them and kind of became obsessed with it. Eventually, she gave me the dolls, which I have now, which was the basis of the whole cylinder project that I eventually worked on with Flora.

MR. HERMAN: When you were in high school, did you have summer jobs, or was it all the Art Center? Did you work there in the summer full-time?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Always the Art Center.

MR. HERMAN: Always the Art Center?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Always the Art Center, full-time in the summers.

MR. HERMAN: So you were never a waitress or any of those things?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, not until I met Flora, yeah. No, it was always the Art Center.

And then when I was—I am jumping ahead a little bit. When I found out I wanted to go to Pilchuck [Glass School], where I didn't know anybody or I knew nothing about. I saw an ad for it in *American Craft* magazine, which was called *Craft* then.

MR. HERMAN: *Craft Horizons*.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, *Craft Horizons*.

I was a tree topper. I worked all summer climbing trees and cutting them down.

MR. HERMAN: Literally?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, literally with a chain saw.

MR. HERMAN: Where, at Pilchuck?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, in Des Moines, to make the money to get to Pilchuck. So I had—

MR. HERMAN: Were there other women who did that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, I was the only one, and they loved it, because I was a very small person. I could really get up there. But that showed how much I wanted to get to Pilchuck.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. But what made you interested in Pilchuck? What made you interested in—that is jumping ahead. Let's pull back a little bit and get you through college first.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Okay, good idea, yeah, good idea.

MR. HERMAN: Well, so you went to Iowa City, right? Because Ames is Iowa State?

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

MR. HERMAN: What was that like? Was that a whole new experience? Did a lot of your classmates go there?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: A lot of my classmates went there, and it wasn't that new, because, remember, I had two older sisters going there.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I visited them and went to anti—

MR. HERMAN: So you were familiar with the campus and—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: —antiwar rallies with them and whatnot. So it was pretty comfortable. In fact, the second year I was there, I lived with my sister Kris in an apartment. The first year, you have to stay in a dorm. I met friends there, but the second year, I lived with my sister, who was also in art and was a fantastic painter, wonderful painter.

She is now a Montessori teacher, a wonderful teacher, very creative. Had children, and so the painting kind of went to the wayside. But she is a much more talented artist than I am.

So we lived together and took drawing class together and went to art history classes together, several of my friends from high school.

MR. HERMAN: In high school and college, did you go into clubs or anything like that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It sounds so uninteresting.

MR. HERMAN: I mean, you sound so directed toward art—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, I can't—you know what? I guess that, again, I have to keep reminding us of the times. It

was when you either were—the traditions of clubs and stuff, if you were a liberal person who was—

MR. HERMAN: —rebelling against—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: You didn't do that. We never dated in high school. It was a time where you had a gang and you'd hang out together, and they were all really artsy types of people and very liberal.

MR. HERMAN: It sounds like your family must have been pretty liberal, too, to have—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, actually, they weren't so much, no. My father, actually, I think he probably votes Republican, or did.

But I was in that time where you were rebelling.

MR. HERMAN: How did your parents deal with that, and your sister, if you were going to antiwar protests and stuff?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: My father didn't do very well with it, actually, at all. We came to blows many times. We were at war at home as well as war at—

MR. HERMAN: Well, it sounded so perfectly June Cleaver.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: That's why I said I don't think I was really that driven. My father was in the insurance business, very traditional, believed in the American dream, and he was rising through the company as we were growing up. He was aghast that he was going to have daughters who were going to have jobs that couldn't make money.

Again, I did say that he really wanted me to get that teaching degree and thought I was crazy not to, and never looked kindly on the fact that I would go visit my older sister, who he had to only conclude was making me even more different or crazy or liberal than I already was becoming.

But you know, this was a time where, in high school, one year you weren't allowed to wear pants, and then they changed the rules, and the next year you were. So time was changing. There were radical changes. So my existence was getting out in the world and being part of that and being very politically aware of what was happening in the world and, you know, fighting. It was the time where whatever anybody over—remember where there was that cliché? Anybody over 30—

MR. HERMAN: Over 30. Don't trust anybody over 30, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, exactly. So that was my father and my argument all through high school.

MR. HERMAN: Where was your mother in this argument?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And my mom was sort of the bridge, or the kind of go-between, because she was a mother who supported her children. And she was at that time also working at the Art Center.

When her girls got old enough that they were all in school, and she first got a job for this company called P.E.O. [P.E.O. Sisterhood], some kind of women's organization, where she worked as a packer or whatever. It was the first time she ever worked out of the home. I'm sure my father didn't like it, because, again, it showed that he wasn't supporting his family to what their needs were.

Then from there, she went to the Des Moines Art Center. This was after I'd already worked there for a while, and she was the receptionist, and she got to know Jim Demetrion. She was part of the gang there. She worked there for many years.

Then after that she was a wardrobe consultant. She worked at a huge department store in Iowa called Yonkers that was very well known there. Like here, it would be Nordstrom's.

And working women came to her and she would put their wardrobe together. My mom, as I said, she wasn't an artist in the traditional sense, where she had a career making objects, but her homes were always exquisitely beautiful. She had an ability to—and I'm just learning this as I went back to take down her apartment.

She had an ability to see in three dimensions in a way that was exquisite, so that her houses and what she fit in an apartment should have been in a magazine. There was a lot of stuff in there, but it was just beautiful—she had art all over. She had a lot of Flora and my work. She had Chihuly. She had beautiful Matisse prints. She really was clued in.

MR. HERMAN: And as a wardrobe consultant, that sounds like she really understood fashion, or style.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, she had a lot of style. It was always a joke about her daughters, because we're artists and we dress like we do. It took her a little while to give up on trying to tell us what color looked good on us.

MR. HERMAN: And probably she wore hats and gloves to church or whatever?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, right, right, exactly. She was an exquisitely beautiful woman and beautifully dressed with gorgeous jewelry.

MR. HERMAN: Of course, people who go to church then. What role did religion or spirituality play in your past?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We went to a Presbyterian Church. I was in the choir into junior high, at least. My parents would go sometimes, but they would certainly see that we got there. They would go on the holidays. My mom was Catholic, and when she married my father, that had to go away.

Then they were divorced in 1978. I was in college. The minute they were divorced, she went back to being Catholic.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So, kind of a sweet story.

We would also go to church group on Wednesday night. There'd be a little lesson, and then you'd go to choir and eat dinner there. So it was a part of our life.

MR. HERMAN: Were you a part of Girl Scouts or anything like that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I never liked Girl Scouts. I hate group activities. I never like to join things, never did then and don't want to now.

MR. HERMAN: So you weren't in camera club or anything like that in high school either?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, I never liked that sort of thing.

I went to Girl Scouts once, and I just thought it was so dumb and I was just not interested. I wasn't interested in the girls. Their interests weren't my interests.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, yeah. Well, growing up at the time you did, when women were really beginning to achieve a whole new status—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right.

MR. HERMAN: —in society, how as a teenager did you respond to that? Was it just something you took for granted, or did you think much about what that would mean to you, as you grew up?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I don't know if I can explain this, but it's such an interesting question, because I think that I was very aware of it. I could apply the changing dynamic of the gender issues and whatnot to the world. But I never needed to apply it to myself, because I was just going to be who I was anyway.

So those, the old traditions, didn't apply to me. The new ones didn't apply to me either, because I just was going to be who I was, if you know what I mean.

MR. HERMAN: That's remarkable, the self-confidence, or the self-assurance. I'm not sure it's self-confidence, because maybe you were self-confident in your—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I'm not a confident person, actually. So maybe it is more self-assurance. But it's a very interesting point that you bring up, because it's certainly something that was on my radar. It was on my agenda, women's rights and whatnot.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, how could it not be?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: But I never felt like I was fighting it for myself, because I wasn't going to change if I didn't win that fight, if you know what I mean. If society didn't—

MR. HERMAN: You were going to be you regardless.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right. If the society didn't make those changes, it wasn't going to affect me anyway, because

I was just going to go my way anyway. Of course, I probably didn't know that then, as much as I can say it now. We always know these things in retrospect.

MR. HERMAN: Sure, yeah. Well, as teenagers, most of us are not really sure where our lives are going. You seem much more self-directed than a lot of people I knew.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I think I knew. I think I had a lot of wonderful mentors along the way. You know, when we first sat down, I thought maybe I probably would have sat down and said, yeah, I had one or two great mentors. But as I was speaking, all these great teachers at the Art Center—they really were helpful to me.

MR. HERMAN: They sound almost more important than high school teachers might have been.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, I think they were. I think they were because, again, you're away from a lot of what you're dealing with in high school, probably.

MR. HERMAN: You mean the social—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: —the social stuff, and so it was so much about art. I think they saw that I was so interested that they were willing to take me aside and tell me what paints I needed and the palette or—

MR. HERMAN: What did you think of yourself in high school if you didn't like organizations? I'm guessing you wouldn't have been—although you said you had sort of a gang of friends both in—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I did have a gang, and none of them probably liked organizations either, if you know what I mean.

MR. HERMAN: So you would be kind of the—not the popular kids, you would be this other sort of—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We weren't the mainstream—more the hippies. I mean, I was a hippie in high school when it was just beginning. I mentioned earlier about when you could start wearing pants to school. Then I remember that year in the yearbook, there's a picture of me in art class wearing old navy bell bottoms, kind as an illustration to what the world has become. That was me, you know what I mean? So I probably never wore a skirt again after that world changed, ever.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, it was an amazing time.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It was, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Let's go on to college.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Okay.

MR. HERMAN: Was there any question about whether you were going to have to work or need a scholarship? Had your parents been saving up to send you and your sisters to school?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Finances were a big issue. As I mentioned, I didn't think I was going to end up going there, but your state school is your most affordable. Again, I always worked at the Art Center. So I had saved my money to go to college.

So my family and my father provided the basic expenses, which was to pay the bill at the college and the dorm bill or whatever. Beyond that—I can remember years where Kris and I lived together that we would go to our friends who stayed in a sorority just to get more food. They could have three—

MR. HERMAN: —guests, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: —guests in a month, and I was always the guest. I can also remember putting tomato soup on spaghetti to try and make a meal.

So it wasn't—there was not a lot of extra, ever. My dad gave us a certain amount of money, and whether he could afford more, I don't even know. Again, it wasn't the greatest relationship.

MR. HERMAN: So you were closer to your mother then?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Absolutely, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Because of your artistic temperament?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, and because she was much more willing to support what I was doing. She might not

have had my politics at the time. She grew into them in her later years. But she certainly didn't think I was crazy to have them.

MR. HERMAN: Did you need to work, then, while you were in college?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I did work, but not that much. I squeezed by. I think I even knew that it was better to squeeze by and give my attention to working at school. I was a bartender for a while, and those kinds of part-time jobs I did. Then again, I always worked during the summer. But for the most part, I was pretty caught up in being in the art department.

MR. HERMAN: So you were not in a sorority?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No.

MR. HERMAN: You just had at least free meals occasionally?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, I would take the free meals, yeah. [They laugh.]

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: Were you ever interested enough in ceramics to think that you might go that direction?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, I think there was a possibility. I worked with a guy named Chuck Hinds, who still is there, actually.

MR. HERMAN: Yes, I know his work, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And another guy named Bonnie McBride. Do you remember him?

MR. HERMAN: No.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I think that was his name, but mostly Chuck. I ran into Chuck at SOFA [Sculpture Objects and Functional Art Exposition] a couple of years ago. I was standing in my booth—not my booth, but you know, the gallery booth that had our work.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It was kind of neat to see each other again. He said he'd been following the work for years. I liked his work back then. I don't really know what he's doing now.

MR. HERMAN: I kind of remember saggar-fire pieces.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, saggar fire, I was totally into the saggar fire. I loved that type of thing and did that.

I also had this instructor. His name was Howard Ragovin. He was a painter. He was the man who gave me sort of the beaming on that made me know that I could keep going. I mean, he—this guy was a painter. He lived in, I think, Majorca. He had a cabin in Majorca in the off season, you know, the summers.

He was this energetic guy and he would never sit down. Like I said, I'd get to life drawing at eight o'clock in the morning, and I'd be there until 3:30. The classes would move through, but there would be like a handful of us that would just stay all day and draw.

He never stopped moving in his class, physically. He was like a whirling dervish, around and around and around. I can remember him telling me—my sister Kris was in the class at the beginning, and another artist, a guy named Michael, and the three of us were like the guys that he—the three he would really talk to.

He'd come up and he'd say, you know, "Go look at Diebenkorn's figure drawings." You remember those beautiful black-and-white ink drawings he used to do, the figure. Or he'd look at something else I'd do, and he'd say, Go look at so-and-so. Go to the library and look at so-and-so. So I was really having somebody help me.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: But I do remember one day where he either said it or alluded to the fact that my sister Kris had way, way more talent than I did, as I already said, no question. But he said, You probably have the personality that it's going to take to be an artist.

So he saw the—my sister Kris is a lovely, shy, smart, smart, smart person.

MR. HERMAN: But not as self-directed?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, it's not even that she's not directed, because she is very directed. But I think she's just too shy in terms of the confidence and whatnot to go out in the world and fight the battle of being an artist.

It's not easy. It's grueling; that part of it is grueling, and it just wasn't in her personal makeup. He saw that, and he actually could identify that in words for me and say that to me. That was really helpful for me to understand that there are a lot of things that go into being an artist.

MR. HERMAN: That it takes to be an artist, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So I studied with him for years, maybe three.

MR. HERMAN: Would he be the person, up to that point, that you would consider closest to being a mentor?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Probably. Again, back to the thing about, as I sat down, if you would have said, "Who was your mentor?" I would have said him. But also, as I was speaking, I think that I had mentors for different things. He was more of a mentor who got me involved in that "You can do this. You're good." You know, "Here's how you do it. It takes energy."

But all those other people I was talking about, Peg Patrick and Reba Cohen and—

MR. HERMAN: They all brought different things to you?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: They really brought different things. Again, I think I'm extremely lucky.

MR. HERMAN: But there was never an artist that you kind of modeled yourself after—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Except for my aunt, who—I guess my aunt would be the mentor, because she—

MR. HERMAN: What's her name?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Elaine Henry. She passed away a couple of years ago, but she was a beautiful painter, and she lived in Chicago, actually about two doors down from the Hancock building. So they were very affluent.

So for a kid like me, who, the lower middle class, to go into Chicago, go up to the whatever floor she lived on—beautiful. She had help. They had a driver. Her husband was like the CEO of the biggest insurance company in the city.

What I learned was, she never made a career of being an artist. She made a career of going to the Art Institute of Chicago and taking classes. She knew Lenore Tawney, and she had a group of people that she knew, but she never showed her work, if you know what I mean.

MR. HERMAN: But she was in a circle of artists.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She was in a circle.

MR. HERMAN: So she was accepted by them as an artist even though she didn't show?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She was, but, again, it was this time where, given who her husband was, she couldn't break out. It was very—

MR. HERMAN: She wouldn't have been taken seriously probably—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Exactly.

MR. HERMAN: —because of his status.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And it beat her down, if you know what I mean. I think she was frustrated. And eventually, the two of them went to India and got a guru and became meditators, and he gave it all up and they went another way.

So she was a huge mentor. But in terms of a professional mentor, Howard Ragovin would be the biggest one.

MR. HERMAN: Did you have opportunities to travel at all during that period, or was your road really Iowa?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Pretty much, pretty much Iowa.

MR. HERMAN: Did you get to Chicago much?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We'd go to Chicago, which was a thrill. Then when I was in college, one winter break, my oldest sister and her boyfriend and I went to Mexico for a month. That was like in 19—in the early '70s. And you know, that helped me. That was like a long, faraway place. That was a big trip.

MR. HERMAN: How did that—if there was even any direct result, or even looking back on that trip, how did that change any perceptions of the world or about art?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I think that more than it being about art, it just helped me. I mean, I was clearly wanting to get out of the Midwest. I was in college. So I certainly had seen the work—

MR. HERMAN: You were out, to a degree?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I was out, but it showed me that I wanted to travel and see the world and whatnot. I mean, I'd been to Chicago as a young kid with my aunt. Then when I was in college, I'd go and see her on weekends sometimes.

MR. HERMAN: Were you exposed to anything either at the Art Center or in magazines or in college that made you want to visit a particular place or learn or see the Taj Mahal or study with an artist or anything?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: That's a really good question.

At the time, I was really infatuated with the whole Arthur Dove, Georgia O'Keeffe part of the world. So I always thought I—and I've still never been. I always thought I'd personally go to the Southwest.

I think it was more—I was more intrigued by the art world from the standpoint of—not that it led me to a place, but it led me to more art. Again, the Morandi show, I can't remember what year it was at the Des Moines Art Center, but it was so—even today, I just don't think you're ever going to see another show of his work like that.

MR. HERMAN: It's kind of surprising that you mentioned Calder early on, because everybody else that you mentioned are figurative artists. And Calder, I think—although he did wire drawings that were human forms and things—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, right.

MR. HERMAN: —I think most of the stabiles and mobiles are abstract. So it's—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I liked how he approached his work. I was always fascinated by how he—I don't know. I was aware that there was something—Italo Scanga, my dear, dear, dear friend, and I always used to talk about how we were infatuated by art. We were like groupies, because we loved art so much. We actually love the art. He'd call me every Friday morning and say what art was in the *New York Times* today, you know, this and that.

I know that at the time when I loved Calder, I was intrigued by the fact that it was so simple. There is something about—he just said, I want to do this. Twist this wire. It's hard for me to describe, but that it was like it wasn't any more complicated than you make a connection between what you feel and what you do. I'm still in awe, as an artist, that it is really that simple. I never make it that simple, but my wish is that I could make it that simple.

If you were watching me, maybe you might think I'm making it that simple. I make—I take it from here and I do it here. But what you don't see is what happens up here, in my head. I know that I'm not making a lot of sense.

I know that I was infatuated with Calder partly because of that. And I loved all the visuals connected to Calder. The pictures of his Connecticut studio, I wanted to be like him, you know, in that place where you've created this world around you of things you loved and then you just made them. That was exciting to me.

Yeah, then I was wild about Egon Scheile.

MR. HERMAN: You've talked about interesting artists, but you haven't mentioned Pop art, which was coming about in the '60s, and whether that was of any interest.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not really.

MR. HERMAN: I would think the Des Moines Art Center probably would have been in the forefront in the Midwest in showing it.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, it did have quite a bit.

I think if you notice, though, what I'm talking about, except for Morandi, who works more with painted planes, I'm really interested in line, even if it's three-dimensional. Our work is like that now, too. I love the drawn line, and I even like it in three-dimensional space. Look at how Calder bent those things, or look at Egon Scheile. Incredible lines. So that's what I'm attracted to.

And also I think, as a kid who sees those shows, you really would have to have somebody be really not seeing to know that there's something happening in that work, even if you didn't like it.

I don't think Flora, growing up in New Hampshire, ever at that age saw a show that had the power of an Egon Scheile, for example, or whatever.

MR. HERMAN: Mm-hmm, no.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Back then I think I remember there were some drawings in that show that had to be put in a room and that you had to get permission to go back in. So think of the time we're talking about. You had to have your parents take you back to that room. It was a scandal in the paper and everything.

MR. HERMAN: How did you see your art progressing as you went through college, changing or new subject matter or new techniques or scale or anything like that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, I think the scale of my work changed. When I got out of college and I left the ceramic department, I didn't have access to everything, have a studio.

MR. HERMAN: No, mm-hmm.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So I started making forms out of chicken wire, plaster, papier mâché sculptures, forms that I had been making in clay. But it was allowing me to make them in a scale that I hadn't been able to make in clay. Certainly, clay has a limit.

MR. HERMAN: So you were doing the sculptural work in clay? You weren't throwing pots?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Mostly sculptural work in—

MR. HERMAN: Hand-building?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, yeah, well, hand-built—I mean, I did throw pots then, and I threw pots for money, but you know, that type of thing. Mostly they were hand-built, big vessels.

I loved Toshiko Takaezu's work. I loved how it—I saw a movie of hers once—I love this still today—where she would start out by throwing the bottom of a pot. Then to get it to dry, she built a little fire in it so that she could start hand-building on it.

So she'd be on the wheel—and they're huge. They would be this wide. Maybe she would—she would throw it up to half the level or whatever. Then she would want it to dry so she could get it to leather-hard so she could build on it. So she'd build a little fire inside to dry it out.

MR. HERMAN: I didn't know that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And then she'd keep building. I love that. She's a beautiful woman.

MR. HERMAN: Were there workshops along the way when you were in college? Would visiting artists come in, or anything that exposed you to some different viewpoints or styles of work?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not so much. At the University of Iowa I was aware of Byron Burford, you know, as an artist, and Mauricio Lasanksky was there, who I never really ran into. But he certainly had the power and the reputation of intimidation that goes with knowing that you have a great artist in your midst type of thing, a printmaker and —

MR. HERMAN: What role did the issues of the day, feminism and women's rights, and you were talking about all the antiwar stuff, that it was a period that roles were changing, the sexual revolution. Did any of that influence your life in that it affected your art?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It didn't affect the imagery. It didn't affect the product that came off of my hands. But it certainly affected how I could begin to move into the world that was pretty much male dominated, even ceramics at that time, to a certain degree. Or possibly being aware of having people perceive that my intention was to be a professional artist and that—there was a time where you'd go to college and do ceramics, but everybody knew you'd just go get married. I knew that that wasn't how people were seeing me, you know?

MR. HERMAN: That's kind of back to your family, because it seems like this kind of idyllic father at work, mother at home, kids doing artistic things, playing in the community, the expectations, certainly, having grown up earlier, in the '50s, that you did, about the expectation that you go to high school, maybe you go to college, but you get married.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right. Well, I'm sure that's what my father thought I would do. When we were really young, the joke always was at parties, Oh, Jim—my dad's name—think of the money you're going to have to spend on weddings. I was aware of that.

You asked what artists I was interested in. When I was [in] fifth grade—and I wish I could have found this; I was talking to my sisters about this last week—I did one of my year-end reports on Giacometti.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: There was a *Look* magazine article on him. So I did a big report that you put in the folders, you know, and put the brads through. You were asking about the ideas that I might have gotten out of being at the Art Center or school. When I think of it—and I have never thought of this before. Then I said to you about Calder when I was enthused with how he lived in that big barn and all that stuff.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: What always attracted me to Giacometti was how he lived. He lived away from his wife in a little studio with a sink and a bed.

MR. HERMAN: I don't really know that much about his living situation.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And he lived the life of a pauper. He'd get up in the morning and do his work, and it was this extreme, almost priest-like existence. Then he had his whole life away from that, whenever he went to it.

I remember when I wrote this paper in fifth grade, there was something about that kind of ritual toward what you loved to do that really attracted me. I was really impressed by it.

MR. HERMAN: Interesting. It wasn't his art, but really it was the lifestyle?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It was the lifestyle that you're willing to—it was the extent that you were willing to go to for your art. I was completely interested in the art, too, but in fifth grade, I didn't know what that meant, that stuff with their funny-looking bodies.

So maybe I came into art in terms of the style of the life you lead first. It's peculiar; it was peculiar in 1960 when I wrote that paper, or whatever, '59 or whatever it was. There's something about that that attracted me. I don't know if it's the solitariness of it, because certainly Calder had a certain solitary life. I know he didn't, because he was really Barnum and Bailey like, but he worked alone.

MR. HERMAN: But it sounds like you always were in a studio at school, not working in isolation.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Or could you have a kind of isolation in a room with others working at their own—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, we had little areas. But, no, we were pretty much in a studio, but it wasn't like a big group of people. When you're in ceramics, you have your little wheel and you have your little world.

MR. HERMAN: Well, I think about how artists often—some artists really do like to not have anybody around them and really be in isolation, maybe some music or something.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I always prefer—

MR. HERMAN: And other people who like to be in a studio building where you go in and out the doors in a kind of a social atmosphere.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I can remember once in college, it was like late Friday night and I was up throwing pots. The ceramics department was this really cool building, where it had a loft where all the wheels were. So you could look down to the first floor.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And I was up in my loft. The wheels were lined up, and two gentlemen, dear friends of mine,

came up and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Oh, I'm working," you know, so whatever. Six o'clock Friday, college, I'm supposed to be going out. And they said, "Well, let's go have a drink," or whatever, and I wouldn't go. They finally had to say, "Look, we're giving you a surprise birthday party tonight. Everybody's at the house. You have to come." And so, really, I was dialed in.

MR. HERMAN: What was your circle of friends like in college then? Were they mostly artists, or did you have a more diverse—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It was very diverse; actually, it was very diverse. These two really, really good friends I had—both of them men, actually—but just buddies, just tremendous friends. I ran into one of them—I hadn't seen in 20 years—this summer. He's in investment banking. So we've gone our separate ways.

But they were very interested in music. And this is the drug period, too, which I won't go into that too much. People are doing different kinds of things then.

MR. HERMAN: Well, I think everybody was experimenting.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah.

So again, even in college, it was more in terms of my social life. It was a group of friends who would get together, and we would listen to music. We would go into Chicago to see Laura Nyro in concert or that type of thing. Music was a big deal.

MR. HERMAN: Dating was not something? There were no romances?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not particularly. I mean, some, but nothing that was—I didn't live with anybody at that time, and there wasn't a steady or anything. I actually really didn't have a place for that then.

MR. HERMAN: How did you get into exposure to glass then, before we end this side?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah.

In the ceramics department, there was one—this is kind of interesting. There was one little glassblowing area that was built in a shed outside the building. It must have been new, because as I'm speaking, I'm thinking, Well, why didn't I ever notice that earlier? My last semester in college, I had walked past that so many times and it looked so interesting to me.

I thought, What really—what is that? And I went in there. And Steven Dale—I think it's Dale.

MR. HERMAN: Steven Dale Edwards, Steven Dee Edwards, there were both of them.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, there are two of them—it's the one that used to do the vessels with the animals. Now he just paints, I think. It's not the—it's the one that lived out here, not that one that lived—

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah, that's Steven Dale Edwards.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Okay, he was a student there. I can't really remember exactly how it happened. I started chatting, and he's working. So he started to teach me how to blow glass. My last semester I didn't learn very much. I just kind of dipped, and I got interested in it.

Then I graduated from college, went back, lived with my grandmother, and you know—

MR. HERMAN: Went back to—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Des Moines.

MR. HERMAN: —Des Moines, yes.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Didn't know what I was going to do. Started working at the Art Center. I made like $64 every four weeks—no, $264. I was just barely making a living. I had got the bug for glassblowing.

I found out that Iowa State University, in Ames, 30 minutes north of Des Moines, there was a glassblowing facility. So I went up there, and I enrolled as what they call an adult student, or a special student, and I started blowing glass there. But no instruction whatsoever.

MR. HERMAN: Who was—well, there wasn't an instructor?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not really. I can't even remember who the teacher was, because as I mentioned yesterday, it

was in the ceramic engineering department. So they were mostly—they're all men and they were ceramic engineers, you know, nerd type of guys. They were figuring out how much heat exited the bricks. It was a kind of funky—

MR. HERMAN: What year would this have been?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: That was probably in 1976, '[7]7, and '[7]8. I mean, probably 1976, I started.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah, interesting.

I think we're getting right to the end of this. So let's stop this disc.

[Audio break.]

This is Lloyd Herman interviewing Joey Kirkpatrick at her studio with Flora Mace in Seattle, Washington, on August 18, 2005, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc two of this session, which is session two.

Now, Joey, we just talked about your introduction to glass, Steven Dale Edwards. Was he on the faculty at that point?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Actually, I think he was just a student and maybe the technician for the hot shop.

So I was completely drawn to the process. I'd been kind of watching this, but as I said here today, I don't know why I didn't notice it any earlier. I can't remember if it was a new program for that year. But it was clearly an add-on to the ceramics building, which I'm sure all hot shops were in schools at that time. It was in a shed in the back of the building.

MR. HERMAN: Was this your senior year then?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: My senior year. So right before I left, I went in, and he started to teach me how to blow glass. Well, the irony is, years later, he was our teaching assistant at Pilchuck. So he was just a great guy, sweet man, and very helpful and got me going.

Then as I said, when I went back to Des Moines to start my life post college without—well, actually, I shouldn't say without a job, because I just went right back to the Art Center. Then I taught a lot, and I actually had a full-time job as, like, the assistant education director or whatever.

MR. HERMAN: Were you teaching painting and drawing or—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I was teaching mostly a few adult drawing classes and then kids' classes, too. So it didn't pay a lot and I was struggling, but I got an apartment eventually.

But the first summer, I think I lived with my grandmother. As I mentioned earlier, I would work at the daycare, go home, eat with my grandmother, who I adored, and then I'd go down in the basement and paint. I had a very prolific painting period then and actually did a little bit more somewhat abstract work, but a lot of overscale, still-life paintings with acrylic.

MR. HERMAN: Overscale. How big?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I mean bigger than those pieces of paper, maybe double the size.

MR. HERMAN: You mean like three by four feet maybe?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, something like that, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: What was the subject matter you were working with then?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Still lifes, a lot of like—I crept into some abstract work, sort of Arthur Dove-esque shapes—

MR. HERMAN: Abstracted realism?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Exactly, exactly. That type of thing. They were deconstructed still lifes, let's say, you know, fruit on oriental carpets and sort of dream imagery from, again, abstracted real shapes and whatnot.

MR. HERMAN: Were there any other artists working then that you would compare yourself to?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: That I knew, or do you mean that I knew of?

MR. HERMAN: Well, no, just someone that you would be aware of and—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, not so much. Again, when I think of it, I think of Arthur Dove, just because everything had black lines around it and that type of thing. But I certainly don't compare myself. So I always hesitate to say it that way.

But it was actually a really prolific painting period, because I had just come back to the city, and so I didn't have the social life that—and I was getting a job for the first time. I was out in the real world as an adult. And so I was actually really, really working hard.

MR. HERMAN: How old would you have been then?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I would have been about 22.

MR. HERMAN: Were you having any shows of your work? Were there opportunities to show?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I just found some pictures of the first show that I had in Des Moines. I was also doing ceramics at the Art Center, and they just gave me free rein to do work there. So I used it as a ceramics studio and did a lot of low-fire, saggar-fire pot type of firings down in their courtyard, which was an exquisite place to work. Nobody had ever done it before, and I noticed when I went home this summer that they were still doing it.

But I was working completely on my own. I mean, that's another sign of the times. They just—whatever a person had the foresight to do, you could do. You could never do it now.

MR. HERMAN: Were you looking at the competitions as a way of getting your work out, too?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Every year, the Art Center had an Iowa artist competition which, of course, I entered every year. Then I had a show of my ceramics, which were—at that time, a lot of them were molds I made of rock shapes. Then I'd make perfect, little, beautiful rocks, and then I'd saggar-fire them with seaweed. Sometimes they would be molds of my face with the rocks. Then I'd do these large keyhole shapes in clay, all handmade. Then eventually, I included glass with them, so they would be holding glass shapes and whatnot.

MR. HERMAN: Were there any ceramic artists that you admired at that point?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Boy, you ask hard questions, because I feel like my memory—I'm too old, Lloyd. [They laugh.] No, because it was more technique. Again, I was coming away from Chuck. So now—

MR. HERMAN: I was just wondering whether, because the Funk ceramics movement coming out of Davis, California, infected us here in Seattle.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: You know, I wasn't as aware of it as much because, again, my mind was more connected to the art, the fine art world.

MR. HERMAN: So you were doing clay? You never really considered you were part of that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I never considered myself part of the clay world. However, I loved working in clay. So I mean, it just shows my youth. I didn't know where I fit in. I wasn't even questioning myself in those ways. That's a look-back kind of question, that.

MR. HERMAN: Certainly.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: But I had a show out—there is a gallery, the Jan Shotwell gallery [Jan's Gallery]. Jan was also a painter. And she opened a gallery in West Des Moines.

Then it was within a pretty short amount of time that I started just going up to Ames once or twice a week and blowing glass so I could make parts up there—

MR. HERMAN: So you were still doing that at the university, at the college, university?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: At Iowa State University in Ames.

MR. HERMAN: You switched to Ames? You graduated—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I graduated from the University of Iowa and went home and missed blowing glass. So as I was home painting and working at the daycare center, I looked up and saw that at Ames, they had a glassblowing facility.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, right, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So I started going up there kind of as a student, but I didn't really blow.

MR. HERMAN: But Steven Dale Edwards was in Iowa City?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: He was at the University of Iowa.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, that's where I got confused.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So I was teaching myself. I got involved enough in it that there were articles in the *Des Moines Register* about me blowing glass and whatnot. So I was involved enough in it that it—

MR. HERMAN: What kind of things were you making?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Mostly I was learning how to blow glass. So I was making very funky, unbeautiful vessel shapes. But then I was also making blown glass, just shapes. Like, let's say, like a bead shape with a hole at both ends. Then I would put fiber inside it and have it held by a piece of clay form. So I was integrating it with the clay work.

MR. HERMAN: Mixed-media now.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah and building constructions.

MR. HERMAN: It's interesting to me, though, as a figurative painter, you did not try stained glass first.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: A very little bit of stained glass.

MR. HERMAN: That would seem almost more logical, instead of going to the three-dimensional aspect of blown glass.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I think I liked the physical activity of blowing glass. I think stained glass then still had a stigma that it didn't have the possibility to be as expressive as an artist in it. It wasn't a judgment that some people even make today, but I don't think people—you know, until Cappy [Thompson] came along, really, you didn't see stained glass as anything other than stained glass.

I used to build these sorts of landscapes out of clay, almost like an inverted plate. I would cut holes out of them and then put lead in them and put glass little windows in them. Then underneath, the windows would look into little piles of rocks and stuff.

So I did stuff like that.

MR. HERMAN: It doesn't sound like anybody's work that I've ever seen. It must have been a totally original idea.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, yeah, but it wasn't stained glass per se. I knew a really good friend of mine repaired stained glass, old, beautiful churches.

MR. HERMAN: Church windows, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So I didn't see it as an expressive medium at the time. I think that's what I was trying to say.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: But I was really involved in trying to figure out how I was going to make a living, because you know, it was tough.

MR. HERMAN: Did you ever do illustration? Or because your sister's a poet—I think of that often—you have illustrations that accompany poems or children's books. Was that ever—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, oddly, it's ironic that you say that. My sister and I have done several projects together. Most never really came to fruition, but it just shows that we've had this working relationship for all these years.

She used to write poetry, and then I would do these hand pinch pots that went with the poems. We did—we often would work together in the same space, kind of like parallel play. We would try and have them relate to each other in some way.

Again, it never really went to fruition in terms of we didn't show them or anything. But it created a pattern for us that we work together. As you may or may not know, we've done a children's book together that I illustrated and that she wrote that was published by Harcourt-Brace in the '90s [*Plowie: A Story from the Prairie*, 1994].

MR. HERMAN: I think I did know that, but I'd forgotten it.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So it was a good question for having forgotten about it, because I have done some illustration. But at the time, no, not really. She was living in California and it was a long ways away. So we could only do these kinds of projects.

MR. HERMAN: Well, from integrating glass with clay, how did you begin to develop a stronger interest in glass that brought you to Pilchuck?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Pilchuck. Well, living in Des Moines, I realized, had a lot to be desired in terms of access to what I might consider a real artistic community. I would probably feel differently today, but when you're just out of college, you want to go someplace. So I knew I wanted to get out, and I had a couple of harrowing, to be honest with you, harrowing experiences one night late, coming back from Ames blowing glass, where somebody broke into my apartment and held me at gunpoint. And it was terrible, you know, a life-changing experience.

I remember after that, sitting with one of my sisters—and you can tell, my sisters are recurring themes in my life, always important to me—and saying, "I really have to get out of Des Moines. I have to get away from this experience. It was horrible and I need to get out." We literally sat in her apartment and opened up the *Craft Horizons* magazine.

There was an ad for Pilchuck Glass School, with a little drawing of—no, actually, a little poster, a little picture of some of Dale's little baskets. I didn't know who Dale Chihuly was, but just that Pilchuck Glass School—"Come to the Northwest; take glassblowing."

Literally, my sister said, "You should call them." I mean, her finger fell on it and [she] said, "You should call them." I picked up the phone. I called, and Elaine Bosworth [wife of then-director Tom Bosworth] answered the phone. Talk about how times have changed.

I said, "I want to come to Pilchuck this summer and take Dale Chihuly's class," and she said, "Great." I said, "How much is it?" and she—I can't remember how much it was. I said, "I don't have that money, but I'm going to make it." She said, "Send me $25 for a deposit. That's okay, Joey. Just send me $25." I think it was $25. It might have been $75. It's a better story if it's $25.

MR. HERMAN: And this was '79?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: This was '79.

So it was completely low-key in that way. I mean, I didn't write out any application or anything. I just sent a check for this measly amount of money, and then I worked all summer topping trees. So I'd stopped working on art. I just worked my tail off to make the money to go out there. I had no idea what I was getting into.

MR. HERMAN: The same summer you were going out there then?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Mm-hmm [affirmative], it was like in August that I was going to go.

MR. HERMAN: I can imagine you getting out there and saying, "More trees!"

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I know. It was a hard job. It was really interesting, though.

So that was '79. So I'd been out of school for almost four years, '75.

MR. HERMAN: Working at the Art Center, working on your art?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Working at the Art Center, doing a couple other odd jobs. That's when I started my odd jobs to make money. I was a baker for a while. I think I worked as a waitress once.

But I always kept painting. Even if it was on the floor in a dining room someplace, I was always painting. I have to really think hard of what I was really doing in '77 and '78, but mostly of 23 years old, trying to figure out who I was, and visiting my sister in California when I could, trying to figure all this out.

So in retrospect, going to Pilchuck changed my entire life, obviously, no doubt about it.

MR. HERMAN: Did it seem like a very different environment to when you were growing up in Iowa?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: When I got to Pilchuck?

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Oh, yeah, no question about it, absolutely. I was petrified. I was going to a world that—I wasn't a good glassblower. I wasn't a person who had a lot of ideas, a lot of ideas with glass. I mean, I played around with it, but typical beginning glasswork stuff. I had little experience except for blowing glass at Iowa State and, I might add, a very similar experience to Flora's, working with those damned ceramic engineers, who only allowed me to blow glass in the middle of the night. So I signed up for the class in Iowa State. So for two years I'd go up there once or twice a week and blow glass by myself in the middle of the night.

MR. HERMAN: There were no technicians or anybody else around?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not really, no. And then they'd do terrible things to the work when they'd get it out of the annealer in the morning. They were just very defensive about having somebody—I always remember they were so upset that I blew glass for so long at a stretch. It was like four hours. It was nothing; now we do it a full day. But it was just contrary to how they thought.

In a way, you have to almost feel sorry for them. They were defensive because it was something "other" to them, or different.

MR. HERMAN: What were they making?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: They were more interested in the glass, how to melt it and whatnot. They were just making vessels and stuff. I don't remember one name, and I don't think any of them continued in glass. They weren't aspiring to be artists. They were aspiring to be technicians and understand the ceramic world.

MR. HERMAN: A whole different mindset entirely.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah.

So I was just, A, female. B, I was making these crazy things that didn't even have a hole in them half the time. You know what I mean? I used to blow these dome shapes that I'd put—then I'd build a ceramic dome that went over, stuff like that. Then there'd be a slit in it and you could look in and see the glass. They didn't get it.

But in a way, it's remarkable that I wanted to continue in glass, because it was such a horrible experience.

MR. HERMAN: Well, I've read a little bit about your coming up to Pilchuck with an armload of drawings; did you not?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Those doll drawings? Yeah, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, the art drawings. I'm curious that you would take those with you to a glassblowing school. What was your intention?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I think that shows the naïveté of a beginner, number one, because I didn't label stuff. I didn't segregate stuff. You know what I mean? As an illustration of that, when Flora and I used to then, years later, teach at Pilchuck, some of our best students were always the beginners, because they came in and they didn't know what the rules were, and they'd do anything.

I think I went to Pilchuck, A, with the mindset of a youthful person who wanted to see their work progress. So my mind was on my work. So rather than going to become a glassblower, I didn't know what the scene was. I didn't know whether there was this new thing happening in glass.

MR. HERMAN: You hadn't seen a lot of glass art then?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, not really, no. I mean, I don't have the history anywhere near that Flora does in glass. I was an art student, and blowing glass had an appeal to me. But on some level, I understood that it could answer some of the questions I wanted to ask in my art work, or I could develop it to respond to my expressing myself.

It wasn't that I wanted to be part of a movement. I didn't even know there was a movement. I didn't know who Dale Chihuly was, you know, nothing about that. So I think all those things. I didn't have a preconceived idea. I was running from something, this horror that had happened to me.

Also it was a way to get out of Des Moines either way. I wanted to go. I love this work, the drawings. I love to blow glass, even though I wasn't any good. So it was one of those things that maybe I didn't really think through it. I just knew that this was an opportunity; I could integrate the two.

So—as I often say in lectures—I got to Pilchuck. Somebody I didn't know picked me up. It was a friend of my mother's who had a son who lived in Seattle. He drove me up to Pilchuck, and at the time, a lot of the trees up there hadn't been cut down. The clear cuts hadn't happened. So when you got off the highway, you take the

right, and then you take the left up the hill, and those trees were still growing and touching.

There was this—even not knowing what I was getting into, there was an incredible sense of going into a time warp, into a place, the unknown, and leaving behind. There was just something so visual about it and so far away about it, because I mean, you're even far away from a city you've never been in. But there was a sense of place about it that I knew something was special about this place.

[END TAPE 1 SD 2; BEGIN TAPE 2 SIDE 1.]

And then I drive in and I get out. In one day, I meet Dale Chihuly, Flora Mace, Bill Morris, Ben Moore; I think Italo was there, and I think Lino [Tagliapietra] was there.

Now, granted, those people weren't who they are now then, if you know what I mean.

MR. HERMAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Billy turned into my brother, you know, but he wasn't William Morris then. Still, what an incredible—I mean, it's life-altering, right?

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So I got there and met Dale and showed him the drawings. He said, "Well, you know, Flora is probably the only one I know who can put specific imagery on glass," because she was doing all his work for him in that way. Of course, I didn't know who Flora was. He said, "I think she's downstairs in that studio right over there."

She was in the studio, under the lodge where they do the—

MR. HERMAN: Oh, the print studio.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah. Now, it's a library.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, oh.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Then later, it became our studio, which seemed ironic, too.

I walked down and started talking to her, and she turned out to be the person on the pad when I blew glass, because she was—what do you call it—his teaching assistant.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah. And she was already experienced blowing glass by that time, too?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right. She was probably the—I mean, maybe I'm overstating this, and I certainly don't want to if it's not true. But I think there was that Sylvia working in glass, that woman. I mean—

MR. HERMAN: Not Sylvia Levinson?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, not Levinson.

MR. HERMAN: You know, because she was cast glass.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I'm sure Flora will know. But I mean, Flora had had her show at Heller Gallery [New York, NY].

MR. HERMAN: Oh, I know who you mean, from the Midwest, too.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yes, yeah, yeah. I think she was working in glass.

MR. HERMAN: She was the other person besides Audrey Handler, who I think was the only other woman working in glass.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, but then there was Flora, and Flora had had her show at Heller.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Probably the first woman glass artist to ever have a one-person show in New York. I'm sure of it.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So she had already had a reputation—

MR. HERMAN: Sylvia Vigiletti.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, I knew it was two Ts, yeah.

[They laugh.]

MR. HERMAN: It takes a minute.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right.

But Flora had had her show and kind of retreated to the country to build her house in New Hampshire. And Dale had finally gotten her to Pilchuck. He had to beg her to come to Pilchuck, because that just wasn't her style either. So that was her first year there.

We immediately hit it off. Actually, I think the first thing I ever said to her when I looked at her was, "I think I've known you in a past life." So it's a sign of the times for one thing, besides everything else.

But she looked at the drawings and she said, "Let's bend these in wire." And we started working together. And we worked together there for two or three weeks making pieces with wire drawings on them.

It was an incredible experience. Again, it just altered everything. And we parted ways. I went down to San Francisco to be with my sister, and she went back to—where did she go back to? New Hampshire, I guess. She was on her way to go work for Ann Wolff.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, in Sweden?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: In Sweden. Flora was such a capable person that people wanted her to come work for them, you know, because she developed all these techniques for people.

After I was in San Francisco for a couple of days, I got a call from her. We never made any plans for a future or anything when we left Pilchuck.

MR. HERMAN: Was there any attraction at that point?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Absolutely, oh, yeah, but we just didn't know where we were going to take this, you know. Not only the personal attraction, but we were making this incredible work that could go someplace, if we would have been smart enough to think it could. But we weren't.

So I got this call from her. I was stunned that she could find where I was, number one. She said, "Why don't you come out to New Hampshire and go to Sweden with me? Why don't we go together? We'll work for Ann." I said, "Okay."

So I went back to Des Moines, worked for a while to make some money. Fast-forward, in a few months went out to New Hampshire, and she picked me up at the airport, and she took me to a beautiful cemetery, you know, those cemeteries that have those faces on them—

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: The beautiful tombstones carved in relief that people take rubbings of.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yes.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She said, "We're not going to Sweden." I said, "We aren't? You just changed my whole life. What are you talking about? I told everybody I was going to Sweden," you know. "What the hell?" She said, "Ann didn't want you to come, because she was afraid I wouldn't work hard enough if there was somebody else along." She said, "I wasn't going to go there"—she got the idea of what Ann really wanted her for. Just to be a worker bee.

So we didn't go. We went down to Rhode Island and signed up as special students, but we lived up—

MR. HERMAN: At RISD?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yep, but we lived up in New Hampshire. We lived with her sister. We left Flora's house and lived with her sister, and we waitressed all week at a ski resort. And on the weekends, on Friday night, we'd drive down to RISD and we'd blow glass for two days. Then Monday morning or Sunday night—I can't remember—we'd drive back up and waitress for a week.

We started really developing these pieces. I can remember, I think it was that guy who used to own a gallery in Boston on Newbury [Street]. David? Yeah. And he walked into RISD one day, as they do, to come see Dale, and looked at the work and said, "Whose work is this?" These were now—they were getting a little bit better, the drawings. We were learning how to do it so they wouldn't break and everything, and they were looking like something.

We looked at each other. We didn't know whose work it was. We had never talked about it really. We didn't know what to say. But he was interested in showing it. Well, certainly, he wasn't going to be interested in showing my work. He didn't know me from a hill of beans. I was absolutely nobody, you know. But he knew Flora, certainly. Everybody knew Flora and what she'd done for Dale and all the drawings and wonderful things that she'd helped. She worked with Italo and did all sorts of work for him and everything.

MR. HERMAN: She hasn't talked about that at all. I need to come back to that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah. She worked for a lot of people.

So we didn't know what to do. We got in the van, and we either just took a long ride, or we drove back up to New Hampshire. It took awhile for us to think and to figure out and to agree to, Well, yeah, I guess we could cosign this work. Nobody's ever done it before. It's scary as hell, and who makes the decisions if we cosign it, and all that sort of thing.

MR. HERMAN: Was that before Margie Jervis and Susie Krasnican were cosigning work, or you just didn't know about them probably?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Flora might remember. I'm not going to say, because I don't know. It's before I knew about them. I think it might have been, but I don't know. I don't want to say anything—it certainly wasn't something I knew that anybody was doing. And immediately everybody thought we were insane.

I don't even think Dale thought it was a good idea. And here, you know, Dale worked with crews of 15. They thought we were going to lose our identity, and it wasn't a good business move. How can you build a career if you cosign work?

I think that was a gender issue, number one. I think men have trouble handling that from an ego point of view, and it just hadn't been done so much.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Really, we're really different, as you can tell. Our backgrounds are extremely different.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, I know that now.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: And I think that—I often say in lectures that we learned early on that our differences make the collaboration work. Initially, I thought, I'm going to have to be as good a glassblower as Flora, and she was a phenomenal glassblower. It probably isn't known now so much, because we don't blow things that are traditional. So you can't see how good of a blower she is, if you know what I mean.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We've gone to a scale where we have teams help us with the big stuff, because, no, she can't make one of those big, 30-inch pears. Again, as I was telling you about the cylinders we made in November, people who had worked with her for 10 years had no idea how good she was until they watched her then.

MR. HERMAN: How easily she could go back to—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right. I thought originally that I would have to be as good, you know, and that was my challenge. I wanted to be as good as Flora. It was when I realized that that wasn't my calling, if you will. A, I really didn't enjoy it that much, and B, what was the point in collaborating if we both did the same things?

But, yeah, it takes a while; you've got to feel these things out. Once I recognized that our differences allowed us to be bigger than we were individually, our horizons were broadened. Initially, it was much more where she did the technical and I did the concept. Now that's blurred over these 26 years. I think people still have that picture of us. It's certainly not as finite in that way as it was originally.

MR. HERMAN: Because you continue to paint through all this period, haven't you?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Oh, yeah. I do prints and—

MR. HERMAN: So you've never really given up the 2-D work at all?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, I continue to draw, paint, and make prints. And she does all sorts of three-dimensional projects that aren't our art that inform our art. But you know, she builds boats. She works on boats. She makes parts for whatever we need.

MR. HERMAN: Now, really, she is amazingly facile with the whole concept.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She's really an inventor.

MR. HERMAN: There might be some things that you can say now that will be less comfortable when you talk together—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: The one thing that Flora is so amazing—and what I've learned about from her; and I hope that she's learned things from me, too—she is an extremely genuine person. Therefore, there's no bullshit, if you'll excuse the expression.

MR. HERMAN: No, that's exactly the term that was coming to my mind.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She doesn't ever say she likes something if she doesn't. She doesn't ever grandstand. She's not—I think she'd be the first to tell you that her goal is not to have a career as an artist necessarily. She just simply likes to make things.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, she said that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So if we were to buy a place in the country tomorrow and she was never heard from again, it wouldn't hurt her one bit. She wouldn't have any kind of change in her self-perception.

MR. HERMAN: That's a remarkable quality.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, it's really wonderful. Flora also has a way of putting her interest in work over an attachment to whose work it is. So over the years, we worked for other artists.

We started working for Dale together again. I was Dale's colorist through the '80s, picking out his color combinations.

MR. HERMAN: I didn't realize that. I knew that one of you—and I had remembered that it was Flora who started out with the Navajo blanket—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She did all the Navajo blankets.

MR. HERMAN: —because I thought maybe you had been involved with that, too.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, not the Navajo pieces, but now I work on the soft cylinders if we do them. We work with Dale about two days every two years, you know, just as a friendship thing. In fact, they're wanting us to do it next month.

Then she was really involved with Billy's work for a while, doing all his drawings and his skulls and stuff, and Italo's. She did a lot of inserts for Bertil's [Vallien] pieces, where he'd plunge little chair shapes and other forms into his cast-glass boats.

The one thing that any student could learn from Flora—and I certainly did—was, and maybe to her detriment in a way in terms of her career, was, whatever she was working on at the time was the most important thing. It didn't matter whose name was connected to it. That is a remarkable—I don't mean she doesn't have an ego, a healthy ego. I don't mean she's selfless, but I mean that she's genuine in her interests to do something. Therefore, if she makes a commitment to work for Dale or work for Italo or work for Bertil Vallien or Billy Morris, that at that moment she's made that commitment, it's more important than any other work that could be made at that time, if you know what I mean.

MR. HERMAN: It's remarkable to really kind of divorce everything else and—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right. So she will give of it as much as she would give of it to her own work, because she said she will and it's interesting to her. If it wasn't interesting to her, she wouldn't do it, and she won't do it if it's not interesting. She's a little bit like Johnny Ormbrek in that way, you know, Billy's assistant, that guy who works for him.

MR. HERMAN: No. Give me that name again.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: John Ombrecht, O-M-B-R-E-C-H-T [*sic*], you know, does all Billy's drawings and stuff now.

MR. HERMAN: No, I didn't know that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: So we learned that we didn't need to duplicate, and that part of working together, we can be alone together.

MR. HERMAN: Well, what is interesting, I think, is you probably have with each body of work, I've found, different ways that you work together, because now that you're working on the large twig birds that have been cast in bronze, that's probably a totally different way of working than translating the doll figures to glass or something like that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Absolutely, absolutely. This is not to say that I don't do any of the physical, because I do. I often just do as I'm told when it comes to that part, if you know what I mean. [They laugh.]

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Flora will figure out how we're going to do it, or like for those bird pieces, I will do the original drawing, and then I will bend the metal to fit it and weld it and whatnot. Then she'll take it from there.

MR. HERMAN: That's just a lot of real meticulous physical work, fitting the branches around the metal armature.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, right, but she does most of that now.

MR. HERMAN: Well, doing things like the body of work where you did those large basketlike pieces, like the big figure—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Figure, right.

MR. HERMAN: —because her background is more sculpture and yours is more flat. How do you collaborate on something like that?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, first of all, artists work in themes. So when we're starting something new, for example, I have notebooks of drawings that I do, and we'll pick ideas from those drawings. Then maybe I'll go work on monoprints, and new imagery will come out. That's an initiator of it. So it all comes out, initially, out of drawing, but of course, once you get something going, you don't have to work from the drawings, because one piece leads to another.

So we will identify interests that we have. Like, let's say, we worked for years on the limbs that were figures, the solid limbs. You see a big one down there. Then we started making the figures hollow, with the steam-bent alder wood. So we may have an idea that we identify off of the drawing, or off of the piece that we made before, when we say, Well, let's do it this way this time, or, Let's do this. We'll talk about it. I'll then go do more drawings.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, with that in mind, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Right, to expand it, and often, Flora will have the genesis piece, let's say, the limb that the figure is going to start with, and she'll mock that up, like that big piece downstairs. She'll hammer it onto a stand, and she may start putting objects near it. She draws in three dimensions. She will cut a piece of cardboard out and hold it up there to say, We'll put this shape there.

MR. HERMAN: So it's really almost working on maquettes as a trial balloon.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Exactly, especially the big pieces.

Then we come together, and we may spend a day holding things up and saying, What about this? Or I'll point to a print and say, I love this blue cascading, fruit-like water. Can you do that? She'll say, I don't know. She'll have to figure out how to glue blue fruit together to make it look like it's freely flowing through the air.

So then she'll have to walk away and go figure something out. Like the paintbrush pieces, I had those in my notebooks for months and I couldn't figure out why we weren't moving on it. Well, she had to figure out how we were going to put the paintbrush in the cylinder without breaking it or without having nuts and bolts visibly holding up the brush.

So there's a lot of coming together and going apart and coming together and going apart. Once we establish a format—let's say, like, Okay, we're going to do these basket pieces, and the baskets have to have wire inside. I can do a drawing of the figure and start bending the metal and welding it. Then we'll go up and cut the wood down at Pilchuck. We'll come down here together. We'll strip it and steam it, and then I may cut it in half, and

she may rout it out, and we'll glue it together or whatever.

Ultimately, we're both physically working on it, but she does more of that, and she always figures out the mechanics of it while I'm working on prints or drawing.

MR. HERMAN: Do you both tend to visualize a piece in the same way at the talking stage? I guess there is probably always some tweaking of it from this first mock-up.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, we don't always. In fact, I remember a kind of funny thing. You know, we got that Chateau Ste. Michelle Libensky award a few years ago. They have this big dinner. Flora and I had to split—we had to be back-to-back at the tables because we wanted to include so many people at our table. Flora had her table with Dale and everybody, and I had my table with Italo and everybody. We had them back-to-back.

Also at my table was Dick Marquis, and he was sitting next to my sister Patricia. Patricia said, "It's so interesting. Dick turned to me in the middle of your talk, and he said, God, I wish I knew what they argued about," in terms of the work. [They laugh.]

I wonder what they argue about. I thought it was so interesting, because I'm always surprised. People don't really write very much about the actual collaboration and how it works. You know that. They write about the work or—

MR. HERMAN: I'm really interested in this, and that's what I want to get into more.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: But we don't visualize things the same. We're two very different people, and we do argue about it. We don't always agree. I think that there is a potential for that to make the work better, because the work is so refined. It's so looked at.

MR. HERMAN: Well, technically—the techniques are often so invisible—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: They're subtle, we hope.

MR. HERMAN: —or they don't call attention to themselves at all.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We don't want them to.

But the idea is also refined. They have been so looked at and so talked about and so—because two people are stripping away anything that's not of the essence to the idea that, I think, that in some ways, it improves the work.

Now, there's also the potential for two minds to make the work more mediocre, I suspect, because it has to be—

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, to really compromise.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: It has to be compromised. So I'm willing to say both are possible. I hope that the first one happens more often. I don't know. I'm not the one that gets to say that, but—

MR. HERMAN: Have you ever mocked up a piece with your two different points of view to look at them both and kind of assess what works and what doesn't?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We've never done it exactly that way. We do it more like, it's there, and I could walk through the room and go, you know, go like this and leave, and Flora will go in there and see it in its new skin and either accept or reject it or whatever.

MR. HERMAN: Do you go back and say, Shouldn't we make this a little bit longer; that color is wrong?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Actually, we do a lot of that, a lot of that. I always say it takes hours to have that one little 15-second brilliant moment. That is exactly how Flora and I work.

I mean, it takes us hours and hours of looking and talking, and then I could go get a coffee and walk back in and walk over and just set the thing. It took 10 seconds to realize the perfect answer in our minds. You can't do that without those hours. You want to say, Why didn't we think of that—you know, Why didn't we cut to the chase earlier?

MR. HERMAN: You couldn't do it without leaving the room, either, and coming back.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: That's right. That's what Rollo May says. You know, you can't see it until you walk away from it.

MR. HERMAN: Like who says?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Rollo May, you know, the great art philosopher.

MR. HERMAN: Spell that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: R-O—he actually was a therapist, I think, but R-O-L-L-O M-A-Y.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, just like it sounds.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: He wrote about artists and how they use their dreams and thinking to make art. Wonderful essays.

So, no, we don't always agree. We used to have—I mean, at a certain point, you have to realize that, with this issue, let's say, between you and I, if I scream the loudest, then I have the stronger feeling about it. At a certain point, you have to realize that, in this instance, Joey or Flora has the strongest opinion about it, and you might have to say, Yeah, I can live with that.

We both can say, I cannot live with that, no matter what you think, and we have to find a different resolution. So it's more apt that I might be able to live with something that I might like it a different way better, but I would never live with something I don't like at all.

MR. HERMAN: How often do you both totally agree, what percent?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: A lot.

MR. HERMAN: More than 50 percent of the time?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Well, I think that we both totally agree when you see the end result.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I think you can say that we totally—we don't send anything out in the world that we both—

MR. HERMAN: That you don't agree on, no.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, uh-uh. I mean, we have that rule. We aren't the most prolific artists in the world because our work is so highly technical and takes so much time to make these fabrications.

MR. HERMAN: Well, speaking of that, how many shows would you have in a year, typically?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We have a show about every other year.

MR. HERMAN: Every other year, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: We've had four shows in the last five years. We just had a sweet show over at WSU, which was kind of nice.

MR. HERMAN: I saw that catalogue. I hadn't heard about that show. I saw your show at Habatat [Gallery] during SOFA in Chicago.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: That was the last commercial show, yeah. Our next show is at Lewis and Clark [College, Portland, OR, *Kirkpatrick and Mace: Woodland Drawings*, 2005] in November. It's going to be very similar to the one at WSU.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Not to get too personal, but our last year has not been normal, because I've been away so much and we haven't been making as much work. We didn't turn the furnace on in the spring like we usually do because I was away so much.

MR. HERMAN: Were you away because your mother was ill—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yes.

MR. HERMAN: —at that point, and you knew that her time was—

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah. My mom was ill for 10 months, for the last year. I would go out and see her, and spend

a couple of weeks with her, at least every five weeks.

MR. HERMAN: You will never regret you did that.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: I'll never regret it. I mean, Flora had to hold down the studio. The beauty of the situation was—my mom was very, very ill and in the hospital almost for 10 months.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, my God.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: She was completely of sound mind and so a pleasure to be with and sweet. So the time wasn't just sitting there. We communicated. We shared meals. We went on walks and that type of thing. So it was really good and a gift. So it was a sad thing. We thought she could get better, and she just didn't.

MR. HERMAN: So that was really an interruption of the *Bird Pages* [2005], I guess?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, yeah, definitely, definitely. The last time we had our furnaces on was in June of '04, and then we always turned our furnaces—no, wait, is that right? No, I apologize. Fall of '04, but my mom got sick in August. So I had to kind of sneak away. Then we didn't turn it on in the spring of '05. You know, we usually turn it on in the spring and in the fall. So we'll turn it on in this October—

MR. HERMAN: Well, you don't share this studio space with anybody else?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, uh-uh.

MR. HERMAN: Have you done that before?

MS. KIRKPATRICK: No, we don't like that. We really like experimenting in privacy, and like our solitude. I mean, we have our kids, our wonderful helpers who come in. We'll let them do their work here if they assist us and stuff like that. But we don't share the studio.

MR. HERMAN: I think probably we should end this. It's one o'clock.

This will be the end of this session with Joey Kirkpatrick. We will resume talking to the two of you.

MS. KIRKPATRICK: Yeah, good.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]