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Oral history interview with Paul Marioni, 2006 September 18-19

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Contact Information
Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington. D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Paul Marioni on September 18 and 19, 2006. The interview took place at the artist's home and studio in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Mija Riedel 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.

Paul Marioni and Mija Riedel have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel interviewing Paul Marioni at the artist's home - home and studio?

PAUL MARIONI: Home and studio.

MS. RIEDEL: Home and studio in Seattle, Washington, on September 18, 2006, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

So we've agreed to start at the beginning.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah, if there is a beginning. At the Big Bang. Start with the Big Bang. I think it was a Little Bang. The Big Bang is coming.

MS. RIEDEL: And shortly after that you were born in Cincinnati?

MR. MARIONI: Cincinnati, Ohio.

MS. RIEDEL: In 1941.

MR. MARIONI: Heartland of the Republican, Christian party.

MS. RIEDEL: And your father was a physician?

MR. MARIONI: My father was a doctor - old-fashioned, Italian immigrant and general practitioner - delivered babies, did open-heart surgery, fixed broken bones, everything, in that era.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was his name?

MR. MARIONI: John.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And your mother?

MR. MARIONI: My mother was a would-be opera singer. Her name was Jenny and she sang a lot, but rarely professionally. She was more was a mother and housewife. But she loved singing, so I grew up in an atmosphere of some culture. They took us to museums and to the opera and to the ballet, and so we weren't totally naïve, but they always - it's ironic. There were four boys, and three of us ended up artists. And my dad always said, you can do whatever you want to do. And my older brother Tom said he wanted to be an artist. He said, that's fine, but you'll have to get a job. I mean, that was the era. And my mom asked me and my brothers when we were going to get a job until about 10 years ago; she quit asking.

MS. RIEDEL: And your other brother Joe is also a -

MR. MARIONI: My younger brother, Joe, is a painter in New York. Tom and Joe always knew they wanted to be artists, from kids. If you asked them when they were eight or 10 years old what they wanted to be, it was artists. I don't know why that is, because, like I said, we were exposed to culture, but we did not come from an artistic family. But they always knew it. And I always knew I did not want to be an artist, because I thought they were snobs about being artists, and because I was not an artist, I had to take the garbage out and do chores that their delicate hands couldn't handle. So I kind of resented their being artists. And I was outside building hot rods and doing other stupid things.

MS. RIEDEL: You were good with your hands, and you were interested in math and engineering?

MR. MARIONI: Yes, I was always really good in math. In fact, I got an A in every math class I ever took in my life,

all the way through college. And S - what do they call them, SAT; the high school exams to get into college - I scored in the 99th percentile in math. I got 100 on the test. And IBM one time tested me with an extensive math test that they told me I had eight hours to complete. They wanted to see if I could do these complex problems, and I finished the test in 45 minutes and got 100 percent; got every answer correct and no scratch paper. They were watching me, and they go, how can you do that? I go, it just makes sense in my head. I don't need to figure it out on paper. It just makes sense to me. I can tell you the answer. They go, but you're right. How can you do that? But I was never interested in math. It just was one of those things that was easy.

So they steered me into engineering from high school, and I should probably add a little footnote. According to them, I was a troublemaker in school. According to me, I was inquisitive. I questioned everything. One out of five teachers loved it, particularly the fact that I was paying attention. And the other four kind of had the how-dare-you-question-me attitude, which never really worked for me, because the people said, how dare you question me - particularly if they said, I'm right; how dare you question me - then I zero in for the kill. [They laugh.] That's when I go into attack mode.

I've always asked questions, and basically I still feel very strongly that way. Questions are important. Answers are whatever you want to make, and I don't see anybody as right or wrong. So I did one year in engineering and got good grades. Struggled through chemistry, but loved physics and did well in geometry, trigonometry, all the math classes, of course. Straight As, everything, in high school; I couldn't believe it. One year in high school I got 100 on every single test I took in math and struggled through Latin.

But anyway, after one year of engineering - and I had an English literature teacher that liked me because I was interested and all the other engineering students weren't. I was particularly interested in poetry and always loved reading. My dad instilled that in me from a little kid. We had a library in our home, and I got a library card in first grade and spent far too much time in the library and read far too many books.

MS. RIEDEL: What were you reading? Do you remember?

MR. MARIONI: Mostly I liked reading biographies and autobiographies, particularly of inventors and adventurers. I kind of wanted to be an inventor, or go some place nobody had gone before. And so I read - I can tell you who invented the cotton gin, the sewing machine, the radio, and all that stuff, and read all of their lives, their biographies.

MS. RIEDEL: And you were in Catholic school?

MR. MARIONI: I was in a Catholic school, that's right. High school was Jesuits, all boys. My dad really impressed on us how important education was and learning. And my dad continued to read and develop and grow and learn and stayed on the cutting edge of medicine. And we all saw that. Tom was never much of a reader. My oldest brother, Don, was kind of the intellectual, and Tom was kind of the daydreamer. I was the kind of the reckless, wild, bad boy. I did a lot of terrible things I'm not going to admit to on tape [they laugh], but I was mischievous and smart enough to get away with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you building hot rods in the back yard?

MR. MARIONI: Built hot rods and rode motorcycles and caused a lot of trouble for the adults, whether it was teachers, principals, police, parents. Like I said, I was inquisitive. I always wanted to know about things. And growing up in Ohio in the '50s, middle America in the '50s, kind of teaches conformity. And Ohio being really uptight - like I say, Republican, Christian, I - I'll back up a little bit. I really believed in the Catholic Church. I was an altar boy and wanted to be a saint when I grew up.

Then I saw the hypocrisy. And that era was rampant hypocrisy. Nobody would talk about child abuse or adultery or all the things that I saw going on that people denied and refused to even talk about. So by the time I was about 12 or 13 - maybe puberty had something to do with it - I started thinking, they're lying. It's like there's something wrong with this picture. I'm old enough to remember when we dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I was about five years old. I remember it, but it did not have an impact on me until I was about 10 or 12, when we started doing air raid drills, duck and cover, because those dirty commies also had the nuclear weapons. Then I started finding out more about it.

And so - an early hero of mine was Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher, because he wanted to ban the bomb. I couldn't conceive of how you could drop a bomb that could destroy an entire city in a millisecond. Probably because my religious beliefs, because I thought we should love our brothers and all men are created equal and do the right thing and all of that. And then I'm starting to figure out that we did this terrible, terrible thing to the Japanese under the guise of war. It was just a terrible, terrible thing.

I kind of started looking at adults like I don't trust them. They're evil; they're lying. And I became very mischievous and a troublemaker. I never really wanted to hurt anybody. I wanted to have fun and I wanted to

trick the adults. So I got into trouble - the irony of it was in the sixth grade I got all As, and they told me I couldn't skip the seventh grade and go to the eighth grade because it wouldn't be good for me. Freshman year in high school, they told me I had a bad attitude and I had to repeat my freshman year, even though my grades were good enough. I had a bad attitude and they were going to cure my bad attitude by making me repeat the grade.

So I should have skipped the seventh grade and they wouldn't let me. And then they held me back two years later as a freshman in high school. So all they did was pour gasoline on the fire of my bad attitude. Talk about a bad attitude, hold me back a year. And there was one particularly sadistic Latin teacher, Jesuit - that was his call, and the principal went along with it, and the principal talked my parents into it. And it was funny because when my mom was about 85 years old, one day out of the clear blue sky, she apologized to me for that incident, that her and my dad went along with the principal that I needed a course correction in my attitude.

MS. RIEDEL: And somehow another year of freshman high school was going to do that.

MR. MARIONI: Plus my other teachers couldn't believe it and just said, don't waste your time. If you got an A in my class, go get a Coke at the drugstore on the corner. Get out of here. Don't waste my time or your time. But I had to repeat that Latin with that same sadistic teacher and I had - I was never good in history either. It's funny because I never liked history. It just seemed like dead guys. I was only interested in what was happening now, nothing in the past.

MS. RIEDEL: But when you were a little younger, that was mainly what you read - inventors and biographies, which is a part of history.

MR. MARIONI: Well, yeah, and I used to say that I didn't care about anything that happened before about 1915, which wasn't my lifetime, but which did kind of cover a lot of the inventors and things that I did like.

MS. RIEDEL: What happened in 1915?

MR. MARIONI: Well, it wasn't specific, 1915, but 20th century. But I never really liked war, probably because my Catholic beliefs, and so kind of post-World War I was where my interest began. So history, never really liked history. And I had to repeat history, and I ended up with the same history teacher, who I ended up really liking and started getting interested in history by taking the same class again, because then I already had, like, a leg up on getting through it.

MS. RIEDEL: What was going to happen next.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. I think I mentioned, since the nuns - since my older brother Tom taught me to read and write and do math before I started the first grade, which was hugely beneficial - and I did the same for my kids. Because then you go into school and you're already up to speed and you feel good about yourself. You feel good about learning. You're not struggling with the fundamentals. So it's a big plus, I think. So anyway, I did manage to get through high school, and, like I said, one out of five teachers liked the fact that I questioned everything and was inquisitive and was paying attention. And four out of five I clashed with, and they'd sent notes home that I had a bad attitude, or whatever.

And then I went on to college. First year was engineering, and not a problem. Just not interested. English teachers, they liked me because I was the only engineering student that loved poetry and cared about literature.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was at the University of Dayton [OH]?

MR. MARIONI: I went to Dayton for that first year. I wanted to get out of town. Dayton really was out of town but was not far enough. And I had a lot of problems there because they had mandatory ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] and I kept telling them I'm a pacifist, I won't fight a war; why should I study war? And they said, you have no choice. Actually, that time - that was the first time the school sent me to a therapist, to try and find out what my problem was.

MS. RIEDEL: Because you were a pacifist -

MR. MARIONI: Well, I kept telling them, my problem - I've got a bad attitude. That's my problem. Nobody molested me; I don't have any dark past. I had a happy enough childhood. My parents were loving - loved me and loved each other and we treated each other with respect. So I went off to a therapist, who totally agreed with me and wrote me a note excusing me from ROTC. So I ended up getting out of ROTC because the therapist totally agreed with me; but my problem was I was a pacifist and I was right. Why should I study war if I was going to refuse to fight war?

And then I switched and went to the University of Cincinnati in Ohio, where I was from, and then moved to San

Francisco and went to San Francisco State [San Francisco State University, CA] and then in English literature. I wanted to be a poet. I loved poetry. And then I actually got interested in philosophy, because that was early '60s and existentialists were the big guns in the literary - [Albert] Camus and [Jean-Paul] Sartre and people like that - were the big guns in literature current at the time, and I was reading all their works and getting really interested.

MS. RIEDEL: And the San Francisco poetry scene was in full swing.

MR. MARIONI: Well, that's why I drove to San Francisco, to see [Lawrence] Ferlinghetti and [Allen] Ginsberg and hang out in North Beach and City Lights, and it was fantastic. It was truly fantastic - people reading poetry on street corners. My God, what's this world come to? And why aren't we still doing it, or why don't we go back to it instead of all the bullshit going on today. And we won't get me started on politics. There's not enough time. But that's what drew me to San Francisco, was the beatniks and poetry thing.

But because I was reading all the contemporary literature, I got interested in philosophy. Then the two were concurrent and I - I took as many philosophy classes as I did literature classes. I started out with an interest in existentialism because of the era coming out of World War II for the world, and Europe particularly, and my own sense of the sheer hypocrisy I saw around me and the senselessness of that hypocrisy, fueled by existentialism. And so I got more and more into philosophy, and the more I got into it, the more I liked it, because I realized philosophy is a discussion of ideas. Nobody has to be right or wrong. And I was really sick of people telling me they were right and how dare I question them. So to be in a field where you could discuss ideas and challenge other people's thinking was totally liberating and refreshing. So I got absorbed into philosophy and continued English literature, and really got into absurdism.

MS. RIEDEL: Now you were studying in San Francisco, or you were there for the summer?

MR. MARIONI: At San Francisco State, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is the early 1960s; you were 19 or 20?

MR. MARIONI: Sixty-four, I think. Yes, '63, '64, in there. And then I realized that back at Cincinnati Van Meter Ames was the chairman of the philosophy department. And he was somebody I particularly respected because he was a Westerner that was the world's authority on Eastern philosophies. And so what a wonderful combination of perspective of Eastern philosophy from a Western viewpoint, and he was really good. So I thought, I'm going to go back to Cincinnati and study philosophy and continue the literature while Van Meter Ames is there.

It's kind of like Ram Dass, the so-called guru. He's the same thing. Ram Dass's forte was that he could mix Eastern and Western philosophy together with humor, even better than Van Meter Ames. But anyway, at the time before Ram Dass, Van Meter Ames was it. And I can't even think of the teacher's name right now, but he was young; he wasn't more than two years older than me - I'm talking mid-20s - that was teaching in the philosophy department and turned me on to [Ludwig] Wittgenstein, the Austrian philosopher that wrote the *Tractatus* [*Tractatus Logico-Philosphicus*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1922].

I had wanted to be a poet and a writer, and then after getting interested in Wittgenstein - in fact, this teacher taught a Ph.D. seminar course in Wittgenstein, and I asked him if I could take his class even though I was undergraduate, and he said yes. So I got in with like three other students for graduate seminar on Wittgenstein.

MS. RIEDEL: This is back in Cincinnati?

MR. MARIONI: Back in Cincinnati. It was in the mid-'60s, in my mid-20s. And I got engrossed in Wittgenstein. It kind of was too early - I mean, I was too young, too naïve, because Wittgenstein made me - gave me the impression that words were meaningless; they did not begin to convey emotions; that they were a poor substitute for thoughts or emotions, which was not really Wittgenstein's point, but at 25 years old that was the depth of my understanding of it. So I kind of decided not to be a writer and to be a philosopher at that point.

And then to try and make a long story short, five weeks before graduation, one afternoon I walked out of school - and this is a big school. It was 27,000 students at the time, but it was in Ohio in the mid-'60s and there was a group, several students had set up a card table protesting the war in Vietnam. Well, being a pacifist, I went over and talked to them and was reading their literature and talking to them about my feelings. The war in Vietnam was still popular and there was like a handful of students.

Contemporary American poetry teacher walked by and saw me, kind of gave me a dirty look. Saw me at this table of anti-Vietnam literature. And the next morning he formally filed plagiarism charges against me, which meant I was kicked out of school five weeks before graduation with no notice and no recourse; basically guilty until proven innocent. He filed formal charges, and then he signed his name to the paper. I was out, kicked out. I could not go to class; I could not appeal; and I had to stay out of school for a year before I could re-apply to take

my senior year.

And I confronted him. I stalked him for three days. I begged him. I had two children, I was working full-time, going to school full-time, raising two children, working my ass off, and suddenly I'm out of there with no recourse, no petition, no - like I say, guilty until proven innocent. And I was furious. And he wouldn't look me in the eye or talk to me. And I kept saying, you could give me an F; you could give me an incomplete so I could graduate. He'd hurry down the hall, did not even look at me or talk to me. I was never threatening, but I'm sure he felt threatened. I'd follow him to the parking lot, talking the whole way. He would, like, hunch his shoulders up and run away from me.

So I went all the way up the chain of command. This was five weeks before graduation, and appealed to everybody, who said, there's nothing we can do for you. So I went to the court and filed charges, sued the university.

MS. RIEDEL: He didn't have to produce anything?

MR. MARIONI: He had a term paper - I wrote a term paper explicating a T.S. Eliot poem, which was a simple poem and everybody would see it the same way. There was one paragraph in the beginning that was remarkably similar to a paragraph in a book, and he did show that to the committee, or whoever - the school - when he filed the charges against me. I had not read that book. But it was a simple T.S. Eliot poem that anybody would interpolate the same way, explicate. It was like a one-paragraph summary of the poem, the theme, what's it about.

So I went to court and sued the university, and I didn't have any money so I acted as my own lawyer, and the university sent three lawyers and the teacher and everything. I'll try and make this really short. I opened the trial in my defense that this was a personality conflict; this was not about plagiarism, and I knew that because the teacher wouldn't look me in the eye or talk to me. So I knew something about me had pissed him off. I didn't know what. And then that wasn't unusual. I had pissed off other teachers. But he wouldn't talk to me, wouldn't tell me what. And it was too important; I had kids and a full-time job and was going to school full-time. It was too important to me.

So the judge said I could not use the personality conflict as a defense that I was on trial for plagiarism. I had to prove that I hadn't plagiarized. So I brought in all my notes and talked extensively and defended myself and in the end - it was three judges, because I asked for a trial by judge instead of jury because I figured if I'm going to get anywhere, I need well-educated people, so I got a three-judge panel to hear my case.

In the end they declared that I had not plagiarized. And this is now like two weeks before graduation, or 10 days, and they ordered the university to re-instate me so I could take my final exams. The poetry teacher stood up in court and said that he would resign before he would allow me back into his class. I stood up and said, are you tenured? And he said, yes, I am. I said, how long have you been at the university? Twenty-seven years. I turned to the court and said, he just proved my opening argument. This is a personality conflict. There's a fully tenured man that spent his whole career at the university threatening to resign rather than re-instate me in his class. It's obviously a personality conflict - never was about plagiarism. And why would I want to go back in his class?

And the judges asked the university's lawyers to produce my transcript, and they looked over them and said, Mr. Marioni has so many credits. He needs 190 to graduate; he's got 270 completed. Why is he even taking this last year? He should have graduated a year ago. He's got enough credits to get two degrees, one in literature and one in English - I mean, in philosophy. And he's right. Why should we reinstate him in the class, and he doesn't want the professor to quit and he definitely made his point that this was all along - his point is very well made that this was a personality conflict, and so we're going to order the university to award Mr. Marioni his two degrees that he's already earned, and he doesn't have to be reinstated or take his final exams.

Well, that was a wonderful victory, but I was pissed off. I was really mad and I stayed mad for three years. It dramatically affected me, because I had believed in education so strongly, and then to come up with this kind of - not hypocrisy - but bullshit that I was fighting against in my life anyway, and with the church and with adults and with parents and the sheer level of hypocrisy. It really affected me.

MS. RIEDEL: There was no disciplinary action taken by the university against the professor?

MR. MARIONI: No, not that I know of. I never went back. In fact, afterwards one of the judges called me into his chambers and said, I've been on the bench 15 years. I've never seen anybody win a case against a university, and not only did you win, you won acting as your own lawyer. Congratulations. You did a good job. You did the right thing.

So that felt good. I was so angry and so mad and I became anti-intellectual. And I rode Harleys and hung out with terrible degenerates. I didn't particularly do terrible things, but I saw other people do terrible things that I

didn't participate in. I really hated intellectuals. I thought they were phony and stuffy, and I hated everything in the adult world - education, learning, intellectuals - all the pretentiousness of it. It just shattered me. And I stayed pissed off for three years. And then I calmed down and said, there's got to be a happy medium from holding intellectuals in the highest ideal to wanting to burn the fucking school down. There's got to be somewhere in between that I can find.

Well, I looked around and thought a lot about it and realized that my brothers that were artists were the only people in society that could do whatever they wanted to do. Everybody kind of excused them; oh, they're artists. That's why I decided to become an artist. So I'd been out of school for three years at that point and I -

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe we should back up a little bit, because we haven't discussed the transition between Cincinnati and San Francisco. You'd gotten married, with two children. How were you supporting yourself, following graduation?

MR. MARIONI: I was supporting myself by rebuilding total wrecks, and hot rods. In fact, that car we just drove in was a total wreck when I bought it.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is a fabulous, fast, red Porsche.

MR. MARIONI: It's the only way I could afford a $91,000 Porsche. [They laugh.] Some rich guy had spun around on the freeway and managed to hit everything he could possibly hit. Every single panel was wrecked on that car except the driver's door. And it took me 22 days. I completely rebuilt the car from the bottom up.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's in pristine shape and it's fast. Let's talk about your engineering abilities.

MR. MARIONI: I put myself through college fixing wrecked cars. Not always - I'd buy and sell cars - anything I could make money on. By the time I'd graduated from college, I'd owned about 275 cars and 10 or 12 motorcycles. Anything I could make money on, if I could buy it and sell it the next day and make 100 bucks or 500 bucks, I did. A lot of them were wrecks, and I had a shop.

MS. RIEDEL: Where did you learn to repair cars?

MR. MARIONI: Self-taught. Built hot rods starting when I was about 12, 13 years old, and bought my first motorcycle when I was 12; hid it behind the garage. When my mom discovered it, I said it was my buddy's. [They laugh.] And so I knew cars. I knew how to work on them, fix them, and I enjoyed it. I like going fast. I still like going fast. Speed is complete freedom from the world of the intellect.

So I put myself through college buying and selling cars. Mostly total wrecks, some antiques and classics. Some sports cars. I restored Bentleys and Porsches and Jaguars and occasionally built a hot rod. In that way I could work at my own time, because I had two kids. I was married at the time. I had two little kids, and I was going to school full-time, and, as I said, taking extra classes. It's like I hear kids today going, I've got three courses this semester. I go, three? I used to have like seven, eight, nine, some semesters. It's like I was reading a book a week, writing a term paper a week. Raising kids, working.

So the working was solved by having a shop - basically it was like a three-car garage, where I would go work day or night, whenever I had a chance. And I knew cars well enough that I made money, made good money, was able to pay for school, raise my kids, and live. So after school I went to work -

MS. RIEDEL: This is in 1969 you finished in Cincinnati?

MR. MARIONI: Yes. I went to work professionally as a body man. I graduated in '66 or '67. I can't remember. I worked three years professionally as a body man. I was good. This was in San Francisco. It was union; I was in the Teamsters. I got thrown out of two union hall meetings, one bodily, carried out of the meeting and unceremoniously tossed down the front steps of the building.

MS. RIEDEL: Why were you thrown out?

MR. MARIONI: I was thrown out because they had gone on strike for 17 weeks, I think it was, and came back for a nickel an hour more, and I pointed out to them it would take, whatever, 79 years to make up the lost salary, and so I got tossed out. And then another time they wanted to approve a new contract that they didn't feel it was necessary to read the contract. There were more than 700 of us in the union hall, and I stood up and said, there's no way I'm going to vote for a contract you're not going to read. How can we vote for something - and a couple of other people in the audience went, yeah. And before I knew it, four guys picked me up by my arms and carried me out of the hall, kicked the front door open, and threw me down the steps for asking to have them read the contract. So I was not a good union member either. [They laugh.] But anyway, three years.

And then I got divorced. My wife left. It was mutual; we had gone different ways. It was the hippie scene in San

Francisco. We were back in San Francisco and the hippie scene was flourishing and we just grew apart. And also, we'd had kids way too young. She was 20, I was 22 when Dante was born. They gave us no sex education; they gave us no information about being a parent or a father or a mother or husband or a wife. Basically they gave us no information. It's like, how stupid is that? So we grew up floundering around, trying to learn to become adults and deal with our raging hormones. So we had kids and got married too young, simple as that. I won't call it a mistake, but it was what happened.

So seven years later she basically felt like she'd missed out on her youth, and I agreed. We both had. So she wanted to take off and have fun. I said, fine. So we parted amicably. We had no debts or no possessions. Some used furniture. So there was nothing to split up and no debts and that, so I wished her well and she left. And she left me with the two children. Marina was three years old - in fact, was three days before her fourth birthday. And Dante was six.

And she packed her bags, took all the pots and pans out of the kitchen, and left. And suddenly I was a single parent, and I hadn't been raised to be a dad, let alone a mom. So I sat my kids down and explained to them that she wanted to go do other things and that that was her right; there was no problem and no hurt feelings, and that we were now in this together, Dante, Marina, and me. And I said, it's kind of like being in a lifeboat. If we're going to survive and make it through life, we're going to have to cooperate, help each other.

Luckily I had two wonderful children who grasped that concept and cooperated. They still joke today - Marina will be 40 in a week, and Dante is 42 - and they still joke that I was lucky I had liberal kids. [They laugh.] But basically there were kind of no rules except one - treat each other with respect. I said, you can hang out with whoever you want to, you can try drugs, alcohol, sex, you can stay out all night, you can do whatever you want to do, but respect yourself and respect your sister, your brother, and your father. We respect each other. And that was it.

MS. RIEDEL: How did that work?

MR. MARIONI: That worked out fine. And I'd say, if you're going to stay out all night, call me. I won't get mad. I'll just go to bed knowing, not wondering where you are, or if you drank too much or something. And if you want to sleep with your girlfriend, boyfriend, bring them home and sleep with them. I don't have a problem with that. No grandchildren, please. Just respect yourself, respect what you're doing. If you want to smoke pot, smoke pot. If you want to take other drugs, try them and don't abuse them. Don't do it too much or too much at once or too often. Just respect what you're doing. And that worked out fine.

Didn't set bedtimes, didn't limit who their friends could be. And they treated each other with respect and they treated me with respect and we had a lot of fun. We used to hitchhike places, my kids and I, on trips. We'd hitchhike across California.

MS. RIEDEL: This was still in the mid-'60s-late '60s, early '70s.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. And one time my daughter had a horse out near Muir Beach near Mill Valley. And I'm not going to drive her out to Muir Beach every day, so she'd hitchhike out there, ride her horse, hitchhike back. Friends, and particularly women, were constantly bringing her home and chewing me out: how can you let your daughter hitchhike? How can I stop her? What am I going to do, follow her around? I go, I told her, don't get in a car with a middle-aged man, a group of teenaged boys. And I said, besides - she was like seven or eight years old at the time - besides, the first woman that comes along is going to stop and pick up a little girl hitchhiking. Because I've asked Marina and she says, yes, first woman, very first woman stops. If I see it's a man, I don't even put my thumb out. First woman stops, picks me up and takes me right where I want to go. [Riedel laughs.] So worked out fine. Of course today there are more lunatics in the world. Or at least they get more publicity. I don't know if there are more of them, but they definitely get more publicity.

So people were constantly giving me a hard time that I was too unorthodox. Dante would ride his bicycle to Sausalito, take the ferry across there to Chinatown, buy fireworks and hang out with the Chinese kids when he was eight, nine years old. I'd always say, Dante, keep a dime. If anything happens, make a phone call. They knew how to make phone calls; they knew how to talk to adults and knew how to talk to the police. We were friends with the police in town. I used to tell them, look into people's eyes. If they look like Charlie Manson, run away. [Riedel laughs.] Scream and run away. Otherwise kids are good judges of adults. They know if they mean well or don't. So pay attention. Watch what's going on around you. Keep a dime in your pocket, no matter how much you spend, and have fun. It's like teaching responsibility. Trust them. It pays off. It's remarkable how many people think that kids can't do something. And of course, the kid gets frustrated and loses self-confidence. You tell your kids they can do it and that they're bright enough and have some preparation, like the Charlie Manson warning, they can do it and they feel good about themselves and it gives them self-confidence.

Both my kids have traveled to foreign countries on their own ever since, even if they didn't speak the language. They just head off to wherever and have an adventure, because they do have that self-confidence. I got a lot of

grief from other adults, that I was reckless and irresponsible, and one time even they called the child welfare society on me; one neighbor that thought I was too irresponsible. And they came and investigated me, talked to the kids. And said, what's the problem? They're well fed, they're dressed, they're happy, they like their dad, they like having adventures; what's the problem here? So anyway, they were - I was lucky I had good kids.

MS. RIEDEL: And you were living in Mill Valley.

MR. MARIONI: Living in Mill Valley. We were - yeah. Mistakes were made, we had fun, and we were trying new ways of living. I mean, we were flush with excitement of the civil rights movement, stopping war in Vietnam, women's rights. We were flush with excitement of that sexual freedom. Everything was new and the future had unlimited possibilities. To raise my kids in a nonconventional way in Mill Valley in that time, early '70s, could work. And did work. I mean, both my kids are fine adults. They respect -

MS. RIEDEL: And during this time you began to work in film, yes?

MR. MARIONI: I started in film after the three year hating intellectuals. And I decided to become an artist, and I thought, what interests me? And film - I always loved movies, and film can capture illusion and reality. And in philosophy absurdism is trying to measure -

[END TAPE 1 SIDE A.]

- the distance between illusion and reality, which my whole life had been. Like I say, hypocrisy. The hypocrisy is the illusion. What's the reality, what's really going on? I knew that the priest was screwing the neighbor's wife. I knew whose dad beat my buddy as a kid, broke his arm. I knew about child abuse; I knew about adultery. I knew all these things were going on, but everybody was pretending like they weren't going on.

So - and the same with the church. I left the church at 13, when the priest said they had to raise the tuition at the school to keep the blacks out. I got up and walked out of church. I never went back. And I told my parents it was unacceptable. I cannot be part of this. I was raised to believe everybody was created equal and we should love our fellow man. I could not tolerate being told that we're going to raise the tuition at school to keep the blacks out. I'll never go to church again. You can drop me off in the park. I'll sit in the park while you guys go to church. My mom and dad accepted that. They would drop me off at the park, they'd go to church, they'd come back, pick me up in the park, and we'd go out to lunch.

MS. RIEDEL: Extraordinary parents.

MR. MARIONI: Well, I was adamant about it. I didn't really say, can I do this? I got up and walked out of church and told them, I'll never go back in there; this is totally unacceptable. I'll go to the park. I'll find God in the park. I didn't give them - I didn't say, can I do this? I didn't. I was - it was clear. I did it. There wasn't, can I do it?

So film had that ability to capture illusion and reality. That always had fascinated me, and philosophy made me - a bad attitude of growing up, that difference between illusion and reality. So I started in film. Robert Nelson - I went into a lot of underground, independent filmmakers, and Robert Nelson was one of my heroes. And one day I was in a food store in Mill Valley. I don't even remember what it was called ,because it wasn't a Safeway. It was a family -

MS. RIEDEL: Mill Valley Market, I bet.

MR. MARIONI: Yes, probably Mill Valley Market, and I saw this woman that I knew that had - was married to a professor at San Francisco State, and he had just started - he had just built a synthesizer and was playing with [the band] Weather Report, so I was really interested in what he was doing, and his wife I happened to know. Well, I saw her in the store in Mill Valley and I said, what are you doing here? She said, well, I live in Mill Valley now. I go, well, why is that? I thought you lived in - out by State.

And she said, no, I divorced my husband on a - spontaneously. I met this guy at a party and three days later went to Mexico, divorced my husband, married Robert Nelson. I went, Robert Nelson the filmmaker? And she goes, yes, do you know him? I said, well, I don't know him, but he's, like, my favorite independent filmmaker. Where do you live? And she gave me the address and I got in the car and drove straight to the house, knocked on the door, and said, Robert Nelson, I'm Paul Marioni. You're my favorite filmmaker. I want to make movies. And he said he was teaching at the Art Institute [San Francisco Art Institute, CA] and said, well, my class is full. I said, I don't need credit. Can I audit? He goes, yes, you can audit.

And we became friends, and I went to the Art Institute for a year, maybe more, and studied film with Robert Nelson, and we became good friends. And I made several films. And then one day I went by his house, and he had stained a glass window there that was broken. And it was a round window, and it was a big teaspoon and it was titled *John's Big Spoon*. It's funny. I went to Europe on my own when I was 20, bummed around Europe for

about four or five months, and had gone to Chartes Cathedral and looked at the rose window and didn't care, and had gone to Murano and Venice and watched the glassblowers and didn't care, kind of went in one eye and out the other. I had no interest in glass. I was just seeing the things people were talking about.

And then I saw this window, *John's Big Spoon*, and it was broken. I said to Bob, what's that? He said, well, a friend of mine made that for another friend that gave his wife a heroin overdose, so Judy [Raffael North] - her name was Raffael at the time, she was married to Joseph Raffael, the painter - Judy Raffael made that for this guy named John that had accidentally given his wife an overdose of heroin, and the wife survived, but Judy made this to remind him never to do that again. I went, that's really cool. And I had never looked at glass with any interest at all, none. And like I said, I'd seen the rose window and glassblowers in Murano, and in one eye and out the other. But this one caught my eye, mostly because of the concept, the story, what had happened. So I went, that's really cool, and kind of forgot about it.

And then I starred in a film that Robert made called, *R.I.P.* [1970], and when he premiered that film in San Francisco - and we're probably talking 1970, maybe '69 - he premiered *R.I.P.*, which stood for "Rest in Pieces." And it was -

MS. RIEDEL: "Rest in Pieces."

MR. MARIONI: Yes, it was a performance piece that I had done, where I tore a car in half, because I was working as a body man. We had these frame racks with 20,000 or 100,000 pounds of pressure, and I bolted a Corvair down because [Ralph] Nader was writing about Corvairs at that time in *Unsafe at Any Speed* [*Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-in Dangers of the American Automobile*. New York: Grossman, 1965]. I got my hands on a Corvair, bolted it down, literally ripped it in half, as a senseless act - like ripping a phone book in half. I'm still interested in philosophy, and this was a senseless, fun thing to do, rip a car in half. No meaning. So stupid, like ripping a phone book in half.

Robert Nelson came and filmed it, made this movie, *Rest in Pieces*, and he premiered the movie. About two weeks later I was at the Renaissance Fair - I starred in the movie because it was my performance - about two weeks later I was at the Renaissance Fair, wherever that was, I can't even remember - Marin County or Sonoma County. Nineteen-seventy, I think.

This woman comes up to me and says, are you Paul Marioni? I said, yes, I am. And she said, oh, I just saw *R.I.P.* a couple of weeks ago. That was great, such a wonderful and funny and incredible senseless act. That was great. I congratulate you. I go, well, who are you? She goes, I'm Judy Raffael. And I go, are you the Judy Raffael that made *John's Big Spoon*? And she goes, yeah, I am. I go, well, I've seen *John's Big Spoon*, so I know who you are, and we immediately became friends, started talking. So really it was as much to get to know Judy as anything, any other reason. I said, well, teach me how to work with glass.

So I went out to her studio in Fairfax - she was married to Joseph at the time - and spent four, five days. She showed me the fundamentals: how to cut glass, and how to conceive of fitting it together, and plan out what size, and lead it together. The basic, raw fundamentals. And then she said, get out of here. Go home and do whatever you want to do. And at the time I wanted more than that from her. I wanted more friendship, more advice, more consultation, consolation. I was trying to be an artist and had never been to art school, and I had finished my film *Hole* [1972], but I had not shown it. Had I finished it? No. Yeah, I think I had. I'm pretty sure I had.

Another one of life's ironies, anyway, was that after my wife left, I lived in that house in Mill Valley with my kids, and because I needed to be gone and that - the house was huge, big old Victorian - I'd rented out a room to a woman named Jackie White, who was a painter. And quite a bit older than me, maybe 20 years older than me. So I rented her a room so that there would be a presence with the kids and I wouldn't always have to be there. Her husband had just dumped her, and she'd been married like 25, 30 years, and it just worked out. She could come and rent a room, paint, have studio space, because I had a big studio.

Well, one night she invited her friend, Gunvar Nelson, to come visit with her. Well, I had never met Gunvar Nelson, because Bob Nelson had divorced her to marry this other woman that I knew. So Gunvar came to my house to visit with Jackie, and Gunvar and I fell in love. Gunvar never left. She stayed that night and we lived together for three years. So here was - by pure coincidence I end up with Robert Nelson's ex-wife as my first girlfriend after I got divorced, and she's a filmmaker also. And so, anyway, to make a long story short, I made *Hole*. It was the third movie I made.

But then I got interested - I met Judy and started working in glass, and as soon as I started working in glass, I got sucked right in. She infected me with her enthusiasm. I just saw unlimited possibilities - and we'll talk more about being self-taught, but it's tremendously liberating. I had no preconceived notions of what I should do. I had no past of what had been done. It was tremendously liberating. It was a whole new world, a whole new vision. There were no ifs. And so hugely beneficial, only because I'm self-motivated. I've found out since then,

because I've taught for 30 years, nine out of 10 people need to be told what to do. Only one in 10 is self-motivated. Now I realize I was self-motivated. But she infected me with the excitement of glass.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is saying a lot because *Hole* actually went on to win some awards and do fairly well.

MR. MARIONI: *Hole* won a lot of awards and ended up making me a lot of money. Not a lot of money, but for independent film; showed all over the United States for about two years, got on that midnight film program. I can't remember the guy's name, but went all over the United States. Got rented, got shown every week for about two years in the different cities. And got shown at the Whitney Museum [Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY] once, several film festivals. It was remarkable.

MS. RIEDEL: But you didn't feel compelled to go on with that.

MR. MARIONI: I had already gotten interested in glass. I had put *Hole* on the shelf and I got interested in glass. And after like a year or two Gunvar said, you made the movie, why don't you send it out? I'd only been working in glass and was not making any more movies. I started on a fourth movie. I scripted it and shot a couple of scenes, and then started working with glass. And then a year later sent *Hole* out to - I can't remember which film festival, but it took first prize. I sent it to another festival; it took first prize, and the sponsor refused to award the prize and the jurors all quit and filed formal protests. So it got a kind of publicity.

And then I sent it out and it got shown at the Whitney and the Berkeley Art Museum. Got shown a lot.

MS. RIEDEL: So what was the film?

MR. MARIONI: It's a pseudo-documentary about a man obsessed with holes. It's 20 minutes long, and I shot it in 16-millimeter, and anybody that knows me would know it's a pseudo-documentary. But it appears to be a documentary about a man obsessed with holes. And it's, I hope, funny and I hope intelligent and obviously well enough to have won several prizes, and got branded and shown a lot. By the time that happened, I was totally sucked into making - working with glass.

And I had my first show at the John Bolles Gallery in San Francisco. That was quite an experience, because I made appointments with galleries and then I'd walk in and I'd open my portfolio and they'd say, what medium do you work in? I'd go - I'd say, glass, and they say, oh, well, we don't show glass. And I'd go, well, I have an appointment, look at my slides. And you now, of 13 galleries, 12, the first 12 I went to refused to even look at my - or a couple looked and said, we don't show glass.

MS. RIEDEL: They showed paintings, sculpture?

MR. MARIONI: Painting, sculpture, yes. Some photography. Finally the John Bolles Gallery, which is a really good one - and I can't remember this guy's name right now, but he had worked with my brother Tom at the Richmond Art Center when the city of Richmond foolishly made my brother the director of the Art Center. They realized their mistake fairly quickly, fired him after about the fourth show. It was hugely controversial. But anyway, this guy had worked with Tom, so he agreed to sit and look at my work. And when he looked at my work, he went, oh, this is fantastic; I never dreamt anything could be done with glass. My gallery work is surreal figures, totally nontraditional. I was making wall pieces, and three-dimensional wall pieces, and working, like I said, totally uninhibited. Had no preconceived notions about what I should do, no past, no knowledge of the past of what had been done.

So he gave me the show, and I lucked out because I sent startling announcements to the main critics and collectors and people, artists that I respected, and Cecile McCann, editor of *Artweek* came, saw my show, called me up, said that's extraordinary, unlike anything I've ever seen. Would you have lunch with me, so I said that I'd love to. So I went and had lunch with her, and she had wanted to do an article on my show. And at the end of the lunch she said, Paul, you talk about your work so well; you're eloquent in talking about your work - I said, well, I have a college education - so why don't you write an article about the work?

MS. RIEDEL: This is your first show?

MR. MARIONI: First show. And I was in *Artweek*. And the same week [Pablo] Picasso had a retrospective at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY], and Picasso got half a page - you remember *Artweek* was a big newspaper format - with two photographs. I got two full pages with seven photographs - my first show - because of Cecile. She just liked my naiveté and the fact that I could speak about my work, and she was just astounded that I had done something that she'd never seen or dreamt of or thought of. It just kind of startled everybody - what I did my first show - because it was so nontraditional. You couldn't, and I didn't, call it stained glass, thank God.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. It was colored glass, flat wall pieces -

MR. MARIONI: There were some windows and some flat wall pieces and some three-dimensional wall pieces.

MS. RIEDEL: And found objects and -

MR. MARIONI: Some found objects included, and photographic imagery laminated in. I was inventive on techniques. I always had a clear vision of what I wanted to do, and then I didn't know how to do it, so I had to figure out, find a way to do it. So I was inventive on techniques. But techniques are tools in your toolbox. They're a method to achieve your vision, your goal. And because I had no formal training, I had no formal way of doing something.

I was criticized for laminating photographs in, and I go, well, I don't know how to paint, so I can't paint. I can take a picture of what I want. They're my photographs. I'm not using someone else's. I'm setting up the image I want. I photograph it, and I have a Ciba transparency made so it will last. And I laminate it in. I do it because I can't paint. If I could paint, I would paint that. But I can't, so get over it. So that was tremendous publicity; put me on the map overnight. It was remarkable. And a tremendous boost to my wavering self-confidence about whether I could be an artist or whether I had talent or how could I do this when I'd never been to school; all those insecurities.

But like I said, I'm obviously - in hindsight I'm self-motivated. I never even thought about those things. I just did it. I wanted to do it and I did it. I put my vision into reality. How I did it was irrelevant. But I happened to be inventive in doing that, and I showed people something they'd never seen before. And Cecile appreciated that and put me on the map. She single-handedly made my career happen. Bob Nelson and Judy Raffael were single-handedly influential in me becoming an artist, encouraging me and saying, you can do it, and being good role models for me because they were doing it. And Cecile put me on the map.

It opened up all these opportunities for me, to be part of the first Artist's Soapbox Derby [*30 Gallons of Blood.* San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA, 1977-78], where I stood everybody on their ear. And get more publicity, appear more in public, and do more crazy things, more challenging things, and write letters and get them published, and get to talk to museum people and critics. It just put me on the map overnight. I was there. So that was maybe luck, maybe being in the right place at the right time. Maybe the boldness of my confidence to just go ahead and do it. Who knows? Definitely it was luck that Cecile McCann took an interest in me and gave me that tremendous exposure.

I was getting letters from people all over the world that had seen *Artweek*, that issue of *Artweek*. So it made all the difference in the world. I was being invited to show glass after I'd done this, gone to 13 galleries to get my first show. After my first show I'm being invited to show at the Berkeley Art Museum or somewhere. And asked to teach.

MS. RIEDEL: Did that throw you for a loop, or were you able to just roll with it?

MR. MARIONI: No. I was ready. It was like, out of my way, I'm coming through. I was a brash young man. I had a vision. It's like, "Get out of my way," was my attitude.

MS. RIEDEL: And so you started to teach?

MR. MARIONI: I had my insecurities. I don't know how to draw, I can't paint; my sense of perspective is terrible and I really should take a drawing class but never doing it. And just developing my own style and then being asked to teach. That's why I joke that I never went to art school except to teach. And so, I mean, it was tremendous for my confidence because, like I said, I did not have - I didn't think I knew how to draw or paint.

MS. RIEDEL: And in the long run, you believe it was a real advantage, not to have been to art school.

MR. MARIONI: It totally was a real advantage. Absolutely. In fact, I'm more and more thinking that self-taught is the best, and particular for teachers. When I look around - I think about everything way too much. I love teaching. I swore I'd never teach when I was in philosophy and literature, where the big option was teaching. But at that time you had to go to teachers college; you had to get a teacher's certificate. You weren't allowed to have a mustache or a beard; you weren't allowed to wear Levis; you weren't allowed to wear t-shirts. You had to wear a shirt with a collar, no Levis, no long hair, no beard, mustache; it was like, screw that. I'm not going to teach. You guys are way too uptight for me. So I was never going to teach. I swore I wouldn't get married, I swore I wouldn't be an artist, I swore I wouldn't teach. I quit swearing those things. [They laugh.] I changed my mind a lot. I questioned everything. I contradict myself.

But the main thing about being self-taught, there's a big plus and a big negative for a danger. The big plus is you have fresh ways of looking at things. The big danger is, because you have fresh ways of looking at things, you tend to do what they call breaking the rules. Once you break the rules, you get locked into that pattern and your broken rules become the rule. So the danger is then you become - you're limited in your thinking. No matter

what rules you broke, they become the rules. They start to put limits on your thinking. It's hard to think out of the box when you've broken the rules, because you've found a path; you cleared a path.

MS. RIEDEL: A particular way of breaking rules.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. You charted a new course through the wilderness or the brush. You found that path. Well, you tend to find a comfort in that, satisfaction, whether it's smug or not, and then you're locked into that path. You no longer branch off and break new rules and have fresh ways of thinking. I fight that all the time; that's why I say I contradict myself. When I'm teaching, I purposely make a fool of myself. I'll do stupid things so they can see it. I'll lie to the class and wait five minutes to see if anybody calls me on it. If they don't, I will call them on the fact that they let me get away with lying to them. And I'll challenge my own thinking constantly. I'll totally contradict something I said.

Probably I'd take it back to the very, very beginning, and I mention this in "Sense and Nonsense" [talk given at Glass Art Society Conference 2005 upon receiving their Lifetime Achievement Award]. I had a seventh grade nun that had a debate in class, and she would cut the class right down the middle of the room. There were three rows here, three rows there, whatever, 14 students on each side. And she would give a debate, a subject that you had to debate, and the example I use is if you had to cross the desert, would you rather ride a camel or take a bus. You didn't get to pick which side you were on. The right side of the room was arguing to ride the bus; the left side of the room was arguing to ride the camel. Right now I think I got the camel side, was my memory, and I wanted to be on the bus side because I was fascinated by cars and motorcycles, bicycles and anything machine. But I had to argue the camel side.

But what an invaluable lesson. It teaches you *how* to think instead of *what* to think. The problem with education and the problem with everything is learning what to think, book learning. This is the "right" way to do it. You charted - even if you're independent enough to chart a new course through whatever territory or field you're working in, eventually that gets set. That becomes you. So then you're back to what to think instead of how to think. So that was a crucial, crucial lesson in my life, being forced to debate something I didn't believe in, be on the side that I didn't want to be on and argue just as successfully or as strenuously. So it's been a constant throughout my life.

It's actually one of the things I resented about the four out of five teachers that have to question me and the one out of five that kept encouraging me when I'd question them, like I said, because I was probably the only one paying attention, and education. So when they asked me to start teaching, four, five years after my court case where I'd sued the university, it was revenge time; it was time to strike back at the educational system, the notion of book learning and what to think instead of how to think. So it's been crucial to my thought process my whole life. So I contradict myself. Somebody joked - I can't remember who I'm quoting - liberals won't even take their own side in an argument. It's a good joke. Very good joke, but there's some truth to it and we all know liberals that are like that.

I'm even worse. I'll play the devil's advocate: I'll take this side for five minutes, I'll take that side for five minutes, and I usually end up with a conclusion that is comical, that I'm full of shit. But I hope nobody takes me seriously. I definitely don't have the answers. I've tried a lot of things. Some things work, some don't. Done things I'm ashamed of. No regrets, but I've done things I'm ashamed of, and I hope to continue to try things, and I hope to try to continue to expand my thinking, and I hope to continue looking at things in new ways. That's how we progress, and because, like I said, there really is no answer, there is no meaning in life. The fact that we question the meaning of life is the meaning of life. None of us are going to find the meaning of life. None of us are going to find why men and women don't understand each other. It's just not going to happen. But the fun is questioning it, trying to find the answer, trying to hear the other side of the story.

And when I'm teaching, I force people to do things that are exactly the opposite of the way they want to do it. I'll give them an assignment: you have to make something visually ugly. Everybody kind of recoils a little bit, and I go, I'm not talking ugly subject. This is not about oil spills, money, rape, hunger - visually ugly. I don't care what you make it out of and I don't care how long it takes you to make it. But I want you to come in tomorrow with something that's visually ugly that we all agree on in a democratic vote. And I do that because we never honor the ugly. Beauty is singly it. All our efforts are toward beauty. It's not like ugly is equally as important, but you need to think about something you didn't think about before. Or you need to think about something in a way you didn't think about it before if you're going to learn. If you just make something beautiful and you've always been making beautiful things, you're not learning. You're wasting your time at a school and you're wasting the teacher's time if you're not learning. And the teacher's wasting your time if they're not expanding your thinking.

MS. RIEDEL: So this was an era when beauty still hadn't fallen off a pedestal; it was still the goal to shoot for.

MR. MARIONI: Which is?

MS. RIEDEL: When you were teaching the students to make something ugly, beauty hadn't fallen into disfavor

yet.

MR. MARIONI: Oh, absolutely. It was just, think about this in a way you haven't thought about it before. I love giving assignments to students, and was ferocious about it when I taught. It's like I walked in and said, okay, 20 minutes, 20 drawings; I'm going to smoke a cigarette. I'll be back in 20 minutes. I want to see 20 drawings from each of you. And they'd all be like, what? I'd go, I'll be back in 20 minutes. I'd go outside and smoke a cigarette. Force them to realize that you don't have to make a drawing that's controlled and conscious. Force them to do something they hadn't done. Force them to think in ways they hadn't thought before.

And I always resented giving grades, because I never wanted to be the person to judge somebody else, period, on any level, and to judge whether their artwork - whether they were good artists or not. Far too many teachers are credentialed by who their students were. I hear teachers talk all the time, oh, so and so, Bruce Nauman was my student, or whatever. It's like, you have to prepare them to be themselves, find their path, find their strength, find their passion. Passion is such a critical part of it. Self-confidence is a critical part of it too, but in this country, in this society, in this culture today, sadly, we've replaced passion with drama. Everything's a fucking drama. If it's not dramatic enough in your own life, you'll latch onto Fred and Jim's drama, or your neighbor or your friend's drama. Everything's a drama. And sadly, that drama has replaced passion. Maybe we lost passion and then drama filled in the void.

So as a teacher, I feel like it's my role to pump up that passion, pump up your self-confidence, focus on your vision. Don't copy me. I don't have the answers. Don't make work like mine. I'm a figurative surrealist. Work whatever you are. If you love blue - Yves Klein loved blue. Make passionate blue paintings. Just feel some passion for what you're doing. Don't do what you think you're supposed to do. Do what you want to do. Figure out what you want to do and do it, and do it with passion. You're only going to do it with passion if you stick to your vision. If you cut corners, cut costs, compromise your vision, you're going to lose that passion and you shouldn't be an artist.

MS. RIEDEL: So was that your basic teaching philosophy? How did you teach that?

MR. MARIONI: I taught it by doing crazy, stupid things, making a fool out of myself, questioning the students, pointing out when they were fools, pushing them, forcing them to do things they didn't want to do. And constant questioning. And so I never liked giving grades when I taught at San Francisco State. I taught there four years, ironically in the graduate department. I only had M.F.A. studio courses, and I don't have an M.F.A. I taught four years to only the graduate students at State, M.F.A. program.

MS. RIEDEL: This would be late '70s?

MR. MARIONI: Seventy-four to '77. Seventy-four, '75, '76, and '77. I taught there until they kicked me out. We can go into that or not. But I've been kicked out of four schools while I was teaching, and I've been invited back to all four of them. I went back to three of them, and I never went back to State. The students got up a petition demanding they hire me back, and I refused. It was scandalous what they did to me at State.

To make it really short, they hired a private detective to follow me around in my private life to dig up some dirt on me so that I would not expose the high-level corruption I had accidentally discovered in the administration. I was furious. When I discovered the corruption in high levels of the administration, I told them, I'm not interested. This is not what I want to know. I'll walk away. Let's forget this. I'll walk away. Well, they got paranoid and hired a private detective and tried to dig up some dirt on me. It's kind of a long story.

My students pointed out that this guy had been following me around for several days. So I got the biggest guys in the class, and we cornered the guy and threatened to pummel him if he didn't tell us what he was doing. With four guys pinning him on the ground, he admitted the administration had hired him to dig up some dirt on me. So anyway, I left State and then the students - I didn't tell anybody. The students didn't know I had uncovered this high-level corruption. The chairman of the art department knew; wanted to cover his ass, as he told me. You're just passing through here. I'm spending my life here. Don't make waves for me. I said, make waves for you? I just lost the little bit of respect I had for you. I'm out of here. You don't have to fire me; I don't have to quit. You'll never hear from me again. I will not talk about this with anyone else. You're covered. Don't worry about your career. And you're covered. I won't talk about this to anybody else. Bye. Been nice knowing you.

And four years, I walked out. And the students had no idea what happened. They got a petition up and forced the school to hire me back, and I refused to go back. The school called me up, and said, we reinstated all of your classes; you have to come back. I said, no, I don't. I lost all respect for you. I will not work with you again, ever. Don't call me up. I told you I'd walk away; I won't talk about you, don't talk about me. I'm walking out of here and I will not come back.

The other three schools that kicked me out when they got mad at me, when they invited me back, I went back. Said, I never intended to piss you off -

MS. RIEDEL: College of Marin [Kentfield, CA], was that one of them?

MR. MARIONI: No. Pilchuck [Pilchuck Glass School, Stanwood, WA], ironically, one of them. Penland [Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC]. CCAC [California College of the Arts, formerly California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, CA].

MS. RIEDEL: You taught at Pilchuck on and off for 30 years.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. I taught a total of about 18 years over the last 30 years there. Yes, in fact Marvin [Lipofksy] kicked me out of CCAC, over something completely unrelated. And then when he got fired, they called me up and offered me his job. I said, thanks, I appreciate the offer, but I'd rather go downtown and get beat up in one night and get it over with. There was silence on the phone - what's the woman's name that teaches there; she was head of the search committee. I go - I can't think of it. Was it Beatrice? I said, look, I'm kidding. She goes, well, you wouldn't believe some of the things we've heard since we fired Marvin. I go, well, I'm kidding. But I appreciate the offer. No thanks. I'm done. She said, it's full tenure. I go, I don't care. Don't want full tenure. She said, we can get you more money. I go, I don't care. I'm not interested in a tenured position. I've had it with administrations and schools. I can go as a visiting artist, guest artist, artist in residence, do my thing, indoctrinate their molding minds, the students' minds, get paid, and get the hell out of there before the politics seeps in and destroys it for me. So thanks, but I'm not coming. I'm not taking the job.

So I did go back as a visiting artist a couple of times. But I didn't go back to teach at State. I never set foot at San Francisco State once after that, even though the students got the petition up. And Pilchuck, as soon as the director Tom Bosworth kicked me out, Chihuly heard about it, called me up and said, get your ass back up there. What are you thinking? Well, Tom fired me, kicked me out. He's the director. Dale said, get back up there. You're the artist in residence for this session. So I did pack my suitcase and went back to Pilchuck. Hi, Tom, I'm back. I'm artist in residence. How are you? Hope there's no hard feelings. When you fired me, I told you I had no hard feelings. Well, I'm back; there's still no hard feelings. We just had different viewpoints. We want to accomplish the same thing. And I don't expect to get my way, but I sure as hell expect to get my say. I had my say, you didn't like it, you fired me, you kicked me out of here. I didn't get my way. I'm back. How are you? Nice to see you again. Let's get to work. Now we're good friends, Bosworth and I.

And I've always felt that way. My intention is never to piss people off, unless they say, I'm right and how dare you question me. And like I said, I'll attack. And I'm pretty good at it. I've been around pros. But my intention is, let's discuss this and see if there's some new idea. Let's brainstorm and see what pops up. Let's see what we can shoot down. What can we make happen, what are the parameters here, what are the possibilities?

Some people, sadly, want it done the way it's always been done, and so I got kicked out of four schools. I got invited back to all four and went back to three of them.

MS. RIEDEL: What's your philosophy been at Pilchuck over the past 30 years? How has that changed over time?

MR. MARIONI: I don't know if it's changed. Pilchuck's been such a big part of my life and my family. Dante's taught there now probably about 18 or 20 years in his career. My daughter Marina has worked in the kitchen, been artist's assistant several times, and been, like, a teaching assistant. She's never taught there because she never teaches, but she's gone to work as artist's assistants - Dennis Oppenheim, my brother Joe, and a couple of other artists that she went as assistant to work with. It's been a big part of my family, my life and my family. So I have very strong, deep feelings about Pilchuck.

But Chihuly - actually Marvin brought me up there. I met Chihuly and Marvin after I had that first show. I had no idea there was anybody else working in glass, no idea there was a struggling glass, studio glass movement. There were no galleries, no books - a couple of university programs. I'd never heard of any of these people. I just made this work and had a show and got a ton of publicity, and then everybody came out of the woodwork. Chihuly and Fritz [Dreisbach] and Dick Marquis and Marvin, they all came out of the woodwork; hey, we're trying to make something happen in glass, too.

So I think Marvin, or Dale, or Fritz, said, we're making something happen at this school we call Pilchuck. It was the third year. And so come up in the summer and join us. It was too much fun. And people are constantly wanting to gossip; what happened in the early days, what really went on. And I always say, I'm a gentleman; I don't talk. But I can tell you, there was no adult supervision.

The director of the school, who had very, very little involvement, was a woman who was an alcoholic and was passed out by seven o'clock every night, and we were out of control. It was too much fun. Completely out of control. Summervail [Summervail Workshop, Vail, CO] was kind of like that, too, but the director, Randy Milhoan, was brilliant. He was not an alcoholic. He was brilliant, and encouraged the out of control. Summervail ran from about '77 to '84, until the state of Colorado shut him down. It was too much fun. The amazing thing was the sheer number of faculty and people that passed through Summervail in those days. I think it started in '77. They

brought me in in, I think it was, '78. Maybe they brought me in in '77; said, we want to have a glass program. Would you lead it?

[END TAPE 1 SIDE B.]

You would be in charge. Build a studio, develop a glass program, run that for the school. I went, yes. So -

MS. RIEDEL: For the three-month summer session?

MR. MARIONI: Yes. So every year I did the programming, and I had Andy Magdanz down to build the studio, because he was the best at the time. And then I developed a glass program.

We had glass symposiums every summer, and just the people that passed through there. I mean, Merce Cunningham, Dale Eldred. God, the dancers, poets, musicians; the best at ceramics, metal. Just every - it was such a high, contact high, a group high because of the director, Randy, was like - it was out of control. Everybody worked their butts off. It was enormously creative and we had way too much fun.

And then the state of Colorado found out they were funding it. Eighty-four, it was over. They weren't going to fund a bunch of hippie artists, and Randy pissed them off.

And so the interesting thing was that when the state cut the funding - it was hugely successful. He had a youth-at-risk program. He was pulling kids out of prison and putting them to work in the school. Several of them went on to become great artists. It just was - everything was innovative and new and exciting. So when the state cut funding, when they found out what they were funding - because Randy was on the state board of education. He ran two community colleges, the Summervail one in the summer he turned over to this art program.

He wrote a letter - 400 people had taught there. He had a $40,000 budget. Four hundred people had taught there in the eight years the school was open, had passed through its faculty, visiting artists, guest artists. He wrote a letter and asked them to contribute $100. All 400 responded. Not 399, not 398. All 400 people that had passed through that school agreed to give $100 for the next year's budget.

This wealthy woman said that she would give him the budget. So he wrote all 400 people and said, I've got a patron. Don't need your money. Then she backed out and then it was too close to the summer to get the $40,000 from all 400 people. But that was the kind of school it was, that 400 people had taught there and all 400 agreed to give him $100. Not one single person had left that school disgruntled. I always say there are malcontents in heaven. How can you have that kind of success or response? Not one person had ever left there disappointed or angry or unfulfilled. Not one.

MS. RIEDEL: And he wasn't able to regenerate it?

MR. MARIONI: It was too late. It was over. So a huge disappointment to everybody, but it was over. Move on. So Pilchuck is a close second. It had that same early, unbridled enthusiasm, creativity. Anything was possible.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you talk about how that was kindled as opposed to a traditional school; what enabled that to happen? Was it the people who came through, a specific synergy of a certain group?

MR. MARIONI: I kind of hate to say this, but it's as soon as you put a bunch of artists together - Bill Brown, longtime director of Penland, said it best once, if you bring artists together, they're like manure. Put them in a pile, they stink. Spread them around, things grow. But my attitude is, bring a bunch of artists together, things happen. Put an administration in there, it's restraining; it's holding back. It's developing a program; it's developing the capital campaign. It's making rules: don't drink while you're in the shop. It's catering to the patrons. It's all that structure that kind of holds everything down.

So Summervail didn't have that because Randy and his assistant, Jane Gregorius, a printmaker from California, great artist, were the administration. They were as out of control as we were. What kind of administration is that? There was no limits, no parameters, no rules, no patrons, no guidelines, course requirements, or what you could do or what you couldn't do. Same with the beginning at Pilchuck. Pilchuck got the administration - in fact, now it's overwhelming. They have like 18 people in the administration.

But the good thing about Pilchuck is that because of Dale, the artists run Pilchuck. The administration is there to serve the artists, artistic program, thanks to Dale. Dale is a genius. He's a visionary, cares passionately about education, learning, and brought people in that had that ability. In fact, Dale used to put people on the program at the same time he knew were going to clash and hate each other and argue the whole session, just so the students would see two -

MS. RIEDEL: Radically different viewpoints.

MR. MARIONI: Yes, and well-argued, radically different viewpoints. So hopefully a student makes up their own mind, finds their own place. Are you going to listen to Italo [Scanga], or are you going to listen to Ludwig [Schaffrath], or are you going to find somewhere in between that satisfies you? It's a good way to teach. I used to bring in guest artists, visiting artists, when I was teaching at State and CCAC that I knew were radically different and vehemently opposed to my philosophy. Bring them in. You've got your day, your week, have your say. So that the students could see that. Because I always said, I don't have the answers. You've got to think for yourself.

Sometimes to find the answer it's good to go to the opposite end. I'm trying to find the solution to a problem. What I think, I'll reverse my thinking and go the exact opposite direction. It's like a wake-up or refresher to clear your mind. Then you can find somewhere in between by going to the other extreme of your own thinking. Then it helps you to find something new and in between that satisfies everything.

Nobody is ever all right or all wrong. Some people are more right or more wrong, but it's never, you're completely wrong and completely right. So going to those two extremes in thinking about something is a good way to solve a problem. I don't care if you're artists or not. I've taught classes in creativity with doctors and lawyers and engineers in the classes that come, that want to see a new approach to problem solving.

So Dale was good at that, and Dale has continued - Dale is out of Pilchuck and has been a long time, but he laid that foundation, that basis to build the school on, that this is an artists' school and it's going to be run by artists and it's going to be for artists. So administration is there to serve the artists. At State one time, the chairman of the art department told me, the faculty is on top, the administration's in the middle, and the students are on the bottom. I go, no, you've got that wrong. He goes, that's the way it is, Paul. I go, no, no, no; students are on top. That's why we're here. Faculty is in the middle, and the administration's to serve both faculty and the students. And he goes, well, you're going to have a hard time. I'm not going to have a hard time because I'm going to keep that clear. That's clear.

So the administration hasn't taken over Pilchuck, which is probably why Pilchuck is still a vibrant and exciting place, because Black Mountain [Black Mountain College, Asheville, NC], Bauhaus [Staatliches Bauhaus, Germany], none of them lasted as long as Pilchuck. Penland is still going, much longer, but it's different. It's not so much an art school and it's not so much run by artists. But Pilchuck is, and it's still - its 35th year this year - is a remarkable accomplishment. I can't remember, Black Mountain, 20-some years. Bauhaus shorter, but other factors involved in Bauhaus.

MS. RIEDEL: Haystack [Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME] as well?

MR. MARIONI: I've been to Haystack, Arrowmont [Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, TN], Hoosuck [Hoosuck Glass School, North Adams, MS], Pilchuck. What else - Ox-Bow [Ox-Bow School of Art and Artists' Residency, Saugatuck, MI], summer school of the Art Institute of Chicago. I've pretty much been to all of them at one time or another, but Pilchuck I kept going back to.

I've quit teaching several times. Mostly I quit at a certain school. At Pilchuck I taught 14 consecutive years, and then I said, enough. You've got to bring somebody else in. They go, we want you. I go, well, somebody gave me my first chance. Bring - here's a list of young people that are talented and promising. Bring them. It wasn't until I said, I'm not coming back; here's the young talented people I recommend.

So I did 14 years, and then I went back two years as a student and that was great. I hadn't been a student in a long time. Student's the best. Absolutely. Make a mess, ask stupid questions, nobody holds you responsible; you don't have to prepare lectures; you don't have to listen to, baby-sit the students and their psychological problems. Student's the best. So I went back two years. And then I relented and went back and taught several times, four or five more times.

But 2001, I said, that's it. I quit teaching too many times. This time I'm quitting teaching. I mean it. Don't ask me. Because I love teaching and I'll relent and come back. Don't ask me. In 2001 - so I haven't taught since then. I go as the visiting artist or artist in residence, give a lecture, critique the students or something. But make my own work usually. And don't have to baby-sit students or motivate them. I do love teaching. I always did, which is probably why I was popular, because I cared. There's far too many teachers that just get through; finish the book by the end of the semester, get through whatever you needed to do.

I never finished my thought on not grading students - like at State, I used to tell the students the first day of class, if you come to every class, you get an A, period. If you don't come to class, you're in trouble. But if you come to class, you get an A; you miss a couple of classes, you get a B. But you come, I'm not going to judge your work; I'm not going to grade you on your work. I won't grade you on your talent or your progress. I'm going to give you an A if you come to class. That's all I care about.

Four years, semester after semester, 25 students, two classes each of 25, 25 As, 25 As, both classes, semester

after semester after semester. It became a joke - when I'd hand in my grade sheet in the art department, they'd go, all As again, Paul? And I'd go, that's right. I just keep getting the cream of the crop. I'm getting the best students you've got.

MS. RIEDEL: But they would all come and all work.

MR. MARIONI: All 25 of them would come to every single class, meet for studio, three-hour studio class as M.F.A. Never told them what medium they had to work in or what type of work they had to do. I pretty much ridiculed them if they even came close to imitating me or copying me. I would just openly ridicule them in front of everybody else, so they would stop that.

MS. RIEDEL: You're talking about master's-level students.

MR. MARIONI: All M.F.A., yes. All M.F.A. And so, yes, 25 students come to every single class. I felt good about that. I didn't care if they were only coming to get the A. I don't believe that they were. They would work. And occasionally - because I was smart enough to say, exactly what are you trying to achieve? Before I said, what the hell are you doing, or, God, that's terrible, or, that's a mess, or, don't do it that way, I was smart enough to say, exactly what are you trying to achieve? And then they would tell me, and then I would see their vision and I'd go, well, great; keep working; you're on track. Instead of criticizing them or their ability, encourage them once I realized what their vision was, even if it wasn't mine or I didn't like it or didn't understand it. If they could articulate what their vision was and then put that vision into reality, that's a huge success to me. That's an A right there. Without my judgment. They could clarify their vision and put it into reality. That's what it's all about.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you see any difference between university-trained art students and non? Students trained outside of academia?

MR. MARIONI: Truly. University-trained ones have all the theories.

MS. RIEDEL: All the theories?

MR. MARIONI: Yes. Yes. They know - they know Marcel Duchamp, they know Andy Warhol, they know - oh, what's this guy, the hot shot that's doing the big topiaries of puppies - Jeff Koons. They know all - they know all the ins and outs of the critics and the magazines, the art journals and theory. It's like, I've met students that can't even draw. They never took a drawing class and they're all the ins and outs of all the theories. So I totally see the difference. Go to Europe and teach or go to school in Europe, particularly in what used to be Eastern Europe. Hey -

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry, I think this wasn't picking you up because of the water running. You were saying you need to study in Europe?

MR. MARIONI: No, I'm saying there's a big difference. The art schools and the formal education here gives you all the theory. Everything about Marcel Duchamp; you know everything about Andy Warhol. If you're in school today, you know about Jeff Koons. It gives you that theory, how the art world works. And you can graduate with a degree and never have taken a drawing class. I mean, what's wrong with this picture? You go to Europe, particularly Eastern Europe, they've got - you take a drawing class every semester from day one until graduate school. You know about sculpture, you know about volume and space, you know about color; you get all the fundamentals in how to make art. In the United States you get all the fundamentals of how to be a success in the art world. There's a big difference between the two.

It kind of goes back to what I said about far too many teachers use their students as their credentials. Bruce Nauman was my student. I say that facetiously because he was [William] Wiley's student and I was friends with Wiley, and of course, we all saw Bruce skyrocket, high rise, fast rise to fame and success. Bruce is a smart guy and he's not like Jeff Koons. Jeff Koons, total phony, worse than Julian Schnabel or Damien Hirst, all that trumped-up intellectualism to make the art important. It's like, Nauman has talent. He has good ideas. He's like this guy [Martino] Catalano, I think, a young Italian guy that was a pizza delivery boy, and at 35 decided he wanted a more exciting life and decided to become an artist. So he can't draw or paint.

He has everything fabricated the same way Jeff Koons does, but Catalano's got great ideas, fantastic. He's thinking. He's conceptual, he's pushing the envelope. He's got great ideas. Yeah, he has his work fabricated. Koons is the new depths of shallow. There's, like, nothing there. There's no great idea there. It's all hype. He gets his work fabricated. I don't care if an artist makes his work or not. I have no problem whatsoever with an artist who has his work fabricated. I mean, Henry Moore didn't chisel out his sculptures; [Alexander] Calder didn't weld his mobiles together; Chihuly doesn't blow his glass; Warhol had a team of people screen-printing. I have no problem with that. You don't have to make it with your own hands if you've got a good concept. And Koons is new depths of shallow, and Catalano is incredible. His concepts are universal, fundamental, far-reaching, deep; they make you think, they force you to think. That's fantastic.

So art school, the professional schools and universities in this country prepare you for that, to be a successful artist. But they don't prepare you to get a job, to fabricate or make stuff and make a living making stuff. They do, but I'm exaggerating to make a point. So I see a difference, and because I've been to the Czech Republic and a few other places in Eastern Europe and all over Western Europe, I see that basic, fundamental education gives you there. We call it old-fashioned. It's not old-fashioned. It's fundamental, is what it is. It shouldn't be old-fashioned, but with the media today, the rise of media, everybody says it's old-fashioned. You've got to be working digitally, not with a paintbrush.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you single out one or a few of your own educational experiences as especially significant?

MR. MARIONI: Let me take a break.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, we'll take a break.

[Audio break.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel, interviewing Paul Marioni at the artist's home and studio in Seattle, Washington, on September 18, 2006, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

When we finished disc number one, you were just about to talk about your most significant educational experiences.

MR. MARIONI: Well, that's an interesting question, a very interesting question because - well, a couple of things. I have a very good friend in Mexico who went to the fifth grade, and he's one of the smartest people I know. I know he's smart because he's so perceptive. And educational experiences kind of reminds me of French poet Paul Valéry, who once said that seeing is the act of forgetting the name of what you're looking at. So being perceptive, you can get an educational experience when you least expect it, in the strangest place and in the most abstract way. And it's perception, is what it is. It's perception. And my friend Bernardo in Mexico - I say that because Bernardo is the kind of guy that could figure out how to do brain surgery in a couple of hours. Or he'd be a horse whisperer. He can watch a blade of grass grow and tell you something about nature. He's just that kind of guy. He's only been to the fifth grade, but he's one of the smartest people I know, because he's perceptive.

Being perceptive also includes being open to experience and your perception of it. So there are different - I mean, there are profound moments in your life where you - you see something in a new way, or you have an educational experience that comes from something you could never even have planned or in some cases wouldn't have accepted except for the unusual circumstances, where it happened. In [the speech] "Sense and Nonsense," I cite a Japanese woman that I met. I taught in Japan quite a bit in the '80s and have been back several times since. But I was teaching up in the Japanese Alps. I'll try to make this story short, with "Sense and Nonsense," and there was, up in the Japanese Alps - it used to be a wonderful old school that burned down in about '84, right after I taught there. I had nothing to do with the fire. [They laugh.]

And while I was there, a friend of mine that brought me was - ran the summer program - was a motorcycle nut and had several motorcycles, and I do also. I only have one now, but I love motorcycles. So I asked to borrow one of his motorcycles, and we went off into the mountains to a town that had been turned into a ghost town by a landslide. There had been a landslide in the mountains, and the road to this town, which had been a popular resort town with hot spring hotels and that, had gotten cut off completely. This woman at that time was about 45 years old and she was a poet, and she was the last and sole resident of this town. Everybody else had left because you couldn't drive there.

So we took motorcycles and went there and hiked in the last half a mile because you couldn't ride the motorcycle, the trail was so precarious. And we hiked in and spent the day with her, and she had nothing. She lived in a really nice house that had completely deteriorated; there were mature trees growing in the dining room right around and through a dining room table and chairs. And she had visqueened off, like, one room in this huge beautiful old house. It was that era of Japan where it had the grass roofs. So once the roof collapsed, the house quickly fell into rot. So she had visqueened off one room and lived in that. And she was a poet, and the room was stacked floor to ceiling with books. She could hardly get in there. I couldn't even see anyplace that she could have slept except on the floor between stacks of thousands of books.

And we spent the day in there with her, and walking around the town looking at, like, old hotels that had been hot springs that were now ruins. And she lived there, and she talked about she grew a little food and she bought 100-pound sacks of rice and would go into town occasionally. And I had heard about her because she was a well-known hermit. People didn't know her, but they talked about this strange woman that lived in this ghost town by herself.

She had - I brought her coffee, cigarettes, and chocolate, which - because it's tradition to bring something when

you visit somebody in Japan. I never met her, so I didn't know what she'd like, but when I got there and gave them to her, she just casually put them on a shelf with hundreds of other chocolate bars, packs of cigarettes, bags of coffee, pickles, whatever people had brought her, and they had up to 20 years of dust. She hadn't opened any of them. I thought that was strange. She lived alone on the mountain; she probably would like to have a chocolate bar or something. But these were all unopened and hundreds of them that people had brought through the years. Didn't think too much about it, more talked to her about poetry and living alone and survival.

It's a harsh winter and there's a poisonous snake in the area that's very, very deadly. If it bites you, you're dead. And she had caught one and put it in this bottle of sake, which I saw it sitting on the shelf and asked her about it. The snake was coiled up and I said - I forget what type, what it was called in Japanese - but I said, is that a such-and-such snake? And she said, yes. How did you get it in the bottle? And she said, "Well, they live here, and I'm worried that if I get bit I have no recourse. I can't get out of here fast enough to get help."

"So I caught one and put it in a bottle of water for a week so it would cleanse itself, and then took it out of that bottle and put it into a bottle of sake, which would kill it." When she put it into the bottle of sake, it released its venom. By being put into the bottle of sake, it released its venom. "So now I drink a little glass of sake every once in a while to build up my resistance to the venom in hopes - "

MS. RIEDEL: She put a live snake in the bottle?

MR. MARIONI: Yes. This is a snake that if it bit you, it would kill you. And she caught one. First she put it into a bottle of water; then she took it out of that. It was in the water for a week so it could cleanse itself, evacuate its urine and colon, and then she put it into the sake so she got just venom and sake. Then she would drink the sake to build up a tolerance to the venom. Survival.

I've always been interested in survival techniques, because when I was young, I thought I'd be a radical revolutionary and I'd need to know how to hide out in mountains with Che Guevara, so I've always studied survival techniques. I was fascinated by how this woman could live. And she - like I said, she had nothing. And after spending the day with her, as we were leaving, I asked if I could take her picture. She said, okay, and as I focused - she was filthy dirty from head to toe, like Pigpen in *Peanuts*. I don't know if it was that she never took a bath. She certainly never washed her clothes. They were ragged and she was filthy; dirty hair, skin, fingernails, clothes. But she lived in dirt in the crumbling old house.

I was focusing my camera on her, and I noticed she had a T-shirt on with English written on it. I had spent the day talking to her and hadn't even noticed, because I looked her in the eye and that. I'm focusing on this writing on her T-shirt and I realized that it's in English, and in English it says, "Come on, feel rich." It was a profound educational moment. It was a Zen experience for me. Here's a woman that had nothing and wanted nothing, and she's wearing a T-shirt in English that says, come on, feel rich. It really was a bolt of lightning. It was tremendous learning, educational experience. We all want stuff and we have these stupid jokes that whoever dies with the most toys wins. And I'm - had spent this day with her 22 years ago.

Now it's even worse for me. I'm actually hostile to consumerism. Consumerism is the worst menace on the face of the earth; it's raping the planet, depleting the resources, polluting everything, and driving everyone to the poorhouse. Consumerism is a nightmare. But 22 years ago I was not at that point. But to spend the day with this well educated woman who was totally content, peaceful with herself; lived alone and wanted nothing - had nothing and wanted nothing, like I said, didn't even give a second look to my cigarettes, coffee, and chocolate, just set them on the shelf with all the dusty other ones.

She literally wanted nothing, yet she's - I don't know if she even spoke English or knew what the T-shirt said, but it said, "Come on, feel rich." And it's so true. You can be rich just by having an eight-year-old grandson loving you. What greater rich is there than that? You can feel rich by sitting in a creek and just feeling how wonderful the water feels on your aching body. There are so many ways you can feel rich. This life is so full of riches in that way.

Why are we so focused and so driven to acquire material goods, that we've all got to have the latest electronic gadget, the iPod, the Palm Pilots? We've all got to have this stuff. It's so stupid.

MS. RIEDEL: Why do you think?

MR. MARIONI: It's driven by capitalism. It's driven by greed and profits. That's what capitalism is, and advertising. The biggest industry in the world last year, PR [public relations], replaced weapons, which had been the biggest industry for about 15 years, which replaced oil. Last year it became PR - biggest money-generating field on the entire planet Earth. Where's that at, when half of earth doesn't even have drinking water, let alone clean or irrigation water. When half - more than half the earth has never been to school, doesn't have a bank account, doesn't have a job, doesn't have running water, and our goal is to acquire as many consumer goods as possible? It is so fundamentally flawed, and you don't really want to get me started on this subject.

But that woman's, "Come on, feel rich" - I never complained about my financial difficulties after that. Being an artist, every artist has their ups and downs; make money one year, you don't for two years. You borrow money; you cut back on how much you eat, or whatever. You keep going as an artist if you're self-motivated and driven enough to do that. All artists go through some financial struggle.

I often quote John Lennon, who said, the Beatles were an overnight success after only seven years. It's true. We all think the Beatles are a huge success. Well, they were a band for seven years before they got recognition. Some artists never get recognition. Some artists - it's like, I had really good sales the past two years in gallery shows, when I've never sold a lot in the gallery, and I joke, I'm an overnight success after only 35 years. It's like, you can't - I don't - I can't measure it by money or material goods, success.

To me, success is managing your own life, doing what you want to do; finding what you want to do and doing it as well as you can and controlling your own life. That, to me, is success. Life is far more important to me than art. Art is far more important to me than glass. So I work with glass, but I'm an artist. I'm not a glass artist. I work with glass as a medium. I'm an artist. Life is even - my life as an artist is even more important.

My brother Joe, the painter, criticizes me that I could have done much better, because he's got the five-year plan, the ten-year plan. He talks to the right critics, he gets the right catalogues and essays, and he shows in the right museums, and he sells to the right collectors. He's got the plan, the career plan, but he also has never been married, never lived with a partner, and never had children. So he's focused solely on his career. Even if I had never been married, never had children, life would be more important to me than my career. And I do the best I can and I believe that if you're doing what you want to do, that's what you'll be best at doing, because you want to do it, so you'll grow your talent. It's a given. But my measure of success is my life.

So when you get those educational experiences, sure, some of them come from school. I mean, a semester of graduate studies of Wittgenstein was an educational experience for me. It gave me a whole new perception on writing and words, the meaning of words and language, the theory of language. It was an educational experience and played a big role. But meeting this woman - well-educated woman who had nothing and wanted nothing and felt rich was equally as important an experience. It's about life. I mean, a theory of language, of course, is about life, too, but that ability to appreciate what you've got.

It's one of the things after I left the Catholic Church - I wanted religion. I looked at all the religions, from Judaism to Holy Rollers. I looked at all of them - Mormons, Quakers, everything. And Buddhism appealed to me because of that aspect that if you have to shovel shit, learn to love shoveling shit. I agree with that Eastern philosophy. Western philosophy: suffer so you can get into heaven. I don't agree with that. No one should have to suffer. We all do, but what's this business of religion teaching you to suffer so that you can get into heaven, some unknown happiness in the afterlife? Forget it. I'm not interested in that.

But the Buddhists also don't treat women as equals. Men are hierarchy top, women below. I disagree with that. Even though I don't understand women, I accept the fact that they are equals. And so I couldn't be a Buddhist. The closest I got was Quakers, because Quakers don't have any iconography or churches, or anything really. It's just, help refugees. That's the basis of Quakers. Ironically [President Richard] Nixon was a Quaker. But anyway, I didn't - I didn't - I ended up with no religion, and hostile to the Catholic Church.

But you get those educational experiences in so many different ways, and it really comes from stopping and perceiving what's happening. Everybody perceives it differently. My reality is my reality, not yours. You and I could experience - witness the same event and have totally different take on it. It took me until about three or four years ago to realize that your reality is reality. Even though I didn't see it that way, it is reality. It's the way you perceived it, and perception is everything. Perception comes from your past experiences - whether you were molested as a child, you're going to perceive certain areas of your life today differently. I accept that. But it is still your reality.

So whatever we call reality is really an illusion. It's how we perceive it, and yet we call that reality. And we dismiss illusion as having no value. When illusion, like this woman, well-educated woman who had nothing and wanted nothing and felt rich, we would call that an illusion. That's far closer to reality, as far as I'm concerned, than a lot of other things I'm told are reality. I'm not convinced that there is a reality. Who knows what dimension we're in and what universe we're in. As far as I'm concerned, it's all an illusion.

MS. RIEDEL: Does spirituality play a part in your work?

MR. MARIONI: Well, it does, because I think I'm a spiritual person. Because I've rejected religion, it's been hard to believe in spiritualism. But I've eaten peyote; I've found that kind of extraordinary tranquility, harmony with nature as a result of peyote. I often joke that the Catholic Church drove me away from God and drugs brought me back. [Riedel laughs.] Peyote brought me back. Peyote's a holy drug. Indians use it - holy sacrament. I can see why. It's like, I grew up in the city; I loved animals and nature. St. Francis of Assisi was my hero as a little kid, but I grew up in the city. I'm a city boy. So I had fear of snakes, fear of spiders, don't like bats, all the usual

city stuff. The pests.

Well, you take peyote and suddenly that snake is your sister, that spider's your brother, that rock is your brother, that tree is your sister. You see an unbelievable harmony in existence, not only in life forms. Like I say, a rock, you can feel an incredible connection to a rock. It's just in such slow motion, you can't communicate. It has a lifespan of millions of years. It's like if we took one second of our life and slowed that down to a year, you would think we were inanimate, right? You'd think we're a stone. And that's what a stone is. It's had a life; its record of its life and its existence is there on its surface and inside of it. It just has a different sense of time.

And so that spiritualism of understanding that - seeing the universe as a whole - I refuse to entertain the concept of God; I'm totally agnostic. I don't think we have any comprehension whatsoever of God, so it's foolish to assign God any properties whatsoever, particularly to ask him to win the war in Iraq. [Laughs.] It's utterly foolish - but it gave me - I have a spiritual sense. I've had some really uncanny, otherworldly experiences in my life that if I told you, you wouldn't believe me, and I have no way of explaining them in any concrete terms whatsoever.

I don't believe in ghosts, I don't believe in the afterlife, I don't believe in reincarnation, I don't believe in heaven or hell, period, at all. And yet I've had these ethereal otherworldly experiences where things - I've seen things happen; I've had things happen to me that I could not explain. And so I believe in it. Even though I say I don't believe in it, I've experienced it on some level. So I'm a spiritual person. I'm not a religious person.

I try and put that into my work sometimes, because basically my work is about human nature and that's a part - spiritualism, sexuality, ornamentation are all parts of human nature. In my work I - that's what my work is about, human nature.

[END TAPE 2 SIDE A.]

To me, the emotions are the universal language. I'm very careful in my work not to tell you - I'm talking my gallery work, not the commissions, gallery work. I'm very careful not to tell you what to think but to make you think. I know what symbols to use, I can provoke a response, trigger a response, but I don't tell you what to think.

People are constantly - that buy my work - tell me what it means. And I never even thought it.

MS. RIEDEL: What symbols do you use?

MR. MARIONI: Well, a hand is a really strong subconscious symbol. Eyes are really important because I work figurative. I like surrealism. I particularly like Francis Bacon, how he could distort the human figure. You couldn't be sure if he was going up the stairs or down the stairs, but you could still recognize the human figure. So I work figuratively. Not always. That piece on the wall right back there is called *The Premonition* [1981]. The only thing in there are eyes peering out of the darkness of the window.

MS. RIEDEL: This one with the three volcanoes?

MR. MARIONI: Yes. See the window and two eyes? I mean, they're almost not there. Such a minute detail, two little eyes peering out of the darkness of that window. But look at what an emotional response that can trigger, just seeing two little tiny - I mean, they aren't even an eighth-inch - two tiny little eyes peering out of the darkness of that window. There's so much else going on that makes you wonder - volcanoes erupting, snakes coming out of the ground, pitchfork, the shadows, the sky filling with black smoke covering the sun. There's so much going on, and then you see those two little eyes. That can trigger an incredible human emotional response, whether it's loneliness, fear, whatever. Inquisitive, like what's going on outside, whatever. It's a tiniest little detail that means everything.

And so I know some of those things. I've read [Sigmund] Freud and [Carl] Jung, and I know some of those things, so I put symbols into my work that will trigger a response. I can't always tell you what the response will be, but that's why I say in my gallery work, I don't tell you what I think; I try and make you think. And people come up with the wildest interpretations of what had a strong voice to them. People have - people who have bought my work don't buy my work to get a signature piece, like Chihuly. They don't have to have a Paul Marioni. They buy my work because it triggers a strong response, sometimes good, sometimes bad. I had a woman that bought a major piece from me, and she said to me, "I love it and I hate it, but I love it more than I hate it," is what she said to me. I thought, that is so incredible that you would buy an artwork that you felt that way about, but the love of - that loving the piece was stronger than hating the piece.

To me that is 100-percent success, that she wasn't indifferent. She didn't - it wasn't like she didn't care. In fact, she hated it but she also loved it, and she bought it and told me that, because she loved it more than she hated it. Now that is fantastic. What a reward that is to an artist, that you could make something that reached to another human soul with that kind of dramatic response.

MS. RIEDEL: Normally you hope for one or the other.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. Well, I had another woman, she's passed away, but she was a major art collector. She had Warhol, [Robert] Rauschenberg, everybody, and she bought a piece from me. And her husband, who was a wonderful old curmudgeon, called me up after she bought this piece from me. They were in their mid-70s at the time, and his name was Horace and hers was Connie. He called me up and he said to me, "I've been married to Connie for 42 years. I never understood why she collected art, why she had such a passion for art. And she bought that piece from you that you dropped off last week. Now I understand." Incredible.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the piece?

MR. MARIONI: A sculptural piece that I'd made. That's incredible. I mean, he'd been married to her, loved her, and supported her passion for art, and said, I never understood why she liked art and was so passionate and wanted to collect - and the house was packed full - and now I understand, because he saw something in my piece that touched him, touched his soul, made that connection. Which is what art is, a form of communication between me as a human being and you as a human being.

We don't have to be the same sex, culture, religious beliefs, age, financial standing - none of that. All that goes out the window. Art speaks to your soul. Art speaks to you as a human being; it's a form of communication. So I - I want to talk about the experience of being a human being, and our emotions are a common language. That's what we all share. I don't care what age or sex or religion or where we come from or where we're going. So I use symbols for emotional responses, those triggers. I can't always trigger the response that I plan out of you, but I plan to make you respond.

That's why I say, when people buy my work, they related to it. They didn't buy it because they had to have a Paul Marioni. I have had hardly any work in glass collections. Almost everything I've sold my whole career has gone to art collectors - paintings, sculpture, whatever; people who buy art. And I feel good about that.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. MARIONI: Maybe you'll touch on this subject later or not. It's like I said, I tell people I'm an artist. Most of my peer group say I'm a glass artist. I don't. It's not about the material. I mean, it is about the material because glass is unique. It captures and manipulates light, which is unique, and so it is about the material, but I'm making work that I feel is art, not glass.

I look at all the glass around me now, particularly because of 35 years of working hard to make the studio glass movement a success. I certainly don't take credit, but a bunch of us did - Chihuly and Marvin and Dick Marquis and Fritz and me, we were on the roadshow all the time, infecting other people with our enthusiasm to make something happen - truly remarkable that we did make something happen. The studio glass movement is here. It's here forever. Artists will work with glass from now on. Truly remarkable, after 5,000 years of secrecy in glass and not being available to artists except in a few instances of designers, it's truly remarkable that our group was able to accomplish that.

And it's been exciting as hell; made us a really tight family. We all love each other, and it all came out of cooperation, not competition. The people who were competitive, particularly on the East Coast, got left behind. The people, particularly on the West Coast, who cooperated, made it happen. We got museum shows, we got educational programs, we got galleries, we got collectors, we got books; we made it all happen by cooperating and working together as a movement. And I feel so thankful to have been part of a movement that grew roots and is here from now on.

But I look around at all the glass in the galleries, and I have a lot of painter friends, and my painter friends like to call me - call us - the glass holes. It's funny. I'm not offended. It's funny, and they're - they're jealous of our success. I mean, I always remind them of that guy in New York that put a paintbrush up his ass and painted in the '60s, and I go, oh, yeah, any asshole can paint. But it's a mutual jealous thing. I understand their viewpoint.

You look around at glass, a lot of it is shallow. It's just pretty. And why did it get so successful? I mean, it's to the point of overshadowing ceramics, and ceramics has been strong since [Peter] Voulkos, actually since George Orr. But particularly since Voulkos. The number of enormously talented people have worked in clay for the last 50 years is staggering. The clay movement is staggering; it's so far out, overshadows the glass movement.

Why is the glass so popular? Well, it's pretty. People like it. It catches light. Every kid picks up glass off the beach. Glass has a wonderful shiny, glossy surface and lollipop colors. We're suckers for glass. The material inherently draws us in. We're just suckers for it. And that's the success. That's why there are so many glass collectors and hundreds of millions of dollars worth of glass is sold every year in the United States, if not worldwide. It is worldwide now. The Glass Art Society has members from 64 countries. That's a third of all the countries on earth. The other two-thirds live on 50 cents a day and are never going to blow glass. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: What is it about glass that has kept your interest all these years? What is its essence, its strength and its limitations, that have really continued to hold your interest?

MR. MARIONI: Its independence. I said earlier, you could never be a master of the material. You can only cooperate, or hope it cooperates with you. Glass has a mind of its own. It can do the same thing 99 times, and the hundredth time it won't do it.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? I didn't know.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. It's totally got a mind of its own. They call it a frozen liquid rather than a solid. That's all technical stuff that I could explain to you, but I won't bother. But it's a unique material that captures light. Because it captures light, you can manipulate light. I mean, glass can reflect, transmit, or transluce, and Chihuly's genius is that he saw - he was the first person to see the two biggest allures of glass are color and light. And so he blew opaque colors so thin that they became translucent, hold the light in the glass so that they glow, and the color - he's good with color, even though he uses other people like Charlie Parriott or Joan Monetta to do color for him. Chihuly's good with color. He just has staff do color because he's busy.

But he capitalized on the two strongest aspects, the allure of glass: color and light. And did it brilliantly. I mean, I've seen thousands of his pieces and I still look at them and go, those are incredible. I'm not at all sick of looking at them. Dale's a genius. Those are incredible.

The other thing Dale is very good at is pieces that are either really beautiful or really ugly. They're never in between. [Riedel laughs.] That's hard. Most people make in between all the time, and hope for the occasionally really beautiful, and accidentally occasionally really ugly. Chihuly is never in between. It's always really beautiful or really ugly. He's not sure himself which is which, and often asks people, what do you think of this? Somebody will go, oh, that's really ugly, and he'll smile and go, good! [They laugh.]

It's like I often say, sometimes I have good ideas and sometimes I'm full of shit, and I can't tell which is which, so you have to help me out here; keep me in line, tell me when I'm full of shit, tell me when I have a good idea, because I can't tell the difference.

But anyway, that's what glass is, color and light. Color is not so much to me. We talked about this earlier - that after I lived in Mexico, color is very important, but never was. I always like black and white - I still like black-and-white photographs and movies better than color, if they're well done. But light, light is a remarkable thing. Light's one of the last things that we really cannot get a grasp on. Is it a particle, or is it a wave; is it a necessary ingredient of life, and can it travel faster than light, and yes, it can. You project a laser beam through a helium atmosphere and it travels faster than the speed of light. How can you explain that, that a beam of light can hit a receptor before you project it? What kind of sense does that make?

There's a lot of aspects of light. Light affects everything. All the cosmetics women wear, it's all about light, what color you're reflecting in the spectrum in your lipstick, eyeshadow, fingernail polish, rouge. All the - the whole cosmetics industry is built on light.

MS. RIEDEL: I sound like Dolly Parton. [Laughs.]

MR. MARIONI: You don't look like you're a fashion slave. I mean, you're a beautiful woman, but you don't have a lot of makeup on. I mean, that's what it is. I mean, we never think about that, that the whole success of the cosmetic industry is about light, how it reflects off of you. That's why you put all this stuff on your skin, to make you look better, different, whatever; ornament yourself. A color, whether it's eyelashes, eyeshadow, lipstick, nail polish, whatever. It's all about light. It's what reflects, what color is that. Is it sparkly? Is it deep color? All of that.

We don't even - we take light for granted in so many ways, and it affects everything, and we don't have very much of an understanding or grasp of it. So the fact that glass captures light is magic. That's why we pick up that shard on the beach. It sparkled. We're walking along, sunlight; it sparkled. We pick it up, put it in our pocket. That sparkle is that magic that caught our eye and captured our spiritual attention. So it's really more about light. And I often say I work with glass because of light, and because glass captures light, glass can manipulate light. So the cast glass is a bas-relief on a lenslike surface. It not only holds the light in it, it magnifies it. It gets stronger, so it makes the water, the fountain. The cast glass, water rippling down, all those bumps and ripple shapes up and down, coming out of there, they're all not only capturing the available light because there is no lighting on that piece, period.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. This is the piece at the courthouse?

MR. MARIONI: The courthouse, the *Reflection Fountain* [United States Courthouse, USGA, Seattle, WA, 2004].

MS. RIEDEL: Right, and we should say that it's lit by daylight and that's it.

MR. MARIONI: That's it. Ambient light. So, yes, at night there's a few lights in the lobby, of course, but they're nowhere near that piece or focused on that piece. But cast glass, whatever ambient light hits it, it's trapped in the glass and magnified. So it's like a magnifying lens, that bas-relief becomes a lens that magnifies the light. So you can capture and manipulate that light. That's the primary reason I work with glass, is to capture and manipulate light. Color is also, therefore, for me content; image is also there for me, too.

I've worked in other materials and mediums, but that ability to capture and manipulate the light, it's endless. I mean, I could live three lifetimes, I could live to be 300 years old and barely scratch the surface of what light and glass are about and what you can do - what the potential, what is already discovered and can be used, consciously used and manipulated, and what's undiscovered.

MS. RIEDEL: And you've experimented continually -

MR. MARIONI: Continuously.

MS. RIEDEL: - with glass from the start.

MR. MARIONI: Thirty-five, 37 years now I've continuously experimented. I've developed a lot of techniques, and I used to be way more well known for innovative techniques. But after years of saying it's not about the technique, people finally stopped associating me with that. I have a patent, and I've developed lots of things. We've mentioned briefly developing casting, glass casting. I don't take sole credit for that because Howard Ben Tre was working at the same time trying to develop casting.

Howard had been a student of mine way too long ago, 30 years ago or something, and he was interested in developing casting the same time I was, mid-, late '70s. And we cooperated. And many other people helped us out. And I can't even say who had the key to the solution, but the biggest single key - because we worked on - I had a crew of five on my payroll. I don't know how many people were working with Howard. He was on the East Coast; we were talking almost every day on the phone. We worked three months, seven days a week, spent about $20,000.

MS. RIEDEL: And you were collaborating?

MR. MARIONI: Not with Howard. Not with anybody. I hired a crew of five people.

MS. RIEDEL: But you were talking with him every day?

MR. MARIONI: We were talking on the phone, not every day, but about the problems we were having. None of us had met or heard of Bertil Vallien. This was back in the '70s. Bertil didn't come to the United States until '81. Howard and I were both producing cast glass by '78, '79, and so before we met Bertil. It would have been wonderful if Bertil could have come and told us how to do it. I was researching at Corning in their extensive library [Rakow Research Library, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY] on - what's the name? Slipped away from me. Frederick Carter had done, at Rockefeller Center, the cast-glass window in the entryway of the Rockefeller Center about 1930. I forget the architect's name, but Frederick Carter did, the only cast commission he did. And I went and researched his extensive notes, and he had no notes on that cast-glass window. And I read every page of every notebook in their library.

It's interesting because I was trying to find out how we could cast glass. The industry was very supportive. I believed strongly that if we could cast glass, we could make it thick enough that it could work in an architectural setting and eliminate the problems of breakage, whether from vandalism or earthquakes or accidental, whatever. We could solve the resistance to glass by making the glass thicker, and by casting it we could put imagery in or manipulate the light optically. None of us had met [Stanislav] Libensky and Bertil Vallien.

It's funny. I'd been to Sweden, but I had not heard of Bertil Vallien, had not met him and not seen his work. And I had been to the Czech Republic, but by then I'd already - had met Libensky and [Jaroslava] Brychtova, but I had seen their work at the World's Fair in 1967 at Montreal. I knew it was glass, but I had no idea how they did it or what they did or why they did it or anything, but they were the featured artists in the Czech pavilion at the World's Fair. So we were basically - there were no books and we had to start from scratch.

Industry was very supportive because they wanted to see if it could be done. In fact, Spectrum paid the whole $20,000 that I spent, three months, seven days a week with five employees. They covered that cost for me because they wanted to see if I could do it. And I consulted with probably 50 people besides Howard, and Howard consulted with however many.

The turning point came - I was reading one of Einstein's books, and in the book Einstein said, when you get a simple answer, it's God speaking. And we had been going with it, collaborating with industry, newer and newer technologies, more extensive chemical processes, and as soon as I read Einstein said, God - if you get a simple

answer, it's God speaking, I turned around and reversed course, simplify, simplify, simplify, until we got all the way back to the sand and water with a pinch of bentonite, and it worked. So that was three months of seven days a week to get to a simple answer that worked.

MS. RIEDEL: Within three months you had it?

MR. MARIONI: We had it. We got it. And then we started casting. Howard got it, started casting, too, then Bertil came and said, yeah, that's the way I've always done it. [They laugh.] We go, yeah, why didn't you come four years ago? Would have saved me a lot of money and a lot of work. And then Libensky and Brychtova came and went, wow, we've never seen that done before. We don't do it anything like that. We do it completely different. In fact, Libensky and Brychtova, the first time we brought them to Pilchuck and I ladled glass out of the furnace, they were shocked. They had never seen anybody ladle glass. They had never even dreamt of that possibility. It wouldn't have done any good to have met them earlier. They were on a completely different, parallel universe; different track completely. But Bertil would have taken a lot of work, and I was able to show Bertil a few things.

Howard went on to develop monumental sculptures, and I went on to do 30 or 40 architectural cast-glass pieces with Ann [Troutner]. And it was - the learning process is good, and trying to figure things out, particularly when you're successful and come out the other end with a technique that works for what you wanted it to do, is rewarding. But the techniques have always been in the service of the vision. Here's what I want to do; how can I do it.

I was frustrated at not getting public art work because I worked with glass. I was frustrated, so it's like, here's what we can do, make the glass really thick and use it in public. And it took a - it took a while to get the first commission. I think it was '78 or '79, that first commission. That was really -

MS. RIEDEL: Where was that?

MR. MARIONI: The first cast-glass one was for the city of Seattle, for a community center that's since been torn down. The cast window we made has been relocated to the convention center downtown. Corning wanted it for their museum, but they didn't want to buy it. They wanted to show it indefinitely. I told - when they tore down the community center, I said, give it to Corning. I don't care about the money and you shouldn't either. Corning is the best museum for glass. I'd like it to be there. And they said, well, they won't buy it. I said, well, give it to them. What's the problem? You bought it with public funds. They go, that's the problem. We can't give away something we spent public money on. We could settle on a low price, but we can't give it away.

Well, then the convention center stepped in and said, we want it. Don't give it away. We want to display it and install it. So that's where it is now, even though it's completely out of context from its original - where and who it was designed for.

MS. RIEDEL: This is probably a good time to mention that you've done two different, very different types of work, bodies of work, in public art and the gallery art.

MR. MARIONI: Very different. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And the public art has -

MR. MARIONI: Public art, I'm serving the client, whether it's a rich person's private home, a corporate lobby, headquarters lobby, or a public facility like a school or hospital, library. I'm serving the client. I make work that the people that use the facility will relate to. Ann and I are very conscious of, say - Ann Troutner and I have been collaborating for 22 years now on only our commissioned work. We're very conscious of making something that enriches the people's lives.

So if it's a high school, we make something high school kids relate to. If adults don't relate to it, tough. If it's a university, we'll make something intelligent. If it's a police station, we'll make something fundamentally simple - courthouse, fundamentally simple. Occasionally beauty plays an important part. It's not usually our goal, but occasionally it is. But our primary consideration is the people that use that facility. So we make the work for others.

Gallery work - I have the luxury of not being market-driven. Usually by the time my work sells, it's three years old and I'm on to something new and refuse to make more of those. And so my work's not market-driven. And I've been supported by the commissioned work and teaching. I have the complete luxury of doing the gallery work for myself. It's a look into my inner soul, my gallery work. It's my expression of my human nature. And it's for me. If somebody else relates to it, fine.

And a lot of people say, well, you could have been rich. You could have been a success. I say, well, I am rich and I am a success. I measure it differently than you. I'm smart enough to know what I could have made and sold

millions of dollars worth of. I don't have to go any further than downstairs and look at my son Dante. I'm not stupid. I can see how you could do it. Dale - I've been friends with Dale Chihuly for 35 years. I see how you can do it. That's not what I want to do.

I became an artist so I could do what I want to do. When I became an artist, there was very little chance of financial riches. A few people made it. Hardly anybody. And I started in a field that was not promising, film, and then moved right into a field which was not only not promising, was completely unknown, glass. So I did not get into this to make money. I'm smart enough I could have made money, but I feel like I'm fortunate enough that my gallery work's not market-driven. I can make the weirdest stuff I want, and occasionally I do. I have a piece in this room I'll show you later that even my artist friends go, that one's too weird, Paul. And that's all my artist friends tell me that. Well, that was my vision at that moment and I recorded it. I put my vision into reality. That's how - that's what makes me feel good.

Working in the studio is singly it. Everything else sucks. Galleries, collectors, museums, critics, schmoozing, parties, openings - everything else is just work. Working in the studio is pure pleasure. It is such pure pleasure it's almost sinful how much I enjoy it, to be in the studio working, hands-on. No one has ever made my work for me. No one ever will - a few exceptions. When I need certain fabrication or certain type of scale or vacuum-sealed or something, I have to work with others, industry. But the time in the studio is what it's singly about. And that's where I get to put my vision into reality. Once you put your vision into reality, that's the reward. I mean, I can't tell you how many people I know that have been unhappy with their life or their job or something, and I always encourage them to make something with their hands, even if they go out and paint the old car with a brush outside, because you can visually see your accomplishment. And being able to visually see your accomplishment is therapeutic. It makes you feel good. I don't care if you did a good job of it or not, that's up to you, that's your judgment. But being able to see your accomplishment.

And mentally - a lot of people that work mentally, they never put their vision into reality. It's all abstract; it's mental; it's head work; brain work. Not as rewarding. You can make a lot of money and come up with new ideas. But the first time I heard about art therapy, I said, great. Artists need therapy. [Riedel laughs.] And they said, no, we use art as therapy for other people that aren't artists. I go, well, that's a good idea, too, but maybe you ought to have both. [They laugh.]

But I mean, it's true. I've had several people in my life that I've turned on to a hobby. It's like, whatever you want. Carve wood. Make stained glass. Paint. Whatever. Just make something with your hands. It's so rewarding, and for me it's singly that.

So the gallery is a complete luxury. My gallery work is a complete luxury of doing exactly as I want. I'm not at all market-driven. I don't care if I sold all three of those masks that I made. I'm not making masks any more. It's like, I've got a new idea. I'm making kinetic sculpture now. I'm excited about what can be done. I'll make more of them.

MS. RIEDEL: Where do your inspirations for those pieces come from?

MR. MARIONI: Inspirations. You talk, you mentioned earlier - travel is very big. I think travel is probably the best educational experience. I sent my kids off on trips by themselves, together and by themselves separately, and I've taken trips. When I was 15 - hitchhiked around the country, and went to Europe when I was 20, had my 21st birthday in Paris that summer. It's like, to go see another culture opens your eyes to the fact that there are other cultures.

Even if you only see one, you come to the realization that there are other cultures, whether it's African, Asian, whatever, Indian, whatever. It's such a rich educational experience. I've traveled all my life and I love to travel. I'm not at all sick of it and look forward to continue traveling the rest of my life. There are many places I still want to go. I don't even have any idea - last time I counted, about five years ago, I had been to about 44 countries. There's about 188 countries on earth. I've barely scratched what's out there. I still have a lot to see in Africa and South America that I really want to see. Chile is probably the next adventure.

So to go see other cultures and understand the richness of their cultures, food, music, clothes, ornamentation.

MS. RIEDEL: Where have you been in particular that really struck a chord?

MR. MARIONI: Thailand. Thailand was fantastic - Italy, of course, to see the richness of the past, and the Renaissance - 2,000-, 3,000-year-old history. The summer before last, went to Naples and stayed up on the top of the town, the old part, the rough part where the street gangs are. It just felt so wonderful to walk around in 2,000-year-old streets and stay in a 2,400-year-old stone building and walk around these arches, and dark and narrow, where people have lived and celebrated their lives for more than 2,000 years. How rich and wonderful is that? I didn't care if there were street gangs. Good food at the corner delicatessen, good coffee everywhere. I'd stay out until two or three in the morning and walk around. Nobody ever bothered me, but I'm not afraid and I

don't intimidate easily. So I walk by a street gang - go, hi. I'm not going to slink by them and hope they don't notice me. So I don't get in trouble much. I've gotten in trouble several times, but I'm not afraid.

So to feel that richness of thousands of years of life, or go to Thailand and feel that incredible Buddhist sense. Thailand was extraordinary because everybody was poor, but they have plenty of food. What a difference that makes. People are happy, singing, smiling, talking to each other, playing with monkeys and parrots and eating good food. It doesn't matter how poor you are, there's such an abundance of food, everybody was happy. So a poor country where there's no food, it's very, very different.

I had a fantastic experience in Cuba. Ann and I went to Cuba about seven years ago. I've always kind of admired [Fidel] Castro for the fact that he threw out that scumbag [Fulgencio] Batista. I didn't agree with Castro on everything, and it's not like - he's not like a role model. I admired what he accomplished. And so finally after wanting to go to Cuba almost my entire adult life - because when I went to high school, private boys Jesuit school, one of my best buddies was Cuban. He came from a rich family under Batista, lived in Havana, and when he'd go home for Christmas or Easter, he'd come back and tell me he'd been on the rooftop with a sniperscope and rifle picking off troops supporting Castro. So I always wanted to go see why - why this rich kid was fighting for Castro. He didn't need to fight, and Castro was trying to overthrow the riches. But he was my buddy, and so I was always curious what his thinking was.

So finally went to Cuba about seven years ago. Cuba has enough food. Not like Thailand, where it's overflowing everywhere, but they had enough food. Have you been to Cuba?

MS. RIEDEL: No, but I've just been reading about it, and a friend just spent years there.

MR. MARIONI: Remarkable. They have nothing and they're happy. We have everything in the United States, including every neurosis. Here's the Cubans; they've got nothing but sex and music. That's it - enough food to get by. They're all pretty skinny. They don't have an abundance of food, but the weather's good, fruit's plentiful, vegetables, some chicken or occasional pig. They've got enough. They wiggle their backs, they play music, they flirt like crazy, they sing. It's remarkable, the mood in Cuba. People are happy. They've got jobs, they've got education, they've got housing. No prejudice because they're all mulatto. There's no class difference. They're all poor.

They've got - they're the highest educated in the world - highest literacy rate in the world, over 99 percent. It's remarkable. They get free education all the way through college. You can talk to a street sweeper about philosophy or math or poetry. They're all well educated. Seem to like each other. There's no crime. Few taboos. Can't have sex with anybody under 15; that's about it. Can't use drugs - if you do, we'll put you in the hospital and try and cure you, not in prison. It's not a crime against the law. It's a medical problem, drugs. AIDS, almost nonexistent. Somebody surfaces with AIDS, they shuffle them off to this one little town where all the AIDS people are being treated and trying to make their life comfortable, if not curable.

So people aren't afraid of Castro. He doesn't walk around with bodyguards or drive around in a bulletproof limousine. He walks around. He's not afraid of anybody killing him. They aren't intimidated. I asked them why there isn't any crime, and several people said because you get caught, you don't get a trial. You just get tossed into prison. You don't know when you're going to get out, maybe three weeks, maybe three years, maybe 30 years. So why commit a crime if they just toss you in jail? If you commit a crime, you're caught; you have no idea. No justice system. So why commit a crime? It's amazing. You don't feel ever at all afraid.

It's spotlessly clean. They're so poor, they recycle everything, and there's no industry, so their beaches, the south coast of Cuba is the cleanest ecological preserve in the world.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that true?

MR. MARIONI: Yes. No industry. Never been any industry there. It's pristine. And the beaches are spotlessly clean. They must pick up whatever washes in from all the garbage being dumped out of Florida or New York. You wouldn't see a hypodermic syringe or plastic bottle or bottle cap, anything on the beach. Same with the cities. Troops sweep the streets, recycle everything. They all drive old cars. It's remarkable. They have nothing and they're happy. We have everything and we aren't happy. Another educational experience, travel, seeing another culture - how they deal with their life and their problems.

MS. RIEDEL: How long have you had your second house in Guanajuato?

MR. MARIONI: We bought the house in Guanajuato 15 years ago.

MS. RIEDEL: So you go back and forth?

MR. MARIONI: Exactly. November, first of November, it will be 15 years ago. Six weeks short of 15 years. We go

back and forth. Ann - she hasn't been back here in about two and half years. She said she's never coming back. And I plan on closing up Seattle in about two or three years and spending the rest of my life down there. I like it much better in Mexico. I like the culture; I like the people; I like the life. It's cheaper, easier, don't have to make so much money to keep the operation supported. And we have an extraordinary house. My garden - 2,500-square-foot garden that I've been working on - Ann's been working on - Bernardo - for 15 years. It's become my favorite place on this entire planet Earth. I can go sit in my garden at three in the morning and smoke a cigarette and feel complete peace, calm, peace. My favorite spot on Earth, that garden.

MS. RIEDEL: What do you grow there?

MR. MARIONI: Everything. It's somewhere between a formal garden and a jungle. It's closer to a jungle. There's thousands of plants; it's packed.

MS. RIEDEL: Fruits and vegetables as well?

MR. MARIONI: No. They're so cheap at the market. We have several fruit trees, two tangerines -

[END TAPE 2 SIDE B.]

- because we both love tangerine juice. And we have two very productive tangerines - we have kumquat that - because they're hard to find in the stores and we love the taste of kumquats, make preserves out of them, occasionally just cook with them with chicken and just toss them in. We have two types of mangoes. One is just starting to bear fruit, and the other one I'm just getting going. We love mangoes, and they're cheap in the market, but I sprouted seeds. So we have a peach, two plums, and let's see. I mean, the garden's packed - there's over 1,000 -

MS. RIEDEL: And you mentioned that you've grown a sequoia out here from a sapling, from a seed?

MR. MARIONI: From burl, which isn't even a seed; just a slice off the side of the tree. Took a year to sprout a burl, another year to get it six inches tall - another year to get it about a foot tall. Then I put it in the ground 21 years ago, and now it's more than 50 feet tall and growing about eight feet a year. It's a giant. Can't believe it.

Now I find my solitude out there. If I have a blue day or get a little depressed or something doesn't go right, I often go out to sit under the sequoia and rest. Sometimes I'll hug it. I'm literally a tree-hugger. And it's comforting. Sequoias have that furry bark that feels good, and it's just so comforting. I planted my first trees when I was six years old, and I've been planting trees all my life. And so I plant them places. Some of them I've never gone back to see. I have no idea. I see them until they're established, and then I leave and go somewhere else. It's kind of like giving back. So it's nice to - like a sequoia in the city of Seattle. There is one grove of them in the arboretum, but there's none anywhere else in Seattle or the Olympic peninsula. Sequoias aren't native here to begin with. Cedars are. So to have a sequoia here is kind of a treat. It's one of three forms of life that has no built-in death cycle. Sequoias can live forever until lightning strikes, the chain saw, or a landslide or fire.

MS. RIEDEL: I've seen a 3,000-year-old one in Yosemite, in the Mariposa Grove. Extrodinary.

MR. MARIONI: Over 300 feet tall, about 354 feet tall, I think, the last time it was measured. Still growing - over 3,000 years old; no built-in death cycle.

MS. RIEDEL: And just huge; it takes minutes to walk around it.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah. It'll just grow forever. So that's kind of a treat, to plant - to sprout a burl and plant it and watch it grow, and particularly out of context here in Seattle. One day I had the window open here and I heard a woman's voice going, that's the most beautiful tree I've ever seen. I love that tree. Wow, look at that tree, I love that tree, what a beautiful tree. And I looked out the window and it was this old woman about 80, and she had her hands up in the air and she was going, I love this tree. It's so beautiful. It's fantastic. I love this tree. I felt so good about that. She was just an old lady walking down the street and stopped and exclaimed the beauty of this tree. How wonderful is that; this old lady could see that and enjoy it. I do the same thing. I go out there almost every day and thank that tree for being there.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you design your garden in Mexico or has it just evolved?

MR. MARIONI: No, it was there. It was the jungle when we bought it. The house was complete - had been abandoned for a couple of years, several years, and the jungle - the garden was completely overgrown. You have to go down several flights of stone steps down into the garden. We're on a steep hill, and as we walked down, I said to Ann, are there tigers in there? It was a jungle. You could only get in on your hands and knees, crawling under things. It was completely overgrown.

So we crawled around in there and saw what was in there. There were stone walls and paths in ill repair,

disrepair. But it was chock full. But we happened to buy the house at the end of the rain, so everything was flourishing, overgrown; nothing had been pruned. There was one big tree in the garden. I don't remember what kind it was, but there was a wonderful orange tree, and the big tree was pushing the orange tree over the cliff, the hill we live on. Our garden is supported by a 300-year-old stone wall that's 50 feet high. If you walk to the bottom of our garden, it's a 50-foot drop down a stone - 300-year-old stone wall that holds it up. That stone wall got rebuilt two, three years ago by the Mexican government because they own that wall. It used to be the mint where they made silver coins below. The mint's gone and - but the federal government still owns that wall, so they came and rebuilt it about three years ago.

Anyway, this big tree was pushing the wonderful orange tree over - over the edge. So very first thing we did was we asked the neighbor who wanted some work, we need to cut down a big tree. And this old lady sent her son, Jesus - he can cut down any tree. So we say, send him up to the house. A couple of days later and he knocked on the door, a strong man there, and he says, I'm Jesus, and you need a tree cut down? I go yeah. So we walk him down to the garden. As we're walking down the steps, he goes, are there any tigers in there? [They laugh.] Like word for word what I had said. That's the tree. Cut it down. Try not to hurt yourself.

One day he cut that huge tree down. We had a big stack of firewood. Suddenly the garden had more light; the orange tree was saved from being pushed over the edge. Now it still borders on being a jungle, but we've rebuilt all those stone paths, new stone, structural stone walls, rebuilt the terraced walls that were there, put in three or four stone benches. Bernardo's really good with stonework, and he and I love working together. So we'd work in the garden together. He's really good at stonework, so we built maybe four benches in different places where you can just sit, whether it's a really nice view out, or completely covered by a canopy of trees above where you can pretend like you're in the Amazon in our back yard.

MS. RIEDEL: Will you have a studio down there?

MR. MARIONI: Ann and I each have small studios that we use for drawing and painting and designing. We'll never have glass there. Don't want to and don't need to. Get way too much glass up here. So down there I draw and paint for fun, and we do a lot of our design work down there.

MS. RIEDEL: And if you need to do glass, you would just come to a studio up here?

MR. MARIONI: Yes. I actually have a good friend that owns a big glass factory in Mexico City where I worked in '83 when I lived there, and I have another good friend in - it's a high-class factory - glassblowing, casting, everything. I have another good friend in Morelia; that's only about 100 miles. They have a huge fabricating studio because he does a lot of large-scale architectural commissions. And he also says, any time you want to work, I want you to come to my studio.

But we haven't really been looking for commissions in Mexico. There are a few rich people there, and they do put art in public places, but budgets are always so low, it's kind of like we would do it graciously, not - we probably couldn't even make as much money as it would cost us to make it, just because Mexico is a poor country. Their budgets are low. There are few wealthy people and we've made a couple of feeble attempts to meet them, show them what we're doing, but they're mostly in Monterrey, and Monterrey is like a big industrial city and we don't go there. I don't want to go there just to meet the few rich people and hope to get jobs from them.

MS. RIEDEL: So the thought would be, in two or three years, to relocate for good and close up Seattle. You wouldn't be doing many more public art commissions? Getting ready to phase that out.

MR. MARIONI: Probably not. No, probably not. It's possible we'd sort of get more selective about what we did. Now we see each opportunity as that, an opportunity. So we take a lot of what comes along. Somebody comes and says, I want a rose window; I say, I don't do rose windows, but so and so does. Here's their phone number; call them up. But most of them we see as an opportunity that we take.

But no, we'll probably stop doing the architectural work, or just an occasional project that interests us, and keep - Ann and I will both keep doing our gallery work. The goal is once we eliminate the cost of being in Seattle - because we only rent here, we don't own space. I have no desire to live in the Bay Area, where I do own a house, but I'm going to leave that to my kids. The goal is to eliminate the expense of living in Seattle and working and spend the rest of my life in Mexico working and not needing to generate - I don't have to make $50,000 or $100,000 a year just to keep in motion.

I can live in Mexico for practically nothing. Our house is paid for; our taxes are $76 a year, and they think they're screwing us because we're gringos. It was $26 when we bought the house. Now it's $76 a year. I can afford that, $76 a year. Food's cheap and good. I still want to travel, but believe it or not, this summer I turn 65. I got my first Social Security check and I could - my Social Security check is a little over half of my rent here, so it's like, what's plan B? Do I want to stay here and keep working just so I can afford to stay here? Or do I want to go to

Mexico, where I could live comfortably on my Social Security check and do what I want to do?

I'm only still here now, really, because both my kids live in Seattle. They're adults, but I still call them kids - and my grandson. He's eight now, so he's big enough; he can come to Mexico whenever he wants. I'm going to get out of here in two, maybe three years, and spend the rest of my life down there. I'll keep working because I love working. Here I work because I have to work to support what's here. Down there I'll work because I love to work. I'll keep showing.

And I can fabricate. I'm not - I'm no purist. I don't have to work in glass. I could be just as happy with any other medium. I actually really like to paint. I have a tremor that I was born with, and it gets more difficult for me to - because I like detail; tight, clean things, and at 65 it's difficult. My shakes are getting noticeably worse. I've learned to love my wiggles and squiggles and drips and splatters. I don't do watercolor, and I advise people, don't sit too close to me when I'm eating. [They laugh.] I splatter. But I'm starting to like my paintings and drawings that are full of wiggles and drips and splatters. I always wanted to color in the lines.

MS. RIEDEL: In your gallery work you show both paintings and glasswork, yes?

MR. MARIONI: I do, yes. I show drawings and paintings and glass. Yes. In fact, about five years ago I sold most of my drawings and none of my glass. Which shocked me. And other artists bought the drawings. They're cheaper, but I sold them to other artists. I think that show - I don't think I sold a single glass piece out of that show. I showed these, what I call, Whistling Vases. They're whimsical. Everybody thought they were too weird; I said, they're too funny. They're not too weird, they're too funny; they wiggle - do I have one here? Yeah. They're kinetic.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. MARIONI: It's just a butt and lips and they wiggle and -

MS. RIEDEL: Shimmy.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah, shimmy, wiggle. Everybody goes, those are too weird. I go, they're too funny to be weird. Did not sell a single one.

MS. RIEDEL: Yet.

MR. MARIONI: Oh, I've sold them since the show. As I say, it takes about three years to sell. I'm not market-driven.

MS. RIEDEL: It takes about three years -

MR. MARIONI: Three years later, I'm not interested in that work any more, and suddenly everybody thinks that work's what's good. When I made it, a lot of people think, it's too weird. Made this other series that didn't sell that I called Ghosts. They're quite large pieces that I mounted on glass rods so with the slightest breeze they move. You go - [blows] - and these three-foot - some bigger than three feet - pieces would just go like this. I thought, isn't that incredible? I call them Ghosts because they're shroudlike forms, and I go, they're all about the void, what's not there. The whole piece, the concept is what's not there, the void, the missing figure, like a ghost with a sheet over him. And then look, they move, they come to life with the slightest breath.

Everybody's going, I don't have a clue what you're talking about, Paul. I sold one to Elton John. That's the only one I sold, to Elton John. [Riedel laughs.] He came in and saw my show and bought it. I've never sold - I made six of them, and I've got the other five in the studio, and I've shown them a couple of times. People just don't get it. I mean, I can - I can - visually they're beautiful; colors are nice. They're well blown, well made, and they're kinetic and move around, all of that, but I can see that people would have trouble with the concept that they're about what's not there, the void. And I've done that several times.

I made - after a trip to Thailand I made a quarter of a Buddha, head of a Buddha, about 22 inches tall, out of optic - fiber optic glass - flawlessly pure - but it's just a quarter of a head - front corner, quarter of the Buddha. And the two flat sides in here and in here were cut flat, ground and polished perfect, flawless. So when you walked around the piece, the internal reflections, you could see a fully three-dimensional head, but this half of the face from this flat side reflected and showed the full curve of the face. This half of the head here reflected back on the backside, the other cut.

So as you walked around the piece, you could see a fully three-dimensional head of the Buddha. But physically present was only a quarter of a head. So you could see more than was physically there. That's incredible.

MS. RIEDEL: It is.

MR. MARIONI: I mean, to be able to make an artwork that does that, work with optics and light in that way, so that you have to practically touch something like a hologram. You can see a fully three-dimensional head that's not there. I just sold that piece last year. I made that piece in 1988 and it sold to a collector last year. It's like, I don't know. People have a hard time visualizing. It's taken me - I have to learn this lesson over and over. People cannot visualize. So -

MS. RIEDEL: But they didn't have to.

MR. MARIONI: They didn't have to. It's just like, open your eyes. You don't have to think about it. In fact, don't think about it. Just walk around the piece. What do you see? Okay, now touch the piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Were they unnerved?

MR. MARIONI: I have no idea. I can't explain myself, let alone others. I have no idea why. Why couldn't they see that? But I fully understand they can't see it. They can't grasp the concept in the Ghost series. But the concept is the void, the missing figure. What's not there is what the piece is about. The ghost, the departed spirit. People can't grasp that. I don't know why.

MS. RIEDEL: Or they don't want to live with it.

MR. MARIONI: No, they're not spooky. It's not that, I don't think. Who knows?

Twenty-five years ago I saw a test that a Czech architect had devised to see if people could see three-dimensionally, and he claimed to have given the test, I think at the time he said 7,000 people, and that he found that about one percent of human beings could see three-dimensionally. I took that test, and it's a piece of paper, eight-by-11 sheet of paper that's cut and folded to a three-dimensional shape. And I took that test and I picked up a piece of eight-by-11 paper, and cut and folded it to the correct shape; twenty seconds and I got it. It was right. I was really good at geometry. I figured it out mathematically. I saw, well, this line, this edge has to line up with that edge, so cut the paper here and twist it 180 degrees. It was a simple mathematical problem for me; twenty seconds and I had done it.

But it interested me because he claimed that only one percent - I think he said 7,000 people he'd given this test to - could cut and fold the piece of paper. So I started giving it to my students. I'd walk in and show them the picture of how the paper would look folded and give everybody a piece of paper and say, fold it to look like this. I found no more than three percent. I gave it to several - 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 students through the years, and friends, mathematician friends and sculptors and all different kinds of friends. And no more than three percent of people could cut the piece of paper and fold it to what the picture showed.

Ultimately, I concluded that this Czech architect that devised it was correct - people see two-dimensionally. We don't see three-dimensionally. Our brain - first of all, we don't - our brain doesn't get a picture. Our brain gets an electronic impulse. It's only a learned experience. Whatever you were told was brown when you were one year old, or red apple, is a learned experience. Whenever you see that color, you think red. You do not see red. I mean, your brain does not - your eye sees red, transmits an electronic signal to your brain. Your brain has a learned image of red.

So the Czech architect is right. The brain fills in. The small cow is farther away than the big cow, because cows are all about the same size. So the brain fills in and we think we see three-dimensionally because of the brain. The brain teaches us three-dimensionally. He's right. We see two-dimensionally. And so I always expect other people to see things, but time and time again - Ann is really good at rendering, drawing to make it look like the object, not just drawing. She's really good. She's trained as a scientific illustrator. She does all our final drawings. Ann will make a drawing that is practically a photograph of our project.

We show that to the client or committee; this is what it's going to look like. And they approve it and we build it and we install it and have a dedication and the committee comes. Every time they go, we never dreamt it would look like this. It's like, Ann showed you a drawing that is practically a photograph. I mean, her rendering is so good. And every single time they go, I never dreamt it would look like this. People cannot see.

So it doesn't really surprise me that that quarter of a head took from '88 to '05 to sell. What's that - 17 years to sell. And the ghost, I've only sold one of six ghosts. It really doesn't surprise me. I think because I can see it, everybody else should see it, but that's not true. Like I said about reality. It's your reality. It's my reality. But it is not reality. It's our perception based on our experience.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm going to pause just for a second.

[Audio break.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel interviewing Paul Marioni at the artist's home and studio in Seattle, Washington, on September 19, 2006, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

And we're going to start this morning's conversation with a discussion of the 85-plus commissions that you've done over the past two and a half decades.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. When we start a tape, I always think of that Bob Dylan record, where it starts out, "Are we rolling, Bob?" [They laugh.]

So the commissions, well, Mija, you just remarked that at 85 in a career it seems a lot of commissions. Actually, it doesn't seem like a lot to me. Now it's over 90, actually. But maybe that's because I've always been interested in doing commissions, and did my first one immediately after my first gallery show in '71, '72. A person had bought something out of the John Bolles show, my first show, immediately commissioned a piece for their house. So it started right off. And I kind of took it for granted and saw it as another opportunity.

But they had a specific request and reason. It was to commemorate their 25th wedding anniversary, so it made me think a lot about the fact that a commissioned work is for a client and the gallery work is for myself, and hopefully I'll find a client, someone that relates to it. But the gallery work was strictly for myself. So it made me think about that concept, that this is for someone else. I need to make something that they appreciate, not something that I'm satisfied with. I mean, I have to be satisfied with it, but primarily it's the client.

So in the early '70s I did several commissions for private homes. Around '76, I think, I did my first public one for Stanford University [Palo Alto, CA]. They were doing a remodel of a building that had been their basketball stadium and was going to become administrative offices. So I did, I think it was, two windows at the entryway with a basketball theme, but the figures in the pictures were just clear window glass. So it was kind of like the ghost or the memory of the building having been a basketball stadium.

And on the private homes they were varied. Once I did - one I did for a home in Berkeley. The husband of a couple commissioned the work, two sidelights for the entry. I did a rather bizarre set of windows for them that was, like, underground, both the windows. The house was up in the Berkeley Hills and perched up on a high foundation, so it really set up above the ground, almost in an exaggerated way. So I did the two windows to the entryway like you were looking underground. So it was like strata of the earth, differing colors, with objects that had been lost, like an archeologist would find.

At the time I had a doctor friend at a hospital in the Haight-Ashbury that worked the night shift and would let me come in and use the X-ray machine to x-ray anything I wanted. And so I would laminate these X-rays. I remember I took my cat in and x-rayed it, and a friend of mine had a gun. I've never owned a gun, but I took the gun in and x-rayed it, like silverware and all kinds of objects. And then I put those in the window. It's like the recorded history of archeological history of the ground under the house. He loved it, and his wife hated it. I wish they'd both loved it. I'd be much happier if they had, but he loved it. He was adamant that it was perfect and I'd done a great job. And she never came around.

So I've had a couple of instances like that, but mostly I've been really lucky and everybody's loved the work I've done for them. Moved in the mid-'70s, in California, myself and probably 20, 30, 40 other artists petitioned the legislature to get public arts programs into California. I was aware, very aware of what Seattle had done and was starting in other places around the country. And I've always believed strongly in the public art program because I feel like art enriches our lives, consciously or unconsciously.

And the other thing was I felt like with the modernization, we were losing our landmarks. It's like every corner had a Seven-Eleven, a bank, and a gas station. So we were kind of losing the big elm tree or the big rock or whatever kind of defined landmarks in your communities. I felt like public art programs would address that issue; make something that people remember.

After, I can't remember now, a year or two, we finally got public art program laws passed in California, and immediately Ronald Reagan got elected governor and canceled all the funding. It was very frustrating. So for that reason and several other reasons, I moved to Seattle, because Seattle had a great, established, well supported public art program.

MS. RIEDEL: This was late '70s?

MR. MARIONI: I moved to Seattle, like, December 28, '78, and I'd been teaching at Pilchuck, so I'd been coming up here every year; started in '74, the first summer. So I'd been spending my summers in Seattle, or the Northwest, and I'd go camping out on the Olympic peninsula or west coast of Vancouver Island and hang out in the area and made a lot of friends.

It seemed like Seattle had a thriving, exciting underground art scene, and no - they didn't look to New York, and

they didn't have a superstar system where a few people were really successful and everybody else struggled. Seattle, everybody got a little slice of the pie. No superstars - in fact, still true today. You could say Chihuly's a superstar in Seattle, but Chihuly's a superstar in the world. He happens to live in Seattle. He doesn't show as much in Seattle. He doesn't command all the attention here at all. It's still true today. A very exciting underground art scene, very supportive of regional art, and the public art program has suffered the last couple of years, mostly because of budget cuts.

But at that time it was booming, and because I have always been outspoken and fought hard for legal rights of artists, copyright and protection and trying to get public art programs started, they were very gracious and welcoming to me when I moved to Seattle, the art community. They knew who I was and they were happy to have me here. I immediately got a commission.

MS. RIEDEL: Which was that?

MR. MARIONI: It was for the Delridge Community Center. At that point I'd been struggling to get public art commissions in the few places that had them, primarily because I worked with glass, and they would always say, well, glass - we can't put that in a public building because of vandalism or accidental breakage. So I had already started thinking about cast glass. I'd seen Lee Lawree building, Rockefeller Center, in New York that Frederick Carter had done a monumental cast-glass window for, and I was very interested in the possibilities of the architectural use of glass being in cast glass.

Well, because I hadn't done it, and Carter had only done it the one time and that was in around 1929, it was hard to convince public art programs and architects that glass was a viable material and particularly in cast glass thick enough that you couldn't break it by punching it, kicking it, or with any object you carry in your pocket short of a .45 or nine-millimeter. But eventually I got a project where when I went - three finalists were interviewed. When I walked into the interview, the architect committee said, we're not using glass because it's breakable. I go, well, you haven't even given me a chance. I haven't opened my mouth yet. It's first thing. I said, I'm going to challenge you to open your mind and listen to what I have to say. I think we can develop cast glass - I was overly self-confident - and solve that problem. And besides, cast glass offers the opportunity of capturing and magnifying the light, so it works well in any light situation. Won't need special lighting.

MS. RIEDEL: That's been true for all your pieces. You've always used the ambient light.

MR. MARIONI: It's always true. I've never required special lighting. Ever. Not once in 37 years. I work with available light. If they have ceiling light, I look at what kind it is, what color it will be, but mostly I prefer natural light. And I understand light pretty well, more than most people. It astonishes me how few glass artists even think about light. I've asked everybody, what do you think about light? The only one that gave an extremely intelligent response was Stanislav Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova, who's worked with cast glass for many, many years and knew very well how to manipulate light by forming the glass.

But other people, like Pino Signoretto, who's worked - solid work, glass, clear glass in Murano his whole life - when I asked him, he said, I don't understand your question. I said, well, what do you think about optics? You work with solid, clear glass. What do you think about how the light works in your piece? He said, I've never thought about it. He thinks about the shape, the muscle tone if it's a woman's figure, are the breasts anatomically correct, or the leg muscle anatomically correct; if it's a crab, is the claw anatomically correct; if it's a horse, is the neck, mane correct? And he said he'd never thought about light. I've asked a lot of artists, and I'd say out of the thousands of people working with glass today, no more than a handful, literally five of the artists, work with glass because of its ability to capture and manipulate light.

Subconsciously we all know it does that. But you've got to be conscious to know how to manipulate it. And I felt cast glass really was the answer. So I was extremely self-confident and proposed doing a cast-glass window for the Delridge Community Center. And the architect liked the fact that I openly challenged them, openly and immediately challenged them, and smiled and said, well, you told me to open my mind. I will. Let's see if you can do this.

The Spectrum Glass Company, I talked to them about it, and they said, we haven't got any idea how to do it, but we'll finance it. You come and work at our factory; we'll pay the bill. You develop the cast glass. So a crew of - I hired five of my artist friends to be my crew, and we worked three months, seven days a week at Spectrum, at their factory. They built me a furnace, an annealer, and gave me all the hot glass I could use. Industry was very cooperative. I'd worked with industry several times up to that point, and it was very interesting how industry came around.

When I started in late '69, industry wouldn't talk to us - wouldn't let us in or any of my friends that worked with glass. They were very, very guarded. Glass had been a carefully guarded industrial secret for 5,000 years, and who were these young upstarts that were coming along trying to steal the fire, was basically their attitude. I had applied to work at the A.C. Fischer [A.C. Fischer Glashutte, Bramsche] factory in Germany because they made

sheet glass and they'd been making it for hundreds of years, what we call antique glass; it's hand-blown sheet glass. They said, absolutely not. We've never let an artist in here and we never will. And they'd been there, like, I don't know, 400 years doing that. So I said, okay.

But by about '77, '78 we were making incredible gains, the glass artists, because we were cooperating. We were meeting and talking to each other, Glass Art Society. We'd meet artists from all over the country and a few from Europe or Japan, and we'd talk about what we'd done and what we could do and what we learned and where - how to mill red glass and where to buy supplies and which galleries weren't paying you, and what materials were out there. So we pretty quickly out-distanced industry. And in '76 I got my first National Endowment [National Endowment for the Arts] grant and applied to A.C. Fischer to work in their factory, used the grant to go to Germany and work in their factory.

Singly because of Rosemarie Loo from Emeryville, who was buying glass from A.C. Fischer and knew me and knew my work, and she told Fischer, let this guy in. He's blazing a new trail. So they agreed and let me in. I was the first person to ever walk into that factory. And I worked there, I believe, it was five months. And they were going to bill me. I had a National Endowment grant; they were going to bill me at the end. I was only supposed to stay three months, but at the end of the three months, I was trying some new experiments with color, and they were very excited about the results and asked me to stay on and continue my experiments. So I did, wondering if I was going to be able to pay for another month or two of working in the factory.

We did not firmly establish a price. I had my fingers crossed that the National Endowment was enough money to cover, and I stayed in a farmhouse with a family that rented rooms out. So I was starting to sweat it. I stayed on the fourth month and into the fifth month and was starting to worry about costs. Finally I finished up my work and my experiments and crated up all the glass I wanted to take back to California and went into the office and asked the boss, I've got to pay my bill because frankly I'm not even sure I have enough money because I stayed longer. He reached in the top drawer of his desk and pulled my bill out, waved it in front of me so fast I couldn't see the numbers, and then proceeded to tear it up. And I go, what are you doing? He said, I'm tearing up your bill. I go, well, I agreed to pay. He said, we got as much out of you as you got out of us, so it's free. Enjoy the rest of your stay in Europe. So I lucked out.

Well, kind of the same thing with Spectrum and developing the cast glass. We worked seven days a week for three months; we were terribly frustrated. Industry was giving us all these newest materials, zirconium - and saying, try this for a wash, or mix this in with your mold material. The more complex it got, the more complex the problems got. It just was getting worse and worse and worse. We were not making progress. After about two months I went in to the owner of Spectrum. At that time one of them was a man named Jerry Rhodes, and I said, Jerry, we're spinning our wheels. We're working our butts off, but we're not making progress. The problems are getting bigger and more complex. And so I'm - I'll be very frank; how long can you support this endeavor? And he said, don't waste my time; get back to work. So I said, okay, and went back out.

And I think maybe on tape yesterday I said Howard Ben Tre was on the East Coast trying to develop cast glass also, and we were frequently on the phone talking about the problems we were facing. And I happened to be reading a book by Einstein. I can't remember which one it was because I've read several. And in that book he said, when you get a simple answer, it's God speaking. Well, what a revelation that was, and I immediately told the crew we were going in the wrong direction. Industry's feeding us these new materials. The more we use them, the bigger the problems get. We're reversing course and we're going back - simplify, simplify, simplify -

[END TAPE 3 SIDE A.]

- we've got to get this problem back to a realm we can understand. So we ended up - we went just to sand and water with a pinch of bentonite, a clay binder, so it would have some body to it and ability to compress and make a mold out of it. Well, shazaam, or whatever they say; it worked. When we got back to the simplest thing you could possibly do, it worked. So Einstein was exactly right. When you get a simple answer, God's speaking, and that's been a kind of fundamental life lesson for me.

I realized that that applies in many ways, because life has gotten so complex, and our interpersonal relationships have gotten so complex, and after 100 years of Freud we think we're capable of analyzing everything. Everything gets more complex all the time, when a lot of times if you take a very complex problem and take it apart, it's really a couple of simple problems. Maybe more than a couple, but it does have simple parts. Then you can solve a simple solution for a simple problem. So it's applied in many areas.

So three months and we were able to successfully start casting glass and do the project for the Delridge Community Center. Years later, Jerry - Jerry Rhodes would never tell me what he had spent on us. Years later, after he retired and I made a window for his home as a thank-you gift, I pressed him on the issue, and he said about $20,000. I said, you spent $20,000 on believing in me? And he said, two things, Paul; I do believe in you. You were a bright young man and I thought you could accomplish this. The other thing you have to understand

is in industry we do the same thing 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, year after year after year. Frankly, we're all bored to death. Having you in here, struggling, floundering around, flailing and cursing and eventually finding your success was so refreshing. That alone was worth $20,000. He said, everybody in the factory was watching you. He said, they're all bored to death. They're all standing around doing their job, bored to death. So frankly, you were our entertainment and you were well worth $20,000.

And it's kind of the same with the guy in Germany, saying the same thing. Tearing up my bill and saying, we got as much out of you as you got out of me. In fact, the chemist at the factory in Germany was very, very old, a chemist that had worked in the glass industry for 50, 60 years. I don't know if he worked for A.C. Fischer that whole time, but when I was doing my color experiments, a couple of times I'd go to him, because I know nothing about chemistry, or very little. I struggled through chemistry. By the way, Fritz is really good at chemistry. Fritz Dreisbach is responsible for a lot of what's happened in this melting glass and colors. He's really good at chemistry and helped all the rest of us out with his knowledge. But the chemist there, I'd go to him and a couple of times I'd say, well, I want to mix this with that. A couple of times he'd go, well, that won't work because of the reaction of lead and gold or whatever to each other. I'd go, well, can I try it and see it? He'd go, sure. Yeah. Waste your time.

And a couple of times we had startling results that neither he nor I predicted. The glass did something totally different than what he thought would happen, and totally different from what I thought would happen. And at the end of my stay in Germany he called me aside one day and took me out for a beer and said, I've worked in the glass industry my entire career, and he said, you taught me a lot. I go, how could I teach you a lot? He said, because you didn't know what you were doing and so you tried things that I wouldn't have tried because I thought I knew what I was doing. He said, you taught me that I don't know what I'm doing. We do need to keep investigating, experimenting, and learning. He said, that's what you taught me. So he bought me a beer and toasted to me and told me I taught him a lot.

All I taught him was how to screw up and make a mess, which I did a lot of. We had a couple of startling successes and a lot of messes.

MS. RIEDEL: Can you give an example of a startling success, and explain what had drawn you to this particular factory in the first place?

MR. MARIONI: Well, I went to the factory initially because they hand-blew sheet glass. It's called antique glass. It's not old. It means they blow a cylinder, cool it off, cut it, heat it up, and then roll it to a flat sheet. It's for the stained glass industry, called antique glass. So I felt that rather than take all the sheets of colored glass and cutting them up and making a stained glass window and being confined to the lead line, the black line work in the stained glass window, I could eliminate the lead line by putting all the color and imagery into the sheet as it was being blown. It had never been done before.

But I got the National Endowment in '76 and I said, I'm going to spend this on trying to make this work. So I did some small experiments at CCAC in Oakland. I was teaching there at the time and blowing glass, and so I did prototype tests, and it looked very promising, in fact. I don't know if you've interviewed Marvin or not, but he'll probably remember my very first test was to put my name, Paul, into a blown glass piece. So I sandblasted out, like cameo cutting, multiple colored pieces of glass; I sandblasted out the word "Paul" and then heated it up and started my bubble and rolled it onto the bubble and blew out a vase. And it's like writing your name on a balloon, as you blow it out, it stretches and gets larger.

It was luaP, backwards, L-U-A-P instead of Paul. Marvin got a big laugh out of that. He was there watching to see what was going to happen. I finished the luaP piece, and Marvin, of course, had a huge laugh and enjoyed ridiculing me that I spelled my own name backwards. [They laugh.] But it was another one of those eureka moments - hey, this is going to work. Yeah, I screwed up, but it's going to work.

So I did more little tests and then got the National Endowment, go to Germany. We'll make sheets of glass that are finished windows. And we did. And it worked. And had a show at Berkeley Art Center of all that work when I came back from Germany.

And so it was proven; I could eliminate the lead lines. And I got a U.S. patent on that, that process of putting specific imagery into glass. I have to say that getting the U.S. patent was strictly an ego gratification. Nothing else. I wanted to be able to say I had a patent. So I fought hard to get it, spent some money, and eventually was awarded a United States patent on the process of putting specific imagery into glass.

So that patent never made me any money. A few artists gave me royalties off of sales of their work after they used it, and then it became so common usage that nobody knew who started it, or that they should pay me any royalties. So whatever - I spent a couple of thousand dollars, I probably made back five, $600 by the graciousness of a few artists who appreciated the fact that I showed them how to do it.

And the patent officer said to me, when they finally, after four applications, they finally granted the patent, the patent officer said to me, only one in 7,000 patents makes money. But that's like the - what do they call that, solenoid, used to be in computers, the little cylinder with wires coming out of it. The first computers had - not a solenoid, what did they call that? Anyway, he cited that as an example, that the guy that invented it had no idea what it could be used for, but now it was going - they were making millions of them, going into all the computers, and he was making millions of dollars. So he said, one in 7,000 patents makes money, [telephone rings] but that one makes a lot of money. So don't get your hopes up. And I said, thankfully, I have no hopes or expectations of making money. It's strictly an ego trip. I want a patent. I want to be able to say I have a patent.

Dominic Labino, one of the founders of the studio glass movement - not my teacher but certainly an important person at the start of the studio glass movement - had, like, 200 patents, so he was like the patent king, and he made millions of dollars. I can't tell you the fluorescent tubes, whatever he - [telephone rings] - I know he did the shuttle, the tiles on the face of the space shuttle. Invented -

MS. RIEDEL: Shall we pause?

MR. MARIONI: Industry did a complete turnaround. By the mid - late '70s they realized we were outdistancing them, and industry was extraordinarily cooperative. I tried to develop cast in graphite, and of all strange things, Nabisco makes graphite, makes cereal and graphite. I don't know why that is. And that was close to a monumental disaster. It made me realize I should not screw around with things, chemical processes, that I don't know enough about because they - they sent me a formula for 1,000-pound batch, but I didn't have all the money to buy all the ingredients to make 1,000 pounds, so I thought, I can afford to buy the ingredients for 100 pounds, which was like a couple hundred dollars, and I'll do my tests.

So I took one-tenth of everything, mixed it all together, and before I could pour the last ingredient in - it was in a five-gallon steel bucket; my crew was there with me - and before we could pour the last ingredient in, it started smoking, and then the steel bucket started glowing red, and I said, let's get the hell out of here because I know that steel doesn't glow red until 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit, and this bucket of chemicals I was mixing was - glowed red. So I said, let's get the hell out of here.

So we ran outside and peered through the window and watched this thing glow red-hot for several minutes. I said, let's go eat dinner. We came back and it cooled off. I called up Nabisco and said, what happened? I didn't get to mix the last ingredient in. The whole mixture got so hot. And the guy said, you are so lucky. If you'd mixed that last ingredient in, an explosion - he said, you had a five-gallon bucket; the explosion would have leveled about a city block. They would not have even known how many people were in the building. He said, you are so lucky you stopped. And I go, well, what happened? And he said, well, you tell me. I said, well, I took your formula, I reduced everything to 10 percent to mix 100-pound basket - he said, stop. That's where you made your mistake. You cannot reduce that formula. That formula we gave you is for 1,000 pounds. By reducing it, you pumped up the chemical content way beyond the point of safety or process.

So I thought maybe I'd better cool it - [they laugh] - better quit trying things I don't know anything about. Well, I didn't quit trying things I didn't know anything about, but I quit trying chemical processes that I don't know anything about. I still do a lot of stupid things, but not to the point where they wouldn't know how many people were in the building after the explosion.

But industry was - and a lot of times - what's that place in New Jersey - Johnson's Atelier, Johnson, Philip. In those days you could call the Johnson Atelier and ask them a question about materials or techniques, and I did frequently. And often they'd say, well, that's going to take about 45 minutes to explain. I'll call you back. And they'd put it on their dime. That's - in those days we were paying long distance, fairly exorbitant daytime rates across the country. I'd hang up, and they'd call me right back and then spend 45 minutes explaining some technical process or material use to me. They were a wealth of information. Johnson funded that. They had a huge library and very skilled technicians.

Other times, like when Loctite first developed their anaerobic glue, they really had no idea how it could be used. So I was one of the first people to start using it, and I had a lot of questions for them. Particularly I had a situation where we did a commission for a television station in New York [*Umbellar*, WIXT-TV9, Syracuse, 1985], and I needed to use their glue to glue all the large glass sculpture, glue it all together on site. I couldn't put it together and ship it. It was too complex and fragile and weighed too much. I had to go on site and put it together, and I could not do it outside and move it inside. Had to be built inside.

So I talked at length to people at Loctite, and they couldn't help me. They kept saying, well, use a helium and neon light on it because it's close to sunlight. I go, yeah, but what temperature's that generate? Well, 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit. Well, I can't put that against the glass. It will - the glass will break. I got nowhere with them. They really had no idea how to use their product. They developed the product and put it on the market and said, let's see what happens.

And same with General Electric - I called General Electric and I said, I'm stuck in a situation where I cannot use sunlight. I know sunlight's 360-nanometer wavelength - and that's what sets the Loctite, the wavelength of sunlight, the anaerobic, meaning it's in the absence of air. So you have to have very good, close joints and put the glue in and press any air out, and then you have to expose it to sunlight; the wavelength of sunlight sets it instantly.

So I called General Electric, got through a maze of bureaucrats, all the way to the scientists in the laboratory. And I came away from that experience that these guys had never been out of the laboratory. [Laughs.] They knew light bulbs unbelievably, but they didn't know how to dress themselves. They were like the idiot savant, or Einstein, who also couldn't dress himself. They were lost in some abstract land. So I said, basically all I need to know is which - what source of light would give me 350-nanometer wavelength. And they said, no one has ever asked that question before. I go, you're kidding. You've been making light bulbs for 100 years, or 75, 80, 90 years, and no one's asked that question? No, it's not important; it's not relevant to what we do. I go, yeah, but somebody must have figured that out. And he goes, can't help you; don't know.

So I'm sitting in New York with all the pieces of this commissioned sculpture and I'm thinking, what the hell can I do now? I guess I'm going to have to take it outside, put it all together, glue it, and hope we can move it inside without destroying it. It was too complex and too fragile to move; too heavy and big - seven feet tall and several hundred pounds, and relying on the glue to hold everything together. Now I know the glue would have been strong enough. I could have done that. But at the time I'd never used this type of glue - adhesive, I should call it. Actually a lot of people don't like adhesive. They call it chemical bonding. That's the PC term - I was chemically bonding this piece of sculpture. Now I know it would have worked outside, but at that time I was too afraid to take a chance.

So on a whim I got the yellow pages of the phone book and called suntanning salons, and the very first one I called, I said, this is going to be really - sound really strange and I don't want to explain to you what the problem is, but do you have any idea what bulb would give me a 350-nanometer wavelength? And the guy said, as a matter of fact, I do. We have a black light that we use for tanning; it's a type, and it has the 355-nanometer wavelength. And I go, well, that's probably close enough. And I said - he goes, would you want to come in for treatment? I go, no. Do you want to rent me that lamp? And he goes, well, that is an unusual request. I go, well, how much is a treatment? He said, 10 bucks. I go, how long is that? Forty-five minutes. I go, how about I give you 20 bucks and bring the lamp back within two hours? He goes, okay.

And so it turns out he was trained in Sweden for sun anning salons, and of course they don't want to cook their clients. So he knew everything about wavelengths, what type - everything about sunlight and everything about tanning lights. So I sped over there, got the lamps; raced back; glued everything together; flipped the light on; it set immediately. I let it sit there for like an hour or so. Had a cup of coffee, smoked about two packs of cigarettes, and unplugged the light; tested it, pushed on it, pulled on it. It was set. It was firm. It wasn't going anywhere. Raced back to the tanning salon with their lamp and lucked out again. Just totally lucked - thanked my lucky stars, just on a whim called this tanning salon after hours on the phone with scientists in the laboratory at General Electric, and lucked out to hit a guy that had been trained in Sweden and knew exactly everything about it.

So General Electric's black light fluorescent tube is a 355-nanometer wavelength. Close enough. And so - when I got back to Loctite and talked to them about it, they said they had all these other type of lamps, but they weren't - nobody was using them for glass, and they could use 1,500-1,700-degree lamps to cure, or set their chemical process. So they were very interested, and they did their own test, and about a year later they called me up and said, we've done all these expensive tests, and really, if you do it in sunlight, it will set in a couple of seconds, two or three seconds, but you should leave it in sunlight for 45 minutes or an hour to fully complete the chemical process. And you're right about the black light. It also sets it within two or three seconds, but he said, we found that you should leave the black light on for four or five hours because that will complete the chemical process.

MS. RIEDEL: And this piece was in Syracuse?

MR. MARIONI: It's in Syracuse. It's a television station, big piece of sculpture titled *Umbellar*.

MS. RIEDEL: Still there and -

MR. MARIONI: I guess. I haven't been there in years, but yeah, I guess it's still there, in their lobby.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was it called?

MR. MARIONI: *Umbellar*. U-M-B-E-L-L-A-R, which is like changing from the pistil into the flower. It's the process where a flower opens from the pistil - that's the name of that process. It's kind of like a flower that's open. I like words like that.

Our project in Texas is called *Consilience*, and that's a word that was coined by William Whewell in 1840 during the period of Enlightenment to mean the unity of knowledge. Once I found that word - I used it in high school. I used to read the dictionary just for fun and had a huge vocabulary. Of course, at 65 years old my vocabulary is substantially diminished, but I always liked words that nobody knew that were onomatopoetic. That sounded like what was happening - umbellar, the process of the pistil opening into the flower. It's a beautiful word.

So industry has been really [telephone rings] supportive and welcoming, and the basic fact is that they are bored to death doing what they're doing, or they've developed new products that they want to see what new uses people have for them. So they've been very helpful to me; financially, informationally, technically, very helpful. Mostly it was my own stupid self - confidence that I could do it. Blunder ahead. I made $5,000 mistakes. But I continue to have that self-confidence, and if I have a vision, I'm going down that road to try and accomplish it. And naiveté has paid off, and the fact that I'm a very lucky person overall. I'm a lucky man. I thank my lucky stars all the time, and my guardian angels. I don't believe in guardian angels, but my butt's been saved way too many times. [Telephone rings.]

Two years ago I broke my neck, literally, in Amsterdam in an accident. I didn't even know it. I broke the second vertebra, which is exactly at the base of the vertebrae where the spinal column's attached. I did what Christopher Reeves did, same injury Christopher Reeves, paraplegic for seven, eight, 10 years and died. I'm sitting here perfectly fine and I did the same thing he did. So how lucky is that? Broke my neck, didn't even go to the doctor for about 20 hours. I often jokingly thank my guardian angel, because I don't really believe in guardian angels, but if they're out there, mine has had to work overtime to save my butt.

I joke that my guardian angel often tells me, don't do that, Paul. Whispers in my conscience, don't do that, Paul, and then I go ahead and do it, and my guardian angel forgives me; saves my butt and forgives me. What's better than that? What could be better than that? You screw up and they forgive you. That's the ideal situation. I don't intend to screw up; like I say, I don't intend to piss people off. I'm just frank - say what's on my mind. And I figure we don't have to agree. If we have the same goal, we want to successfully accomplish this, so let's talk about it. We don't have to agree. In fact, often I like people I don't agree with more because it kind of gets boring to just be around people that think alike. I never joined a club for that reason, even though - whatever I might be interested in - yes, occasionally it's fun to go talk about Porches or casting glass or whatever, but it gets boring quickly. So I've often had friends I don't agree with - I'm very fond of. My conservative Republican friends, I chide them and say, it's curable. Your problem is curable.

So the commissioned work exploded after that, once we did the cast glass and everybody saw it and it got a lot of publicity. I told you last night Paul Gardner came out from Washington, D.C., from the Smithsonian, to see me because he saw my cast glass published, and he'd been a young intern working with Frederick Carter on the Rockefeller Center project. Which was very interesting for me, because here I'd already gone through all the problems in trying to figure out the process and then came to a successful solution and executed the first work, and it got published and Paul Gardner came out and talked to me about all the problems Frederick Carter had trying to develop the same thing, and how he did it completely different from me.

Then Stansilav Libensky came from the Czech Republic to see me because he'd seen this cast work published, and I established a deep friendship with him and respect for him. Same thing. He had been casting glass a completely different way than I had. Suddenly the public arts commissions were listening. It was no longer a possibility; it was now a given. And we got a lot of work. Actually, this was before I met Ann. I started getting a lot of work.

It was interesting because at that time architects were not receptive to working with artists because I hadn't - not because they'd had bad experiences, just because they hadn't done that. And so - and it was also late '70s, early '80s, whatever. They called that postmodern, the glass boxes. They really weren't interested in any type of ornamentation and they saw artwork as ornamentation. It took a couple more years - we had immediately - actually Buster Simpson had a really interesting comment.

He said that they should hire the artists and let the artists pick the architect. Which was a very interesting comment. Not practical; everybody laughed, thought he was joking, but I thought about it and I said, I know that you think Buster's joking, but really, why not bring the artists and the architect together in the beginning and have a design team and see what could happen? You have the possibility of using construction budgets to complement the art budget, and if the architect and the artist work successfully together, you're going to get a whole greater than the parts.

And the Seattle Arts Commission listened and said, okay, we'll try that. We'll set up - I think it was four projects to be that way and you're going to be one of them. And so the first one I did was for Police Precinct North here in Seattle, with the architect Merche DeGrasse, since retired. It was the firm Shavey DeGrasse. And they basically hired Merche to design this police station and told Merche, this is Paul Marioni. You're going to work with him as you design the building. Let's see what can happen. So they set up, I think it was four. My project with Merche

went terrific, went so well. And the other ones did not. Things weren't completed, or it wasn't - they didn't feel it was successful on the other ones.

But Merche was really smart. First thing he did - he was on the committee to see my work, and when I got selected to work with him, first thing he did was invite me to an office lunch, and he said bring your slides, do your slide show. I go, why is that? And he said, well, you're going to be in and out of the office. You need to meet all my employees because there's going to be differing aspects of this project; you're going to need to talk to different people in my office. So if I can be frank, I want them to see how weird you are but how successful you are. I go, thanks for being frank, Merche. I appreciate that, and I hope you'll allow me to be frank through this process. He said, please do, be frank. Let's see what we can make happen.

So I did. I went to the lunch, did my slide show and let everybody see how weird and successful I was, and that was a really great idea because it introduced me to his office, his staff, gave me an open door policy to anything I wanted to do on this project and how I could accomplish it with their help. Immediately he assigned me to this young Japanese architect who he hired shortly before that and was very impressed with this young Japanese architect's vision. And said, work with Paul and see what he wants, and then when you're moving along, get a firmer idea, come back to me, and we'll see how we can make it work.

So I had a meeting with him immediately, and the very first thing he said to me was, I was trained in Japan, and he cited who his architecture teachers were, people I didn't know, but obviously I should have. And he said, I think the cube is the perfect form. And I looked at him and I said, oh, that's why it appears so frequently in nature. He laughed. He said, you're right. What do you want to do? I said, curve. He said, okay. What kind of curve? I go, what's possible? He said, I've got a CAD [computer-aided design] program on my computer. We can do a highway curve. I go, what's a highway curve? He said, it's gradually increasing. The longer the curve goes, the sharper it gets. Starts out shallow. And so I go, bingo. That's exactly what I want. Not a simple curve. I want a compound curve, highway curve. Plug in your CAD program; let's see, how much space do we have in the lobby? Okay, we can squeeze in whatever it was at the time, 24 feet. And I go, show me a highway curve on a 24-foot expansion, or radius, or rate of curve. So he did.

I sat there and he plugged it all in, brought it up, and I go, that's it. We're going to start with that. And this is after he told me the cube was the perfect form. But we were kind of coming out of that, I guess it's postmodernism, the glass box that was architecture. And that woman, the New York architect, wrote that book, *Ornamentalism* [Robert Jensen and Patricia Conway. *Ornamentalism: The New Decorativeness in Architecture & Design*. New York: C.N. Potter, distributed by Crown Publishers, 1982] - architecture. What was her name? I'll think of it in a minute. Worked out of New York. And when that book came out, it suddenly, like all the architects must have read it, and what's-his-name did that Portland Building, Michael Graves, and it was all ornamented with ceramic tiles and decorative edges and a more solid feeling instead of the glass box. That kind of stood architecture on its ear. Suddenly after five or six years of me trying to convince architects that they could work with artists, this one book - what was her name? It's important to me to know because I feel it was very influential. Suddenly architects were open to working with artists, and our number of commissions grew exponentially again in the late '80s.

By then I had started working with Ann. I met Ann in '84. We probably started working together in '85, maybe '86, and we do a complete collaboration, and I'm talking about Ann Troutner, Ann Margaret Troutner. We just worked together really well. I have an intention tremor I was born with, my hand shakes, so I'm always having trouble doing the extensive detail I want. And Ann, when she met me, noticed that my hands shake. Not only does she have steady hands, she has 20/10 vision - extraordinary vision. She could see a pimple on a flea's back - remarkable, how good her eyesight is. She's moved into the bifocal age at this point. Now she has 20/20, and mourns the loss of her eyesight. She had 20/10.

So we started working together because she started helping me out because she saw my hands were shaking and I was making as big a mess as the mess I was cleaning up. Then we found that we worked really well together, really well. In fact, it's pure pleasure to work with Ann, and she feels the same way. And so for 22, 21 years now we've collaborated on all our commissioned work. Of the probably 90, 92, 95 commissions we've done, I'd say at least 50 of them were in collaboration with Ann, everything since '85 or '86. I think I did one, maybe two, without her since then, and she's done one, maybe two, without me.

So we park our egos as far away as possible. We look at the budget, the location, particularly as for available natural light - if it faces south, or what latitude the building's at, where's the sun going to be, what time, what time of year, how is the movement of the sun and the light going to change, is it going to be adequate for what we want. Well, any light is adequate for cast glass. It's incredible. You put cast glass under a 20-foot roof and it still looks good, which we did in Rochester High School [*Rochester*, Rochester, WA, 1992]. They picked us because they had a 20-foot roof in front of the school and nobody could see the entrance of the school. They wanted an artwork that would draw attention to the entrance. They did not want neon.

So we did cast glass. It worked beautifully, and the 20-foot recessed into a shadow, still works beautifully. Never gets direct light. It looks good. So Ann and I looked at the budget, the location, and the client. We're very careful about the client. If it's a high school or a police station, a federal courthouse, a hospital, no matter what it is, even private corporations, private residences, we're making the work for the client. So if it's a grade school or high school, [telephone rings] we make work that kids will like. We don't care if the adults don't like it, or the principal doesn't like it. If the kids like it, that's what counts. They go through those doors five days a week for four years. And we've been successful; with schools we've don,e the kids have really liked. [Telephone rings.]

Somebody's persistent. I bet it's one of those politicians trying to get elected next month. I should turn the number of rings down.

MS. RIEDEL: Can we turn it down?

MR. MARIONI: Yes.

[Audio break.]

MS. RIEDEL: We're rolling, Bob.

MR. MARIONI: Are we rolling, Bob?

We'll pick up - working with Ann, I said, has been a pure pleasure. It's so extraordinary to be able to work with somebody else, and it's been extraordinary to work with Ann for the last 20 years, 21 years. The whole is greater than the parts. Ann is really good at things I'm not good at, and I'm really good at things she's not good at. So putting us together - and like I said, we park our ego, look at the budget, the location as far as light goes, and the client. Come up with a bunch of ideas, get them all up on the wall, shoot down the ones that can't be done in the budget, or won't work in this light situation, or doesn't address the client.

And often by the time, like a week of brainstorming and looking at all our different - her ideas and my ideas - by the time we come to settling on what we're going to follow through on, and sometimes we have two or three that we'll actually draw up and then decide which one we like the best, because then we'll enjoy making it. We'll only present one to a client, one design, even if we completed two or three designs. We look at the one we like, and that way we'll enjoy doing it.

Only once in all these commissions has the client said, would you do a different design, another design. Every other one, the client accepted our design. We never got turned down - had a job turned down because they didn't like the design. And the only time the client asked if we would do another design, he said, I want you to do something much wilder. And he was a client that had bought my gallery work. Well, my gallery work's much wilder. It's much weirder and it's personal; it's surreal, figurative, usually narrative. Like I said yesterday, makes you think. It doesn't tell you what to think, but it forces you to think, if only, what's Paul thinking?

But this client had bought my gallery work, several pieces, and when we proposed a commission for their home, he said, I want something much wilder. And we did a much wilder design that he liked. That's the only time that we've re-done a design. I mean, we always say that we will if you're not satisfied. We'll re-do it.

But when we talk to a client, the first question is, do you know what you want? And like I said yesterday, if they want a rose window in stained glass, I send them to one of my friends that make rose windows. I don't try and do something I don't want to do. And if it's a challenge that I can learn from, I'll take it in a minute, in a heartbeat.

But the second question is always - after I say, do you know what you want, they usually say no, but we've seen your work and we like what you do, so what can you do here? I say, well, the second question is, do you know what you don't want? You don't want purple, you don't want figurative, you don't want abstract, whatever. Tell me so that when I submit a design, you don't - you can't say, I don't want figurative. So we're going to be in the ballpark. So - and that's worked.

And I also always say, do you have a budget; do you know how much you want to spend so that we don't design something that's going to cost $75,000 when they want to spend $30,000. So that's worked out really well, and working with Ann has worked out really well. She often has the fundamental concept that we like, but she hasn't got any idea if it's physically possible. So I'm the one that figures all that out. I'll do the engineering, all the math, sizes, budgets and materials and everything. Sometimes it's my concept. And often by the time we're done, we don't remember whose idea it was, or what combination of whose idea - part of this idea, part of that idea.

And that's what I mean about parking your ego as far away as you can. At the end you can't even remember whose idea it was. That to me is ideal because that's when you're getting a whole -

[END TAPE 3 SIDE B.]

- greater than the parts; you're getting the benefit of two brains and two artistic talents. [Telephone rings.] I thought I turned that down. [They laugh.] All right. Sorry, I guess I don't - I guess it doesn't turn down.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. No, it does not. Just pause?

MR. MARIONI: I guess they'll leave me a message to call them back.

So where was I going to go after the commission, working with Ann - oh, specific commissions. You asked me which ones I thought were the most successful or what was my favorite or best or how you phrased it, and I'm not that kind of person that has a best or a favorite, very rarely. And to me, I pour my heart and soul into all my work. So I kind of have an emotional attachment to everything, and I'm not much interested in which one's best, but I did say yesterday that doing commissions is like Psychology 101. Each client is different. Each situation is different, and you pretty much have to be able to psyche it out. And I've been on both sides of the fence. I've sat on juries and interviewed artists for public art projects, and I've applied for public art projects and been interviewed.

So I've seen both sides of the process, and I often tell my students, if somebody on a jury is an asshole - if I can say that on the transcript, transcribed - you have to focus in on them and give them extra attention, give them your love, give them the extra attention. Our natural inclination is to recoil and either ignore them or get huffy and stand up to them, but you can't do that with commissions. And I have found sitting on juries that occasionally, a fellow jury member will be difficult to the artist, in reviewing the artist.

And after the interview once, I said, why were you so in his face? He goes, well - this was a project with, say, the police department - he's going to have to go through a bunch of bureaucracy and face a lot of hurdles in this project. I'm testing his mettle. If he got mad at me, I wouldn't have picked him as an artist. If he dealt with my being in his face, then I think he can deal with the police department. So we'll pick him.

That was an interesting comment and kind of made me - gave me a broader view in the process of being a juror, and I totally agree with him. If you're going to work in public arts, you've got to deal with the bureaucracy and getting things done, getting them done on time, and hopefully working with people that are responsible, which is getting worse year after year. Nobody wants to take responsibility for anything anymore, and very seldom does anybody do their job successfully anymore. It's kind of like, nowadays you've got to do everything two or three times if somebody else is doing it, and I'm not one of those people that goes, step aside; let me do it. I like to assign tasks and I like them done. [Laughs.] And so it is a process. It's not for everyone.

We apprenticed a young woman, very talented artist that wanted to do public art work. And so we hired her to work with us on a couple of projects, and after about three months, she said, I'm quitting. And I said, why? And she says, I don't want to do public art. Now I see what you go through; it's not for me. So thanks for the opportunity, and I said, well, thanks for working with us because it's just as important to find out that you don't want to do it as it is to find out that you do want to do it.

So - and it's not for everyone, doing commissions. And I did say yesterday that four out of five are extraordinarily rewarding. You accomplish something. You see your vision in reality. The client's happy, and if it's the high school kids that like it or the private home you did it for and your client is happy and you really feel good about it and you get paid and often not only do they cooperate, they're enthusiastic. They like your idea. They like getting more out of the project than they expected. One out of five is a job from hell, and you'll say, I'm not doing commissions anymore, and then another opportunity comes along, and you think about the good ones.

I don't particularly have a favorite. I took you to see the *Liquid Light* [2001] at Safeco's headquarters in Redmond. That was a very successful job. It was design team with the architect Ev Ruffcorn. At that time, he was with Zimmer Gunsul Frasca, and now he's got his own firm, Ruffcorn Mott Hinthorne Stine, I think it's called. And working with Ev, he was open - minded, supportive, enthusiastic, cooperative. It was great, and same with Merche DeGrasse. That experience on the police station was fantastic. Merche and I stayed friends for years, until he moved away. And just that everybody's enthusiastic makes such a difference; you're happy about it and you're eager to do it and you work extra hard. It makes all the difference in the world, and it's too bad more clients don't realize that, because when you get the client from hell, it's a struggle, and you can't wait till it's over.

I've cited briefly the Burbank Police and Fire Headquarters in Burbank, California, that we did [*Pillars*, 1997], thanks to Tamara Thomas. And I have great respect for Tamara, and I probably would have bailed out on that job if it was not for her. We followed up a disastrous public art program. First three projects - after I read their public art law program, put it into law, and the first three projects were a complete disaster. One of them never even got don,e and so we were number four. So we had to follow up. So they were already at the point where, this isn't going to work, from the beginning.

Luckily, the architect loved our concept. And initially he wasn't coming to meetings, and the committee was blaming him for everything that was going wrong, and finally one day in frustration - I happened to have his cell phone number. We had come from a meeting ,and we went to endless meetings - and it's police and fire department; endless bureaucracy, endless meetings, and very difficult to move anything forward, and they're always blaming the architect, and I had no idea he was in our camp.

Tamara kept - kind of patting me on the back going, it'll be okay, Paul. Every time she could see my frustration and when I was wondering whether it was worth it. And finally one day, I came out of the meeting, and I had not met the architect or talked to him. He had been on the initial review committee, but I didn't really talk to him, and we got selected, and then he wasn't coming to meetings and they were blaming him. And I left the meeting and went to the closest payphone, called his cell phone number and asked him if he had time to talk, and he said, I'm stuck in a standstill in bumper-to-bumper traffic on 101, or whatever highway he was on in southern California.

So I got all the time to talk, and I go, well, let me be frank, and he said, please do. I said, I just came from a meeting and basically it's - nothing is moving forward. It's - we're hitting a brick wall here and they're blaming you, and you're not there. And he goes, blaming me for what? And I said, that you're not supportive of this. And he goes, I'm the only one that's supportive. I think your concept's fantastic, and I'm the one that's been pushing them to cooperate with you and get this thing moving. I love your concept. I think it's fantastic, and I keep telling the committee how fortunate they are to have Paul and Ann work on this project, because you have a fantastic concept that's going to work great, and I'm totally supportive of you. I can't fathom why they're blaming me.

And I said, well, you're not there. And he says, call another meeting. I'll be there. So we did; I walked back and said, we've got to meet you again tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow. And he showed up and in front of them he said, you should be thankful Paul and Ann are coming down here from Seattle. How many meetings have you brought them to? And you're setting up all these hurdles and roadblocks and getting in their way. You should be thankful. These are talented artists. Work with them. Cooperate. Let's make this happen. And then it burst open and started moving forward. But it's only because I made that phone call and was frank, and then I found out that the architect wasn't the problem. In fact, he was our only supporter.

And I hate to say this, but to be frank, they had the police chief and the fire chief on the committee. These are men that are used to leading, being directors. They have huge force of employees under them. They have to be leaders, but they don't know anything about art, but they can't admit that. They have to pretend like they're in charge and the leader on this project, and so I had to be diplomatic about not insulting them or their complete naïveté about art and try and get around that obstacle and through the nightmare of bureaucracy and administration that this, being the fourth public art project when the first three went horribly wrong; everybody's uptight and expecting this to go horribly wrong. And we did manage to complete the job, and it looks good, and they ended up happy with it. But it was difficult, and so that's one out of five that gets difficult, and it's usually because they don't cooperate with enthusiasm.

Sometimes they just cooperate. But with enthusiasm, makes all the difference in the world in the end, and I've been fortunate enough to usually get that enthusiasm, and the client gets a whole greater than the parts, as I say. Particularly design team where we can get in there and say, well, we can get do this floor, and we can terrazzo floors to complement the artwork so that it becomes an environment rather than an object.

And I've never really been comfortable with art being an object. Particularly I'd go to Mexico or Cuba, where I see extreme poverty, and come back to the United States and go to a gallery opening, and everything is so kind of precious and on pedestals with special lighting, and everybody's posturing in their latest fashions and that; it's kind of like it's cold, creepy. It's not what art's about. Art's an expression of the human spirit. It should be something that you see as an expression of the human spirit.

If it's an architectural project, it should be an environment that's welcoming and feels good and feels right for that situation. Not a piece of sculpture on a pedestal in a courtyard or in front of the building. I don't mean to denigrate sculptors. There are many of them I like and love, but I'm - basically I'm opposed to art being a precious object. It should be a part of our environment. It should be something we're comfortable with and not put it on a pedestal.

So that's the approach we've taken, and design team enriches that tremendously. If you can design the floor and maybe pick the wall colors or rug colors or type of furniture, you can make a lobby of a building that's an environment and it's - and hopefully a memorable one and hopefully one that sustains your interest, because most buildings, the same people come in and out of them. It's only like police station or courthouse where it's different people everyday, but a school or a hospital or other situations, corporate headquarters and private homes, it's the same people, the employees. And hopefully make something that sustains their interest.

It's like at Burbank, they wanted a bronze statue of a fireman and a policeman, and I said, that's fine, but you'll look at it the first time you come into the building and you'll never look at it again, and besides, Ann and I work with glass. Why would you pick us if you want a bronze statue of a fireman and a policeman? [Laughs.] And the fire chief said - or the police chief said, well, when I was asked to be on this project, I thought, I don't know anything about art. So I'd go around the other police and fire stations and see what they've got, and the first one I went to had a bronze statue of a policeman, and I thought, oh, that's really cool, that's beautiful. And he goes, I've been back to that police station five or six times since then, and you're right, I've never looked at it a second time. And so what are you thinking? And I said, no bronze statue of a fireman and a policeman is what I'm thinking. We do glass - [laughs] - and we'll work architecturally: it's going to be the front of the building and part of the inside and part of the plaza outside.

So it is Psychology 101. I mean, I don't want to offend these people; in fact, quite the opposite. I want them to be enthusiastically in my camp so that we can accomplish more. And like the Safeco one you wanted me to mention, the glass floor we did there was unique and unprecedented. We'd done seven terrazzo floors. It took us about eight years to talk clients into the concept of the artwork being on the floor. Now it's hard to believe, because everybody is doing floors - artists all over the country, they're all doing floors now, but it took us seven or eight years to talk the first client into one. That was the veterinary hospital in Pullman, and that one, they fired the architect because he refused to work with us, and put us in charge. Ann and I designed the entire lobby, and we did the terrazzo floor that won first prize in the National Terrazzo Association, got published a lot ,and it was a very successful project for Washington State Arts Commission, and suddenly everybody said, wow, art on the floor; that's cool. That opens up a tremendous number of new possibilities, and lots of artists now are doing terrazzo floors.

But Safeco, we wanted to do a glass floor and they had just - the Nike Headquarters in Portland had just been finished a few months earlier, has a suspended glass floor, and several panels had cracked and they were scratching from foot traffic. You've got grit, sand in your shoes, and you walk on it, it scratches it, so initially they said, no way, no glass floor.

Everybody was really uptight at the word, "glass floor." Words, "glass floor," bristled, immediately recoiled everybody on the committee at Safeco. Soon as I had said, and we want to do a glass floor, you could see, or visibly see, everybody stiffen and their hair bristle on their back of their neck, and I'm going, hear me out; hear me out. Problems with Nike - everybody's talking about the problems at Nike's Headquarters. I'm well aware of it because I follow architecture as well. And hear me out. It's not a suspended floor. We can do it in a way where you cannot break any of the glass, and it's pre- - it's acid-brushed acid etched, so it's pre-scratched. Any scratching will just blend in. You will not be able to see it. So there was still resistance. People are always resistant at something that's never been done before.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. MARIONI: And I'm persistent. So I keep pushing. I keep pushing. I have a vision. I'm going to - I'm not giving up on this vision. So the architect was against it, the client was against it, and the contractor that was going to install it was vehemently against it - this will not work and we can't do it. Finally, I said, if it doesn't work, it's coming out of my pocket and I'll pay to have it removed. So take a chance; it's not going to cost you anything. I'm confident this will work. I've thought it out. I've done my research. I've talked to Dow Corning about it - adhesives, silicones and adhesives - and I'm confident this will work, confident enough that if it doesn't work, I pay for it and I pay to take it out, remove it. See, this was coming out of construction budget, the floor. And so I'll guarantee you. I'll put it in writing that I'll pay for it if it doesn't work.

So they all reluctantly said okay. It's plate glass, thick plate glass, and then we had it mirrored, and then we had it glued down with a special industrial silicon, grade silicon, on a self-leveling concrete floor, so there's no waver or anything. And literally they drive a forklift across it today. It looks like ice on a pond more than it looks like glass. Initially people were afraid to walk on it because it looks so much like thin ice on a pond. I've worked with glass for 37 years. It looks like ice on a pond to me - it doesn't - and I know what glass is and I'd made it and it still looks like that to me. And Western Tile laid it, and they were the ones that were adamantly fixated on this won't work, and so all the way up to the crew's on site, all the glass is on site, everything's ready, and they're telling me, this is not going to work, and I'm saying, just lay the first tile. Let's see what the problems are.

And they laid the first one and went, oh, okay, and lay another one, oh, well. Okay. Lay another one - well, okay. In about four hours half the job was laid, and the owner of the company came up to me and went, this is really cool. Can we do this for other clients? [Laughs.] And they were the ones that were vehemently saying that it wouldn't work. And I was the one who kept saying, just lay the first tile. Let's see what develops and face the problems as they come up.

I wasn't sure it would work. I thought it would. And I thought I figured out everything. I tend to worry and think about things a lot and cover every possibility, but of course, life has possibilities you couldn't have dreamt up.

And so it worked. It worked beautifully, and when they had the dedication, the CEO of Safeco - I think they're out of Texas; I'm pretty sure - came to the dedication, and then he came in and he said to me, all my life they told me not to touch the artwork, and now you're telling me to walk on it. So that was good, and everybody loves it. And the architect, the client, and the contractor all totally came around; this is fantastic. And it is fantastic. It radiates light, and it's a flat glass floor, and it looks like it's lit from below. And you went over on a very gray, cloudy day, and it still looks okay; on a sunny day, it looks fantastic. It really creates a volume of light in that space, and so it works good. So we have to be persistent.

MS. RIEDEL: It's in a three-story open atrium, too, so you can look down on it.

MR. MARIONI: Well, yeah. You can look down on it, it just gets deeper and deeper. At the third story, when you look down, it looks like it's six inches thick, and in bright light it looks that way also. So because we've taken chances and had successes, we're getting to the point where the clients are more often - listen to us and architects more often listen to us.

We did a project for Seattle City Lights South [*Water=Energy*, 1999], the electric company here, and was design team with an architectural firm that had never worked with an artist before. And they basically married us; told the architect, we picked Paul and Ann, and you've got to work with them, And they've never worked with any artist before on any project. They didn't tell me, but they were extremely nervous about how this was going to work. We did Seattle City Lights South, and at the end of that job, the architect, the principal of the firm, called me up here and asked me for a letter of recommendation so that they could show artists in future that they had worked successfully with the artists, Paul and Ann. I said, certainly, and I hung up the phone, turned to Ann, and said, it just snowed in hell. [They laugh.]

An architect asked an artist for a letter of recommendation. [They laugh.] It just snowed in hell. And everybody loved that job, too. So we've been lucky. I mean, we've worked hard, but we've been lucky also. We've had good opportunities. So I can't really say what's a favorite and what's a failure, because I don't think in those terms, but we've had a lot of successes and taken a lot of chances. I've always - my whole life I've always felt like taking a chance was an ideal. It was not a risk, because even if you've failed, you'd learn from that experience and you were better equipped to take the next chance, and if you've succeeded, you're even better equipped to take the next chance.

But either way you couldn't lose, and it was like a win-win situation. and so taking a chance was worth it, and when it succeeds, it boosted your self confidence, which is a very important ingredient in life and propels you to take - try new things, and when you failed, you'd learn from your mistakes, because like I said, I made $5,000 mistakes. I've made a lot of mistakes, and that's the most expensive one, at least that I can think of. My divorce didn't cost me that much. [They laugh.]

And also I'm a firm believer in beginner's luck. I often try things I've never done before, and usually the first time I try, it goes extraordinarily well. It's beginner's luck, and I'll do it again and again, and it goes well, but the first time, for some uncanny reason, has often gone extremely well. So like this glass floor at Safeco, went extremely well, and here I tried something that'd never been done before.

We just recently had a project where we were finalist, and it's an architect, the same architect - Ev Ruffcorn - and he was on the committee, and so we kind of thought it was a given that we'd be picked of three finalists; we'd get this job because we've worked with Ev before and he liked us, we liked him, and Safeco was such a - everybody was so happy with the results.

And then they picked another artist, and we had proposed a concept that'd never been done before, which is projecting sunlight on to the surface of the building through a manipulation, smoke and mirrors. [Laughs.] We're going to manipulate sunlight, project the sunlight in a wavy kind of a pearlescent pattern onto the front of this huge curtain wall. It's a City Hall Library and the curtain wall's 45 feet high and about 140 feet long. Ann and I figured out a way to manipulate, project sunlight onto the front of the building.

So the sun was this wavy web of subtly colored light - would move across the front of the building. Well, it's never been done before, so the committee balked. They picked an artist that does leaves sandblasted into plate glass, and I asked Ev; I said, Ev, be frank with me. And he goes, they were afraid to take a chance. They don't - haven't done much public art; it's a big project, City Hall Library. They were afraid to take a chance on this concept - but he said, I love the concept. I'm confident you can pull if off even though it's never been done before because I've worked with you. We've worked with Ev twice. We did the Bellevue Library [*Check It Out!*, Bellevue, CA, 1993] with him also.

I'm confident, and if you're willing to continue, we'll call this an architectural collaboration and we'll see if we can make it work out of the construction budget, and you'll get a fee, an artist's fee, but you don't get the big budget for the art project. So normally I would have turned him down because basically they're going to get the art work and not pay the price. [Laughs.] And normally I would have turned him down. I like Ev and I like working with

him and I'm happy that he has confidence in Ann and I, and so I said, okay. We'll settle on a fee later, but okay, I'll keep working with you because this has to get finalized and out to bid, and we'll see what we can make happen out of THE construction budget. We'll reduce the scale. Now it's going to be about 15 feet instead of 45 feet across the top of the 145-foot length because we don't have the big art budget. So he's going to try and make that much of it come out of the construction budget. We'll see.

And so - and also besides the fact that I like working with Ev, it will be a chance to make it happen, prove that it can work, and the next time the client won't be so squeamish about buying something that hasn't been done before. And it's like we've done this seven, eight,10 times in our career, and they've worked. So it's hard to get - we didn't do it for Burien City Hall. So it's hard to get the committee at Burien to say, well, we looked at your past record. We see you've been innovative; you've taken chances and you've been successful, so we're going to give you $140,000 budget. It's hard to get there.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. MARIONI: I don't know if Ev fought for us after we left or not. I've sat on juries where I fought one jury three hours to get the artist everybody wanted and was afraid to take because they might be controversial, and I argued for three hours with them and changed their minds and got that artist, and it wasn't - and he did the job and it wasn't controversial. but you've got to have somebody in your camp to make that happen. I've sat on juries where the dumbest reasons have eliminated artists. I mean, you never could have thought of or addressed, and it's like, where did that come from? It's just the stupidest reason, and they get eliminated from being a finalist. So you'll never know. It's all a crapshoot, and we've been lucky because we've had so many opportunities, and we've been lucky because we've taken a lot of chances and been successful.

What else?

MS. RIEDEL: Would you describe the qualities of your working environment as it relates both to your gallery work and your commissions? It's pretty obvious it must change all the time.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah. "Qualities of my working environment" is comical to me. [Riedel laughs.] I've always had a studio at home. I never - I could never entertain the concept of getting up, driving to work, then coming home and eating dinner and watching TV at night. I've always had a studio at home. So when I decided to become an artist, I lived in a very large Victorian house in Mill Valley and had just gotten divorced and had just taken full and sole custody of my two children - three and five years old, and - three and six; Marina was three days short of her fourth birthday and Dante was six. And quite frankly, I wasn't raised to be a dad, and suddenly I was a mom and a dad, but that's another story. But anyway, I'd decided to become an artist. I only entertained the idea of having a studio at home. I had to be at home, but that wasn't the reason.

I said, I like to work when - a lot and unusual hours and often work all night, particularly worked until I see it's getting daylight outside very often, and sometimes pull all-nighters even - I still pull all-nighters where I just work - I work all day, all night, and all day the next day. I don't go to bed. I'm excited about what I'm doing. I just keep working, and so having a studio at home is a given. I would not have a studio out of the home.

So raising two small children and having the studio at home, it's comical to ask about my working environment. [They laugh.] When you've got little kids going, what are you doing, dad? What are you doing? Can I help? Can I help? Can I help? What's that for? How's this work? And it's like, you can help by staying out of the way. You can help by going outside, and you can help by going to the store that's about two miles away, not the close Seven-Eleven, and get me a candy bar. [They laugh.]

So my working environment, the only thing my working environment has to have is music. I love music and I've got to have music on when I'm working. I don't care if it's a crappy radio or a tape deck, and I've never had an expensive, good sound systems ever, because they weren't - couldn't afford them and it wasn't worth the money I had to go into a sound system. I don't know anything about music. I can't play any instruments. I can't carry a tune, but I love listening to music and I always insist on music.

MS. RIEDEL: What do you listen to?

MR. MARIONI: Mostly I like jazz.

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

MR. MARIONI: But I like - I like almost everything, except I never liked disco and I got really sick of rap, but I listen to ethnic music, I listen to old music, classical, new experimental, but rock and roll and reggae, ska - I like ska a lot and boogie woogie. Mostly I like jazz and I love the saxophone and I love piano and I love female vocalists; like Billie Holiday can turn me on after 50 years of listening to her, more than 50 years. So I do have a big collection of records. How old-fashioned are they? And I still have a record player, and I still listen to them,

and I've got tapes and I've got CDs. So I'm pretty well covered wherever I go, and I bring my own music because I really am sick of rap, and I know the young people like to listen to it, but I bring my own music, and I'll subject them to Nina Hagen, Sex Pistols, or something that they might like also and that I like, and - but music is a must.

Then people often say, well, where do you get your ideas? That's a very difficult one. Initially dreams were a very big influence on me. I got really interested in dream study, and in the early '70s - probably about '71 - a group of artists, a bunch of women that I knew - because I knew a lot of women; I have always had a lot of women friends. I like women better than men, generally speaking, and being a single parent, father, everyone else who was single parents was the mom. [Laughs.] So I had a lot of female friends.

In fact, technically speaking, I was the very first father in the state of California to be awarded sole custody of his children. The judge stopped my divorce proceedings and my wife did not come. She was subpoenaed, but did not come - and took me back into his chambers and said, I cannot set a precedent and award you custody of your children, and I said, well, figure it out, judge, because if you don't, I'm going to the higher courts. I said I wanted my children. She's not here to contest the divorce or the custody. I want sole custody of my children, not joint, not shared - sole custody. She's gone. I can't rely on her. She's not even here for this trial.

So I want sole custody, and so figure it out, judge, because if you don't, I'm going to the higher courts. And I said, man to man, I'm going to tell you, I love my children and I want my children and I'll do anything that's necessary to fight you in the courts to keep my children. I said, what's the alternative in those foster homes? One parent is better than a foster home. I said, I'm not a drug addict. I can support my children and I love them and I'm going to fight this through the higher courts. So you figure it out, judge.

So we go back into the courtroom and he reads into the transcripts of my trial that, due to unusual circumstances and specifically not to set a precedent, he is awarding me sole custody of my children. About five years later, *Time* magazine was doing an article on sole custody and they found out. They went to California, and somehow in the records and they were doing a cover story and they called me up and said, we just did our research, our investigative research, and you are technically the very first father in California to be awarded sole custody of your children, and we want to interview you. We're doing a cover story on single dads, because then it was getting more common. I said, mind your own business. Leave me alone. I don't want the publicity and I will not grant an interview to you. Goodbye - [laughs] - and hung up.

Not what I wanted. I don't need that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. MARIONI: And I don't even want to be a part of it. I'm raising my kids. I'm loving it. I'm having a good time. It's working out. I don't need this kind of publicity. Go bug somebody else, and so - where was I leading to?

The kids were in the studio all the time. What are you doing? Can I help? What's that for? And, don't touch that. [They laugh.] And, at the same time, if I was working away, I'd go, can you guys fix dinner? And they'd go, yeah, yeah. What should we have? And I'd go, what can you fix? Cereal. Okay. We'll have cereal. I'll keep working. You call me when it's ready.

My kids were very, very cooperative, very helpful, did not give me any trouble at all, and in fact, I never had a single argument with either of my children till they were adults. And - we - I so thoroughly enjoyed raising my kids. It was a lot of work physically, doing the laundry and getting them off to school and taking them to the dentist and buying them clothes and all that stuff that goes with it, but it was so rewarding and so much fun. We were in it together, and they were cooperative and respectful, and we thoroughly enjoyed each other. And we still love each other deeply and see a lot of each other. I see my daughter almost every day, and I see my son three, four days a week, and we enjoy each other. We do things together. So it was worth it.

MS. RIEDEL: And they've both gone on to work in the arts?

MR. MARIONI: They've both become artists, that's right. And they're good human beings. And they had a thoroughly unconventional upbringing, and all my friends gave me endless crap about how I was raising my children. I would just always say, thank you for your advice, and do what I wanted to do, and try not to tell them how to raise their kids. [Laughs.]

So the studio has always been that way and also I'm - I tend to like people and I've taught a lot, traveled a lot, so people are always coming and going. It bothers Ann; it interrupts her, but doesn't interrupt me. If somebody knocks on the door and I'm working, I'd go to the door; I'll say, I'm working. You can come in and talk to me, but I'm going to keep working; otherwise, go away. [Laughs.] And I keep working.

I'll talk to people, and a lot of my friends have gotten used to that. And I have one friend that likes to talk a lot, and sometimes he comes over and just sits and talks to me while I'm working, and if I have got - if my brain's

someplace else, I'm trying to figure out whatever mathematical measurements, engineering or some - how to solve some issue, I will often turn to them and say, Geoffrey, five minutes of silence. And he shuts up mid-sentence, and I think about what I'm calculating or trying to solve and solve it, and then as soon as I've got it, I go, okay, and he picks up right at mid-sentence. [They laugh.] He'd said, I can come back; I can go off on a tangent and come back. Geoffrey can go off on 100 tangents and come back and finish the sentence. That's okay with me because I've taught a lot, did hundreds, if not thousands of demos.

I'm used to people watching me and looking at me, and the irony of it is I was very shy as a kid. I was born with this voice. My voice did not change at puberty. I was born with this voice. And they called me Foghorn when I was a little kid, and all the adults always would call me into the room and say, Paul, say whatever, and I'd say, and they'd all laugh because of my deep little voice. About the fifth grade, I tried out for the choir [they laugh] at grade school. I auditioned and they said, we don't need a baritone in the children's choir. So it consequently had made me very shy, and I grew up with only brothers and a distracted mom, and so I knew nothing about girls and so I was even more shy around girls.

I took five years of public speaking to try and overcome my shyness so that I could get up and speak my mind and speak correctly, and the last day of the fifth year of - this was in college at the university - my public speaking teacher said, Paul, you're hopeless. I go, what do you mean? She goes, you have the worst monotone, and no matter what I've done to try and train you, you don't - you can't seem to change. I go, it's my voice. It's the way I talk, and I talk with a drawl. It sounds like a monotone because it's - I have a drawl. That's me. I can force that to change. I could tell you another story - [laughs] - but why? That's my voice. I've lived with it all my life. I have no intention of changing it. Why would you think you could change it? All I want to do is have the self-confidence to get up and speak in front of a group of people.

And I always got As in public speaking because I always was well prepared to deliver a speech. I knew what I was talking about. I wouldn't talk about something I didn't know of enough to talk about. I was shy and one - several years later, I used to go to Canyon Cinema all the time. As I've said, I loved independent film, and that's the independent film showcase in the Bay Area. And I used to go every week. And this woman, Ann Sieversen, was the director and announcer, and one day she got up and said, I'm moving to England. I've taken a job outside of London and I need somebody to take my place -

[END TAPE 4 SIDE A.]

- as the announcer. And I'm sitting there thinking, God, I couldn't get up in front of two, three, four hundred people and talk about the films, and I'd be scared to death to do to that. And I put my hand up and went: I'll do it. [Laughs.] It was a weekly show, every Thursday night, and so I took the job; it paid $35, and I became the announcer.

The first three weeks, I walked out on stage, looked at two, three, four hundred people and froze: Er, er, er. Tonight we're showing, let's see, what - tonight - everybody thought I was putting them on. They would laugh, and somebody in the audience would go, Stan Brakhage, and I'd go, oh, yes, Stan Brakhage. Tonight, it's Stan Brakhage films, and we've got three films by Stan. His newest one. I was scared; I was petrified to speak in front of an audience. Just the first three times, I was sweating, and blank memory, and I'm standing there - er, er, well, tonight, er, er - and somebody in the audience would yell it out and they'd all - everybody'd laugh. They thought I was putting them on. I wasn't. I was scared to death. [They laugh.]

But I figured I got to get past this. I was not yet teaching, and I said, I got to get past this. It's ridiculous I'm so shy. And so I did - I was announcer, and then I became director of program on Canyon Cinema for a couple of years, and then started teaching.

Though initially, first time filled in. Gunvar had an operation; I taught her - she was teaching filmmaking at the Art Institute, and I taught her class for most of her semester, while she recovered from an operatio,n because I'd also made films, and so I felt like I could do that. And then a friend of mine asked me to teach at the College of Marin because he was quitting, and so I took that job, and then the Art Institute hired me; I taught two summers at the Art Institute, under contract; hired me, not to fill in.

And so my initial experience of being the announcer kind of was like, get thrown in the water and learn how to swim. So I forced myself to do it. Like I said, I swore never to get married, I swore I wouldn't teach, I swore I wouldn't be an artist, and I swore I wouldn't talk in front of the - get up in front of the public and speak. Well, wrong again. I've been wrong a lot in my life. I have no problem with being wrong. In fact, I chide people that always are right, think they're right.

One of my friends recently came to me and admitted - I'd tried to do online banking, and I couldn't - I could see if a check was cashed, but I couldn't see who'd signed to cash it, and he said, no, you can go online. You can see the back of the check, and I go, no, I can only see that it was cashed. I can get - I can call the bank and get a photocopy, and he goes, no, you can go online. So I said, okay, show me, because I don't know how to do that -

you can actually see a picture of the check, and turn it over, and see the back - and so we go online. You can't do it. He goes, oh, my God. I've never done it. I just thought you could. I'd go, Charlie, you're wrong, and he goes, yeah, I guess so. And I go, Charlie, just say, "I'm wrong," and he goes, "I'm wrong." [Riedel laughs.] Come on, Charlie, forcefully. Believe it. "I'm wrong." It feels good. "I'm wrong." Say, "I'm wrong." It feels good.

And I do that a lot because I love to make predictions, and I'm often wrong at predictions - which is why most people won't make predictions. I don't mind being wrong and I've been wrong on a lot of important things: public speaking, being an artist, teaching, and having kids and raising them. So those are important things that I'm glad I was wrong about, and that gave me the confidence to get over my shyness, and so I'm comfortable doing a demo with 500 people watching.

First time I did the NCECA [National Conference on Education for the Ceramic Arts], the clay conference - this was about 1977. They asked me to be their guest speaker. I walked out on stage and looked at about 2,700 people and I froze, and I'd been teaching and speaking, but I'd never seen an auditorium that big and that crowded. The Glass Art Society, GAS conferences, in those days were three, four, 500 people. When I do demos at schools, I was looking at two, 300 people. Now, you walk out on stage and see 2,700 people looking at you, waiting to be entertained, or expecting you to be Paul Marioni.

Luckily - I froze, but they couldn't find out where the lights were, so I made a stupid joke - in fact, it was in Champagne-Urbana [IL]. So I'm on stage, and my mind is a blank of what I'm going to say, and they're going, where's the lights? And I'm going, well, are they in Champagne or are they in Urbana? Everybody's laughing and it took them about 10 minutes to figure out how to turn the lights out in this huge auditorium. Ten minutes of standing up there, making a fool of myself, and I was relaxed and remembered everything I wanted to say and gave my speech. New Orleans, two years ago - I forgot, maybe 2,000 people -

MS. RIEDEL: Was that a GAS conference?

MR. MARIONI: The GAS conference, yeah, because GAS has grown now to 2,600 members or something, and become a monster, just like NCECA. And now I'm more comfortable. I can walk out in front of 2,000 people and speak. So working situation, I mean, like I said earlier about teaching, I like to make a fool of myself; people enjoy it. As my grandson, Lino, told me at six years old - I took him on an errand I had to run, and while we were waiting to pick up a package, an attractive 35-year-old Asian woman came in and looked down at Lino, six years old, smiled at him, and Lino looked up at her and said, "You are really beautiful." And she smiled and said, oh, thank you, and walked out. And Lino turned to me and said, "Only embarrasses me for a few seconds, and women really like it when you tell them they're beautiful." And I'm thinking he's six years old; I was 26 by the time I figured that one out. [Laughs.] And he's right; it only embarrasses you for a few seconds, and other people like it, and Mexicans love it when you make a fool.

So I learned that teaching, if you make a fool of yourself and particularly doing demonstrations. One time, I purposely filled a 50-gallon oil drum to the brim with water on a step, when I knew I'd need it for my demonstration on the floor, and I'd set this up. There were about 800 people at the demo. So I'm getting everything ready to do my demo, walking around, pretending like there's not seven or eight hundred people watching me, and I'm going about, focusing on what I got to do, and I know I'd got to move this oil drum, and I know I'm going to spill it, and it's 50 gallons filled right to the brim; I purposefully filled it to the brim.

So I get everything set up, walk over to the oil drum, wrap my arms around it, in one hefty swing, swing it off the step onto the - let it drop flat onto the concrete pad - the floor, and it shoots 50 gallons of water straight into the air and it comes down and completely drenches me. And I knew that was going to happen, and I set it up, and there's seven, eight hundred people waiting for me to start my demo. I'm going to be blowing glass anyway, I don't care if I'm wet, and so only embarrass me - only was uncomfortable for a few seconds, and the hundreds of people loved it, that I would do that, and so I'm comfortable in any working situation [Riedel laughs], and I've had to be.

After a while it's kind of like I never try and make finished work; I go out there, I do my demo, I don't care if it comes out and I can sell it in a gallery. I do that at home when nobody's looking. And I'm there, basically the teacher, show them or demo or exhibit, and so I'm willing to do that and - because I've taught a lot, I'm comfortable doing that, and actually, usually enjoy it. And I do enjoy making a fool of myself; I enjoy other people that make fools of themselves. So why not add to that amusement? It's not important or precious. And it's better for people to see that, yeah, you can screw up, and just completely douse yourself with 50 gallons of water. To me it was beautiful. I knew if I could get it off that step in one sweep, it was going to come off and fall flat instead of tilt and spill 50 gallons across the floor, and so I did it. [Laughs.] I had an accidental screwup at Pilchuck one time. It was also beautiful, and taught me a lot, but I won't get into that story, but it was not planned and a huge screwup. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe we'll save that for the end.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's talk a bit about the gallery work, shall we?

MR. MARIONI: The gallery work. Well, as I said yesterday, I was so extremely lucky that Cecile McCann gave me so much attention on my very first show. My first show was a gigantic success, and publicity-wise, I mean, I couldn't have dreamt - it was a hundredfold more than I ever dreamt of. Just luck - I had the courage to mail her an announcement and I had the foresight to agree to have lunch with her and talk to her, and she liked me and she liked what I was doing and gave me a ton of publicity. And I - overnight success, not on sales, but everybody knew who I was. Everybody read *Artweek*, and everybody knew who I was. I didn't know who they were.

A blessing and a curse, both. I really see no allure to fame. Fame does open doors so that you - at least you get in, and can ask for what you want, whether you get it or not is different, but if you're famous, at least they'll open the door and let you ask for what you want. That's a plus. The negative is people expect you to be who they think you are, and that's a big negative.

So I've always done gallery work, and I've never been a big seller. It's funny because I've often been told I'm an artist's artist. Artists always like what I like. In fact, my last show in March, I was particularly happy with two things: a lot of young people came to my opening, a lot.

MS. RIEDEL: This is at William Traver [The William Traver Gallery, Seattle, WA].

MR. MARIONI: At the William Traver, in March - the whole month of March - my newest kinetic sculpture and some paintings. Jam-packed - I don't know how many hundreds of people came; jam-packed, my opening. A lot of young people, which made me really happy that they still care what the old guy is doing. Because I know. I was a young person; we ridiculed the old guys. [They laugh.] And rightfully so, and it was fun. They were moving targets. [Riedel laughs.] So I was very happy a lot of young people came to see, care what the old guy was doing. And the other thing I was very happy about, a lot of artists came; painters and sculptors, performance artists, poets, photographers, musicians, a lot of other artists came. I felt really good about that because a lot of other artists denigrate glass, and I can understand that. We talked about that a little yesterday; I totally understand that. So it felt really good to me that all these other artists came to see what I'm doing.

And several artists have told me - I'd say to them, you've been coming to my openings for years, and they go, every show is different. We never know what to expect out of you, Paul. And it's true. Every show is different. I don't show the same work over and over, and I don't make the same work. It's like, every year it changes. I'm making kinetic sculptures almost two years now. That's very unusual for me. I've had a hard time with galleries because, of course, they want you to make what they sold last year again this year, and all the big-selling artists do that. This is my blue period; I'm making all blue ones this year. But it's the same work.

And I mean, look at Chihuly; he's made the same work for 20 years. Look at Marvin; he's made the same work for 30 years. Gets more refined, gets better, scale changes a little, under - fundamental understanding of what they are doing improves. I'm not trying to put that down. Everybody walks their own path through life; I really don't like to be critical of anybody else. It's their choice, their business, and I don't blame anybody. I have a couple of friends that complain they still have to make the same work because that's what sells, and I tell them, that's your choice. You don't have to make the same work, but I will tell you, if you change, you won't sell. [Laughs.]

Ask William T. Wiley, he'll tell you that. He's the one that taught me that in the early '70s, because he was suddenly the big hotshot out of graduate school. New York shows, overnight success, and then he changed his work and everybody dropped him, overnight. And he persisted; he stuck to it and built his career again. So learning that from Wiley - being with that group of artists in the Bay Area was very influential. I'd met Wiley through my brother Tom and other people. I met Bruce Conner from being a director and spokesman for Canyon Cinema, and he was making films and on the Canyon Board. Bruce is an extremely perceptive guy; I learned a lot from just watching Bruce Conner. I'm 27 years old, stupid, naive kid, and to watch these guys that were professional artists that had managed their lives and their careers and were good was very, very helpful for me.

I didn't go to art school. I didn't have the self-confidence. I just wanted to do it, and so watching - I listened to people like Wiley, and Bruce Conner, and Bob Nelson, Judy Raffael - Judy North, [Robert] Hudson, [Richard] Shaw, all these guys that I got to meet, and they were like my teachers. I never went to school with them or studied with them, but just watching how they managed their lives as artists, how they raised kids and continued their careers, changed their work, suffered disappointments, wallowed in successes. All of it is a lesson, and it was a good lesson for me. And I cite a few people that particularly, like Bruce Conner, that were so perceptive; watching him, how he operated and how he saw things. We were never friends. We didn't hang out together. We went to board meetings; we were on the board of directors. Of course, I would go to his shows and see him around town and say hi, but we didn't hang out; we didn't come over for a cup of coffee or anything - actually did, but it was Bob Nelson, and a few other people.

And those were important ways to learn, and so I persisted in - and I had become an artist because I wanted to do what I wanted to do. I talked about that yesterday, when I saw that my brothers Tom and Joe and their friends were the only people that could do what they wanted to do and get away with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you say it was almost casual apprenticeships - a series of casual apprenticeships?

MR. MARIONI: No.

MS. RIEDEL: No. Okay.

MR. MARIONI: No. It's not really. I did a very short apprenticeship with Judy North about glass, and I did a longer apprenticeship with Robert Nelson, because I took a full year of his film class. I audited it; I didn't get a grade and I wasn't registered as a student. And it was a long waiting list for his class, so just the fact that he let this young upstart come and sit in - I went to the University of California Medical School and watched autopsies and participated in autopsies, participated in brain dissections, just because they got so used to seeing me there. I never was a student; I never signed up. I wasn't even auditing. It was just wanting to dissect human bodies; I was interested in what's inside. What makes this miracle work? How does it work and what's in there?

I went to, I think, 11 autopsies before they finally said, who are you and what are you doing here? And I said, I'm just - I'm an artist. I'm just interested, and they said, well, do you want to joint us? And I went, you bet you. [Laughs.] We're going to dissect a brain today. Here, take this brain out of this cadaver and wash it and prepare it, and I did. So it's the same with knowing other artists, you just kind of -

MS. RIEDEL: This is UC Medical Center in the '70s? [Laughs.]

MR. MARIONI: Yeah, yeah, yeah. [They laugh.] Just one of my interests, medicine. I probably would have been a surgeon if I didn't have the shakes. My dad was a doctor. He did not expect any of us to be doctors and none of us were. A lot of my cousins became doctors, and my dad helped them through medical school and set up internships and practice, but none of us boys did. But I probably would have been a surgeon, if my hands didn't shake. And I probably could be a surgeon even with the tremor, because when I was younger, I could forcibly steady my hand for 20 seconds or something, I can't anymore.

But I've had that fascination. Same with astronomy and same with the law. My mom always said, you should be a lawyer, as I was growing up - and I always used to go, why? And she'd go, you so clearly and forcibly argue your point. I went, well, aren't we supposed to do that? [Laughs] Aren't we supposed to clearly and forcibly ask for what we want, or defend what we believe in? I thought that was natural. [Laughs.]

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

MR. MARIONI: And so anyway, I became an artist, and the gallery work was not going to give up. In fact, that was the sole reason I became an artist, so I could make what I wanted to make. And so - yeah, a lot of people say, your works are really weird, and yeah, I admit my works are pretty weird. I don't know if I'd say really weird; I've seen a lot weirder. Occasionally, I make something that's really weird. It's like Dada. Sometimes I don't even know where it comes from and I don't care where it comes from and I don't care what it means.

I forget who was asked what their work means and they said, I don't know; the critics will tell you. I can't remember which artist said that, but I kind of feel that way - means something to me, but what it means to me is not part of it. That's why I say, I make work that makes you think. I don't try and tell you what to think. *Premonition* piece means something to me, means the idiot - President Reagan saying we could win a nuclear war, triggered the whole process and concept of that. So I can tell you where that idea came from, but it doesn't - it's not part of it. It's not relevant; it doesn't matter.

The Premonition is about that creepy feeling. It's not about Reagan; it's not about winning the nuclear war, or nuclear war, and it's not about winning, which is the key word in that whole phrase. There are no winners in wars except the munitions industry, and the Halliburtons that rebuild the damage; they are the winners. Basically, wars kill innocent people; very few people killed in the war are guilty, very few. The generals, the president, they don't go to war; they're the guilty, they're the war criminals. The grunts and the innocent civilians bear the suffering.

So it's unimportant to appreciate *The Premonition* to know that. It's important to me that I was focused on that issue and that feeling and I wanted to convey that feeling. So visually, and the issues are kind of irrelevant; I mean visually, it's important to build that emotional feeling that's in that piece. But the fact that Reagan said we could win a nuclear war is irrelevant. I mean, I can tell you that it is irrelevant. So I've focused on what I want to do, my vision. I'm an idea-oriented person.

In fact, I say it's like filmmaking; it's editing. Being an artist is editing. You make a film, you shoot, whatever,

five hours of film, 20 hours of film. You edit it down to an hour and a half, two hours, and that's what being a filmmaker is, is editing. You shoot everything you can think of. Well, being a visual artist or an artist that fabricates a product as opposed to a conceptual artist, I have a lot of ideas. I can't make all my ideas; I have to edit the ideas, and so that I can focus on making what I think is the cream of the crop. If I have 10 ideas, I've got to focus on the one I think is the best.

So the gallery has afforded me that luxury, and recognition has come in many ways other than money: opportunities for the next show, or to work in industry, or to teach in Japan, or to go to a conference in Italy, or England, or New Orleans. Opportunities have come in many, many ways. The rewards of it - I never sold much at the gallery. There's been a few exceptions, but I've not been market-driven, because I didn't sell out a show; I didn't make the same show the next time. And because I didn't make the show the next time, people called me an artist's artist. All the artists come out to see what I'm doing because they don't know what to expect. And all the galleries don't like that because - well, fundamentally, if a collector buys your work, they want it immediately identifiable. They want to be able to walk into another collector's home and say, oh, I see you have a Chihuly, too. They don't want to walk into another collector's home and say, who made that? So that simplifies the way beyond what the total is, but that's as simple a way as I can explain it.

And the galleries, of course, if they sell all your, say, *Floating Figures* - I did the *Floating Figures* in the '80s, of course - they'd want you to make more *Floating Figures* because they sold them; but I already made that show. Now I'm making something else, cast glass or something, and they don't want to do that because they already know they can sell your *Floating Figures*. They don't know if they can sell your cast glass. So a lot of galleries won't work with me, and that's okay. For one thing, I don't want to be with a gallery that doesn't believe they can sell me. I want to be with a gallery that believes they can sell me; that's their job, selling me. And it's like I often tell people, you don't have to be friends with your dealer. In fact, it's probably better not to be friends with your dealer.

[Audio break.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel interviewing Paul Marioni, at the artist's studio in Seattle, Washington, on September 19, 2006, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

MR. MARIONI: All right. I can't remember what we - what thought we stopped in the middle of, but to wrap up the gallery thing: I've always been adamant that I became an artist to do what I wanted to do, and I've stuck to that. So I've not had big gallery sales. It's weird because about five years ago, I got - really got sick of the galleries and spent a whole year promoting myself and probably quadrupled my sales. So it taught me that my work - yes, my work is saleable, and it also was exhausting. I was in, whatever, four one-man shows and seven group shows, and I sent slides out, went to parties and collectors' homes, and schmoozed, and did everything.

So it taught me that my work was saleable. I sold over, I think, about $140,000 worth of work that year. I'd never sold more that $30,000 before that. So it showed me that the galleries weren't doing their job, and - but it was exhausting, and it's not what I want to do. I want to be in the studio working, so I only did that for one year, and I went back to showing in galleries and hoping they would do their job. I make the work; they sell it. I don't sell out of my studio, and so - and I don't have exclusive contracts with any galleries. But right now I'm down to two galleries. I've quit all the other galleries I showed with. They just weren't working for me.

MS. RIEDEL: You show with William Traver?

MR. MARIONI: I show with William Traver in Seattle and Imago in Palm Desert in California, and I had my first show with Imago about a year and a half ago and they sold really well for me. It's the new kinetic cast sculptures. I've been making kinetic works since '91, and my show in 2005 was the first time they'd started selling. And it was an uphill battle. Trying to sell glass that you're supposed to touch and make move was contrary to everything everybody's ever been taught. Don't touch that; it's glass. And it rocks and moves, which freaks people out completely.

But to me, if I can capture light in a piece of sculpture and then - and it rocks, it moves, fantastic. It's moving light, and so that's even better than just capturing and magnifying the light. Actually magnifying it and making it move; moving light is an extraordinary phenomena, and so I kept at it; I kept making kinetic sculpture. And Imago sold well for me, and Traver, I showed kinetic sculpture this March, and he sold well for me, too. So that's why I joke about being an overnight success after only 35 years.

And I'm going to continue to do gallery work till I die, period. No matter how long I live. The commissioned work I'm going to wrap up in a couple of years and stop seeking them probably, except an occasional one, because I do thoroughly enjoy the commission work. I enjoy the fact that I'm making it for someone else and I need to make them happy; I need to satisfy them. I enjoy that; it's a challenge. I like challenges; I like problems also. And so I'll continue to do the gallery work and hopefully it will support me. I mean, it can if I focus on it. I haven't focused on career, so to speak. I don't have the five-year plan. In fact, I don't know what I'll be doing six weeks

from today. My life's an adventure, and my life's more important to me than my career, and so I'm comfortable with that. It seems to drive everybody else crazy, but I'm comfortable with that.

And I feel very, very lucky that I was able to continue to be - not be market-driven in the gallery and do exactly as I wanted to realize my vision, which is constantly changing. And teaching, initially it supported it, and then the commission work supported it. And in the last two years I've done fewer commissions, and I quit teaching in 2001. So the gallery being able to support me is wonderful. I'm very, very lucky and I don't care if I sell a million dollars' worth. I just want to sell enough to make the next show, buy my groceries, and drive my car.

MS. RIEDEL: How have the sources of inspiration for your gallery work changed over the years?

MR. MARIONI: It's hard to say. I mentioned that the early work came from dreams, and I did a lot of dream study work, and I've read all of Freud, and all of Jung, and I'm not at all into analyzing dreams. You can analyze dreams, obviously, and the interesting thing for me is that I figured out - well, the best thing that happened, I did the dream study work in about '71 and became an artist late '69, early '70, and had never been to art school. So I had my fears, not just at being an artist, but in life, in general, and the interesting thing in the dream study work, I learned how to realize I was dreaming while I was dreaming.

Mostly because, like, if I got in a frightful situation - what I figured out was what happens in a nightmare is it's a frightful situation. So you wake yourself up to get out of it. Well, with dream study, I realized that in a frightful situation, if you stop, don't wake yourself up and tell yourself, this is just a dream. This is just a dream. This is just a dream. You can address your fears, and most of your fears are unfounded. So, like the madman is chasing you with a dagger in your nightmare, and you wake yourself up to get out of that because you're afraid, but if you realize you're dreaming, you turn around, laugh at the madman with the dagger, and the madman with the dagger turns into a clown or melts.

Most of your fears are unfounded. So the dream study work was tremendously important to my formulation. I overcame a lot of fears I had about being an artist, about danger, the danger of drugs, because I had friends that died of drug overdoses, and all the things we're afraid of, and most of them are unfounded. So that was tremendously helpful. And analyzing my dreams, which everybody else in the group - we formed our own group. We brought guest speakers in from Indian dreamsayers [sic] - all kinds of different people, psychologists. We brought in as guest speakers at my house in Mill Valley. We paid for it - a group of us artists pooled our money and did this. We had no teacher; we just brought guests, and everybody else was in the dream analysis.

One thing I kind of agree with is that everybody in your dream is yourself. And in fact, one time I had a dream I was teaching at San Francisco State, and I was standing in the hallway in the dream, and down the hallway, quite away were two women talking. And I was standing there waiting for something - I don't know what - in the dream, and I could kind of hear them talking. And I was kind of eavesdropping on these two women talking. And after listening to them talk for a period in my dream, I realized I need to know who these women are. So I walked down the hallway, and both the women were me, and so I kind of agree with that concept that everybody in your dream is you, because in this particular one, both of the women, each one of the two women were me, as women, and talking. [They laugh.]

So - and then there's - there's been a lot of humor in my dreams also. I've woken up from dreams laughing out loud because I have really surreal, crazy dreams. I rarely dream about anybody I know or anything that's going on currently in my life, but dreams have that way of doing it. But I also came to the conclusion that there was a truth in dreams, because dreams bypass the ego, and the ego has a tremendous influence on us, which I fight constantly, because ego is not your friend. Ego will talk, tell you how great you are, how important you are, how important this thought is or this activity you're doing. The ego is not your friend. And so I try and bypass my ego. As I say, I park my ego, because I see it as not helping me. My ego does not help me. It's not my friend. I need to filter it out, and like in the commissioned work, parked ego-focus on what the goal is and who it's for and satisfy someone else.

And dreams help me with that because dreams - I think dreams filter out the ego. Dreams show you that you're afraid of the madman with the dagger, or whatever it is. The dreams show you that. They don't go through your ego - yeah, I'm going to kick that madman's butt. They show you running away, cowering. [Laughs.] So dreams are good in that way, and I'm not sure you can analyze them. There were a couple of important points in my life [when] I had dreams that seemed entirely unrelated to what was going on in my life, but as I thought about it and perceived it, I could see a solution to the problem I had in my current life that was given to me from what I saw in the dream I had. Even though they seem completely unrelated. I could give you examples, but we'll move on. So dreams were a big importance in my early career.

I'm also very politically active and have been, and flushed with the success of being part of the Civil Rights Movement, flushed with the success of ending the war in Vietnam, flushed with the success of getting women rights, equal rights for women. And it's frustrating today that things - you can demonstrate all you want, they

don't care. Sixty-four countries had demonstrations against the war in Iraq, and they just go right ahead and lie to us and start the war. They don't care if 100 million people - they don't care if six billion people protest the war. They've got their own motives and they don't care anymore, so it's frustrating today. But it's still important to me to speak out. When I see injustice, I speak out. I stopped a rape one time: four guys raping a woman in a park, and I stopped it just by boldness, just by walking up behind them silently with my hand in my pocket like I had a gun, in total darkness, and shocked them into stopping, and they ran away.

So I don't get intimidated easily, and I'm not afraid anymore of almost anything. Very rarely do I become afraid, and I've been in - I was in the middle of the outrageously horrendous war in Guatemala. Ann and I and Marina, my daughter, and her boyfriend went to Guatemala, thinking the war was in the south, and we drove in from Belize in the middle of the night to Flores and right into the middle of a civil war, where they were killing people right and left. We had no idea. We just ended up in the middle of the horrendous war zone. That kind of scared me. Though the police told us to get in the car and get the hell out of there as fast as we could, we stayed three or four days, and we went up north to Tikal and spent that time with the Indians. And they were killing Indians specifically, and we spent that three or four days with the Indians.

Because I - yes, I guess it's scared me to be in the middle of a brutal, senseless civil war, but no, I'm not going to flee. I'm going to see what's happening here, and we did. We spent three, four days with the Indians and thoroughly enjoyed it, and then boldly and brutally drove out of Guatemala, and ran a roadblock. The military would try to stop us and we ran; I was driving and outran them. The road block, no way was I going to stop; the military was killing people. And so we were lucky. They'd machine-gunned carloads of people at that same checkpoint. Ten days, they'd killed pregnant women, children, everybody at that same check point after I ran through it. So I was lucky, but I don't intimidate easily.

And I try - I'm very politically active and I try and make things happen, and only a few years ago, four or five years ago, I came to the realization, call it maturity, whatever you want, but winning your struggles is not necessarily it. The struggle itself is it. It took women 100 years to get the right to vote. It took blacks a hundred years from the end of the Civil War to get their freedom in the Civil Rights Movement. So winning your struggle is not necessarily it all, the all end, but continuing the struggle is important because - like women taking 100 years to get the right to vote; the women that started that struggle didn't succeed. The women in the middle didn't succeed. Yes, after 100 years the women succeeded.

What's important is to continue that struggle so that it does continue, and when you don't succeed, the next person comes along and continues that struggle. It's a continuum. It's like being an artist or a scientist. It's a continuum. You do your part so that the next person can continue. It's been analogy of a river, and many, many scientists have said, I stood on the shoulders of giants. They figured out nuclear physics today because of the work of Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein, Leise Meitner, and other scientists that came before them, and scientists have said, I stood on the shoulders of giants. Well, really, that's what life is. We all want our life to be important. We all want our meaning for our existence, and we all like to think we accomplished something, but it's a continuum. We're a part of a river; we're a drop of water in a river. What's important is that river keeps flowing and the struggle, whatever, keeps going.

And even when I do political work in my gallery work, and I have - it's like *Premonition*. I did a piece - there was - simply titled, *November 22, 1963.* I made that piece in 1976, so the date is the giveaway. It was an American flag - it was a wall piece, three dimensional - an American flag, where some of the red stripes were black and there was a skull superimposed on it like a pirate's flag, and it was a wall piece. It was simply entitled *November 22, 1963*. Well, for people that are old enough, everybody -

[END TAPE 4 SIDE B.]

- knows what happened that day. Anybody born after that might not, but everybody that was alive, not only they knew what happened that day, they know where they were when it happened. John Kennedy was shot. It was the day the bad guys took over, so I had, like, pirates flags superimposed over an American flag.

Well, it's interesting because at that time - '76 - my career was booming. I was getting invited to a lot of shows all over the country, in fact, in several countries. I was being invited in to museum shows, group shows, all over. And I was excited about that piece because it meant a lot to me. John Kennedy meant a lot to me. His assassination was a dramatic turning point as - Catalano did that piece of Kennedy in the coffin in a fine Italian suit barefoot and titled it, *Hope*, the point being that we lost our hope that day. John Kennedy was the last president that gave us hope. We've not had a president since.

And whether that's because the failure of the presidency or whether because it shattered our dreams and our illusions. It wasn't only John Kennedy; it was Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Robert Kennedy, even John Lennon. They shattered our hope - the bad guys; I say them - whoever. It always seems like it's the right-wing fanatics that kill the left. The left doesn't often go out and kill the right wing. So I'm just going to say they killed our hope.

So I wanted to make a piece about that. I didn't really want to make a piece about John Kennedy's assassination, but I did title it *November 22, 1963*, so obviously it was about that. But visually it was not. And my political pieces are like that; *Premonition* is like that. It's not a political statement. I don't tell you what I think; I make you think. If you see an American flag with a pirate's flag superimposed in it, it's symbols - two strong symbols. You're going to think about what is this. That piece got rejected from 11 shows - 11 or 12. I got invited to the show, I crated the piece up, shipped it off to a museum that uncrated it and said, we can't show this. Crated it back up and shipped it to me.

Then I got invited by the Hessisches Landesmuseum in [Darmstadt] Germany. I forget which big art fair or art even they're responsible for, but one of the biggest ones in Europe. They invited me to show. They didn't ask what, and I crated up the *November 22, 1963*, shipped it off to Germany, showed it at the Hessisches, and they bought the piece. So here 11 or 12 museums in the United States could not face the reality of a piece of artwork that had that title. We could not face what happened that day. We still can't face it. And Germany, because they're objective - they loved John Kennedy also; they know he was killed on that day, but they're more objective about it. It's not a personal issue - not only showed the piece, but they bought it. It's in their permanent collection, and somebody last year told me it's on display. It's not in their storage; it's on display. It's in their collection and on display. I feel good about that.

I don't resist making political pieces, but I know what kind of response - emotional response - it's going to elicit. It's like they always tell you, don't talk about sex, politics, or religion. Well it's true, that's about all I talk about: sex, politics, and religion. Maybe not sex so much, but I'm really hostile to religion - really. I mean more people have died in the name of Jesus Christ than [Adolph] Hitler, that's for sure. And more wars have been started, fought, won, and lost under the guise and the hypocrisy hiding behind religion. Look at the results of war. That will tell you the motives, not what they tell you the motives are to liberate Iraq or turn these pagans into Christians. They divvy up the mineral resources at the end of a war; that's why they started the war. But religions have been more destructive to humanity than any other single factor - my personal view.

Anybody that wants to be religious, that's their business and good luck and fine. You can believe in God or Jesus or Mohammed or whoever you want to believe in. I'm fine with that and I will not try to talk you out of that. So the same with political work. One time I was teaching at Arrowmont, and usually I try and do the first slide show when I'm faculty at a school for two reasons: I want to get it over with so I can focus on teaching and not be thinking about putting together, preparing a lecture slide show, and everybody in the school knows who I am and if they're particularly interested in establishing a friendship or sharing a thought, they feel comfortable to come to me. I don't care if it's a woodworker or a painter, a dancer, whoever; if they see my slide show and come to me and say, yes, I'm really interested in such and such also, or your thoughts about cancer really struck me. It establishes at least everybody in the school knows who I am, and I don't have to spend weeks figuring out who I want to talk to or who wants to talk to me, or share a thought or establish a friendship, so it's always beneficial. I always insist on being the first.

I got to Arrowmont late. My flight was delayed or something. By the time I got there, the faculty schedule on slides was filled up, and I got about the third - last night in about a three-week course. I can't remember; three weeks, one month. Anyway, I was very near the end, and I love slide shows and I love talks. I go see people talk all the time to see if they're a good speaker, if they're eloquent, if they focus on the fundamentals, if they can zero in on the problem. I go see all kinds of speakers. I've been blessed. I saw Robert Kennedy, I saw Malcolm X, and I even saw George Wallace, and George Wallace was a fiery speaker - fantastic. I didn't agree with a thing he said, but, man, could he fire up a crowd. I can thoroughly appreciate his ability to do that, even though I didn't agree with anything.

And so I go to a lot of artists' talks also, and I'm continually amazed that people, like Jonathan Borofsky, can barely complete a sentence and are successful artists - terrible speakers. Chris Burden, terrible speaker - public speaker. Dennis Oppenheim, phenomenal, inspirational. I would go across the country to see Dennis Oppenheim give a lecture or talk. My brother Tom, my brother Joe - fantastic speakers. They make you think about things in ways you had never thought about them before, inspirational, fundamental, insightful. So I go to all the lectures.

So at Arrowmont I'm sitting through lecture after lecture. Arrowmont's multidiscipline; I'm watching the weavers, the metalworkers, the blacksmiths, the jewelers, the clay people, the dancers, the photographers, the painters, the watercolors - they're all giving their talks night after night after night. I go to every one. Anywhere I teach, I've gone to every single lecture I could go that was held. And so I'm sitting there watching this, and they're all about technique. This piece is 12 inches by 14 inches and it's macramé and it's tin, silver, and it's all about technique, night after night after night. And so I'm thinking, this is multidiscipline; what does a weaver care about what a watercolorist says? What does a goldsmith care about what a blacksmith says or does - how he makes his work, what types of metals and that? Not one word about content on inspiration or creativity - all about techniques.

Well, most people go to school to learn techniques and most people teach techniques, because it's difficult to

teach creativity and techniques are the fundamentals; they're tools. You should learn techniques so that you have those tools in your toolbox and you can actualize your vision. But it's not all about that. Techniques are in service of the idea. Because I have three weeks to prepare my slide show and because I've seen as night after night after night of only technique, I decide - and I travel with over a thousand slides; I put together a slide show when I get there. I have about 400 of my own works and about 600 of other artists that I admire that I felt expressed themselves. Like it or not, they express themselves.

So I've got three weeks to think about this and put together a slide show, and I decide I'm going to show 100 slides. I don't know why I picked that number, but a tray is 80, and often if I wanted to talk at length I'd show one tray, 80 slides, so I could talk about each piece. And I'd pick my favorite pieces that I'd like to talk about, and if I wanted to get a lot of information out, I'd do two trays, sometimes three, and not linger on any of the pieces; just, here is the broad overview of my career.

So this night I decided on 100, and I very carefully select 100, because I'm only going to talk about ideas. I'm not going to tell them what size they are, what materials, or what techniques - period, zero. Because I figure I'm only going to talk about ideas; I have not got a single idea out of anybody. So I do that, and in there as I'm putting it together, I'm thinking about it - what I want to talk about - and I've come to realization that out of the 100 slides, four are political pieces: the *November 22* piece is in there, *The Premonition*. I had one called *Indian Nation*, which depicts an image of Mount Rushmore on fire. It's titled *Indian Nation* because of my political beliefs that we took this country away from the Indians and we confined them to reservations and particularly with Oglala Sioux. And I am an honorary Oglala Sioux because I've been giving them money most of my life. They said when they sent me a certificate that I was an honorary Sioux Indian. I called them up and said I appreciate this, but frankly, I'm a white guy, and the Indian on the other end of the phone said, Mr. Marioni, you're a brother. So thank you.

But anyway, so I made an image of Mount Rushmore on fire, which is a contradiction: it's a stone mountain; it can't catch fire. But what did we do? Take this country away, put the Sioux on a reservation in the Dakotas - their territory - confined them to a reservation, then build a monument to our forefathers to look down on them and show them we kicked your butts. We took your land; here's George [Washington], Abraham [Lincoln], Theodore [Roosevelt], and Thomas [Jefferson]. In 80-foot-high stone faces staring down at the Sioux going, we kicked your butt; here we are; we're going to be looking at you the rest of your lives.

To me there is an irony in there, and so I wanted to express that irony, so I made a piece that's titled *Indian Nation*. And I forget what the fourth one is. I made a piece about Watergate that was a stock - a wooden stock. What they were? They used to put the pilgrims in, and where the head hole was an American flag draped in the stock. I don't even remember the title, but I made it during Watergate. I can't remember why. So those four out of 100 - I was very, very thoughtful about this. It was a conscientious effort.

The other thing I noticed is that the end of all the other artists' slide shows, they would always go, are there any questions? And maybe somebody would go, well, did you use natural fiber dye for that fiber or did you not use the synthetic dye? Occasionally a few simple questions like that. That's not going to cut it with me. So I do my 100 slides, I talk only about content, meaning, and ideas, and finish my slide show. And the lights come on and I go, are there any questions? And everybody is kind of squirming. And I go, good, I've got questions for you. If you don't have any questions for me, I've got questions for you.

And so I said - in the past I had an experience where in the middle of a slide show the electricity went off, and it was at a collector's conference. And with electricity off and in a dark room I jokingly said, hey, we're in confession; nobody can see who's talking, so let's get down to brass tacks. Let's get down to honest, brutal, frank discussion while it's dark. Electricity was off for 45 minutes in the middle of my slide show, and I spent that whole 45 minutes brutally, frank and direct talking to collectors. Everybody recognizes my voice and you can recognize the voice of a few of the collectors. I mean, I know Doug and Dale Anderson's voice well enough when they talk. It was very interesting, very, very interesting how frank people got in the dark.

So after this slide show at Arrowmont, I go - I could turn the lights out and we could have a brutally frank discussion, but we're all adults here and hopefully you know me now and hopefully I've been around for a couple of weeks and you can see that I'm harmless, but I'm going to ask you questions if you don't ask me questions. Be brutally frank. Did you like my slide show? Put your hand up. And most of the audience did not like my slide show; 10 percent of the audience put their hands up, and I go, well, I find that interesting because I give a lot of talks and slide shows so I'd like to know what you didn't like. Thank you, all the people that appreciated my efforts to make this talk and put this show together.

I did focus on ideas and content because you haven't gotten that in the last three weeks and I feel like that's a part of learning and being an artist. And so I focused on that. I realize it's not the only part, but everybody else covered everything else. So I felt an obligation to cover that tonight. This talk was specifically put together for content and ideas. So I'm more interested in those of you in the audience that didn't like my slide show than

those that did - that had put his hand up.

I pointed to this man that had his hand up that didn't like my slide show. And I said. I don't know your name, but I've been seeing you around the school the last few weeks and please be frank. Tell me directly and exactly what you didn't like about my slide show. And he stands up and he says, your political beliefs; I disagree with your political beliefs, and your slide show was all about your political beliefs. I said, could you be more specific? And he said, yeah, I don't like you ramming your political beliefs down my throat. I said, that's very interesting and I appreciate your frankness, and I said, let's address that issue. Is there anybody else in here that didn't like my slideshow? And there was like 300 people in the audience. Is there anybody else that didn't like my slide show, that had your hand up agree with him that my slide show is all about my political beliefs? And 10, 15 people put their hand up that they agreed with him: I stuffed my political beliefs down their throat and they didn't like that.

So I said to the guy, I find that very interesting because I put this slide show together far more carefully than I usually do; usually I just pick works that I want to show as examples or overview or sometimes just ones that I like and, believe me, I don't like all of my work. So this time I put it together from an unusual perspective and I know exactly what's in the slide show. I spent a lot of time on it. Only four - I showed you 100 works of art; only four of them had political content or statements to make, and they didn't make a specific statement. The *Indian Nation* doesn't tell you particularly that I'm pissed off at the Americans that took their land away from the Indians. The *November 22* piece didn't particularly show you John Kennedy's assassination. *The Premonition* didn't show you nuclear war. But they are, I admit, they're political pieces; they're political statements. They're implied to make you think. But the point I want to make is I showed 100 slides, only four of them were political statements. And yet - I forget his name - Mr. so-and-so says all my slide show was about my political beliefs.

That shows you how strong they are, only four percent of my slide show was about my political beliefs, and yet 12, 15 people in this room agreed with him that my slide show was about my political beliefs. It was not about my political beliefs; it was about ideas. And ideas are important. You have to have an idea before you make something. At four percent, 12 or 15 of you got the impression that the whole slide show was about that, when only four percent was. I said, that tells me how strong political beliefs are and how strong an emotional response a political belief will elicit.

So to me, that reaffirms my need to make political statements - that it can have that kind of strength and impact reaffirms it to me. That stresses the importance of it and the success of those pieces - that those pieces could overwhelm 96 pieces. And in the 96 there were eight that were about beauty, but you didn't say my slide show was about beauty, you said my slid eshow was about my political beliefs. And only four, so that shows me how important ideas are and how important it is to make a forceful idea.

MS. RIEDEL: Was there any response to that?

MR. MARIONI: I said to the guy, I said, if you come to a school and nobody challenges your thinking - the way you think - you don't like the way I think? That's fine. That's the way it should be at a school. If nobody challenges your thinking, you should demand your money back. You did not get what you paid for. If you came to school, you should come to learn, and you should have your thinking stretched and challenged so it can be expanded and you can grow - grow your talents, grow your parameters of the way you think. He said, well, frankly I came for a vacation. And I said, excuse me? And he said, well, I hate to be so frank, but you're being frank, so I'll be frank, too. I came here for a vacation. I said, well then, buddy, you're in the wrong place. You should be on the beach in Fort Lauderdale [FL], because all the teachers that came here came to teach you. You're wasting your teachers' time, you're wasting your money, your wasting what this school is trying to accomplish. You should be sitting on the beach in Fort Lauderdale.

And the guy went, you're completely right. I am so sorry. You are exactly right. I'm mistaken. I completely agree with you. And he sat down. And I said, good, and I'm sorry I was so blunt and critical of you because it's not personal. I don't even know you. It's not personal, but I feel strongly; don't waste the teachers' time. You want a vacation? Don't come and dabble in the crafts. Don't dabble with ceramics or whatever. Don't waste our time. Don't waste the school's goal. I'm sorry I was so upset and critical. I don't mean it personally. I'm not trying to criticize you.

And he goes, you don't have to apologize; you are completely right. You have completely changed my mind from five minutes ago. I owe you an apology, is what he said, and you are completely right. I owe you an apology and I owe the school an apology. I completely agree with you. You made me see that.

And I said, thank you. I wasn't looking for an apology. I don't like to think in terms of right or wrong. All I like is to express myself and see if my ideas got shot down, and have you express yourself. And if you come to a school and want to grow your talents and expand your thinking, you need to have your thinking challenged. That is simply my goal, is to challenge your thinking. And so I purposely put the slideshow together to challenge your thinking, to show you the thinking process of being an artist.

I said, so, okay, there's still 12 or 15 of you that agreed with him. What do you think? Did I change your mind? And about eight of them put up their hands and went, yes. And three or four didn't. And I go, that's fine. My goal is not to change your mind. My goal is to talk about this issue honestly, and in order to do it honestly, I maybe was brutal, and I shouldn't be brutal. I try to remain a gentleman, but he upset me, obviously. And not one person got up and walked out of that, and we talked for 45 minutes. And previously question and answer was, at best, five minutes. We talked for 45 minutes.

The director of the school, Sandy Blaine, was gone that night. She had some other business to deal with. She was the director of the school and she was gone. But the whole school sat there for 45 minutes while we had this discussion about ideas and creativity and challenging your thinking and that. And then after 45 minutes we were all exhausted and we left. I cut it off and we ended and left. And the next morning I'm walking down the hall and I see Sandy Blaine coming the other way and I go, oh my God, now I'm going to get it. I told you I'd been kicked out of four schools - invited back to all four after they calmed down. And I think, here it goes again. I see her coming down the hall looking far too serious.

So I walk right up to her and I go, Sandy, I don't know what you've heard, and she just put her hand up and she said, I have heard nothing except your slide show. Every single person in this school is talking about it, everyone, down to the janitor, the driver. Everybody is talking about your slide show. I don't know what you said or what you did, but you lit this place on fire, and I want to thank you for it, and I'm sorry I missed it because this school is buzzing. I have never heard the buzz level anywhere near what it's like today. And I just came back in here in the middle of it. This school is buzzing, and so whatever you said, thank you. And she just walked on.

I thought, at least I didn't get kicked out of there. And I did get people talking, which is wonderful. I don't feel like people have to agree with me, and I really don't intend to stuff my political beliefs down anybody's throat. I'd like to, particularly George Bush's throat with both hands, but that's not my intention. So I teach the What's the Big Idea? class as a result of that. It woke me up to the fact that everybody focuses on technique, and if you're going to be an artist, you have to have ideas. I mean, not if you're - what's his name that we were slighting yesterday?

MS. RIEDEL: LeRoy Neiman?

MR. MARIONI: No, Jeff Koons. Jeff Koons: steal somebody else's idea if you don't have your own idea. But anyway, being a philosopher, I'm very interested in ideas. So after that experience I realized that I'm not going to teach - I always taught technique and creativity - always - but I'm going to teach this course called What's the Big Idea? That's creativity; technique comes later. So in the course description I would say, we will talk about ideas; you will have to formulate an idea, you will have to figure out what you want to do, and then I will help you do it. And it was very interesting. I think I taught that class about five times.

MS. RIEDEL: At Penland five times?

MR. MARIONI: No, at Pilchuck, Penland, once in Taipei in Taiwan and - let me think, where else? Maybe Japan once, I can't remember, but I was teaching a lot, and occasionally they would ask for a course description, and once a year I would do that one. And twice, I think, Ann taught that class with me, which was good. I love teaching with Ann. I'm becoming less patient as I get older. [Laughs.] Ann is still patient with students, and so we make a good counterbalance. So I've been teaching that class, What's the Big Idea, and focusing on ideas and creativity and only offering techniques afterwards. And I had this student, Dr. Michael Texido, the brilliant neurosurgeon that came and took my class because he's interested in problem solving and creativity, and that's another story.

What I've noticed is, like, a lot of times we have a debriefing at a school. At the end of the session, everybody gets together - faculty, teaching assistants, the director, assistant director - and we kind of brainstorm on what worked, what didn't work, what did they expect, what didn't they get. What should we do in the future? What should we do again? What should we try new? It's just kind of an informal brainstorming; drink a few beers, sit around and shoot the shit and try and work.

And I've noticed that when I teach the What's the Big Idea? class, it always comes up at the debriefing at the end how important that was and how many people, they always - no matter how many students I will accept, it's always way overbooked. There's waiting lists, and schools always go, well, maybe we should do that again; it was so successful, we had a huge waiting list for your class, and all your students gave you the highest evaluation at the end on their paper they had to fill out. And we need more people to talk about ideas and creativity.

Inevitably, every time that's happened, the other faculty has said, well, I'd like to teach creativity, but there's just not enough time. By the time I get through with all the techniques, there's not enough time left to teach creativity. And I go, that's a cop-out. You teach the way you want to teach. It's none of my business, but don't tell me you don't have enough time, because you can focus on creativity; you can interweave it with techniques.

You can interweave it with motivation, lifestyle examples. You can interweave it into anything. It's a cop-out for you to say that technique took up all your time.

I realize in your field there are a lot of techniques and a lot of ways, and basically students want techniques, but techniques are like book ornament; it's a formula; you can fill it out. But there is no formula for success or for creativity. Of course students want a formula for success, or they want a formula of where do you get your ideas or how are you creative, how do you sort out your ideas and what's important, what's not. There's no formula for that, so it's more difficult. And that, frankly, comes from your heart, who you are, your soul, who you are as a human being. That's important to you and it's important to me, so, yes, I made this whole class about it. It's that important to me that I focused this class singularly on that.

But it's important to me when I don't teach this class. I still - I emphasize finding your own voice as an individual. And I tell people, find your own voice, so you're passionate. Yves Klein was passionate about blue. If book learning told you you could be passionate about blue, you'd wonder what the hell I was talking about. How could anybody be passionate about blue? But if I show you Yves Klein's blue paintings and talked about his passion and what he accomplished with that passion for blue, then you would understand having a passion for blue.

If I talked about Robert Irwin's sense of space and illusion of space, in book learning it means nothing. I could tell you how to ride a bicycle, but if you don't get on the bicycle and ride it, you don't know how to ride a bicycle. Book learning only takes you so far. Some of the smartest people I know are self-taught or undereducated. Book learning and technique only takes you so far, and it's like secrets of techniques. That's one of the things I've been adamant my entire life, was against competition and for cooperation. All my life, even as a kid, I was not competitive. There is no sense in reinventing the wheel. If we cooperate, we can move forward. If I tell you how I developed an innovative technique, I can next year watch what you do with that technique, and I can grow from your perspective on how to do what I showed you.

So it's a cooperative effort; we all move forward by cooperating. And to me, that's what life's about and so I don't have secrets. You want to know how I did this, how I did that, how the pattern work is done - I've developed a lot of innovative work. I don't keep any secrets. I'll tell you quickly and easily and openly how I did it, and hopefully, I'll learn something back from you on how you do it.

And what I find is people whose work is only about technique, has no content, they're very secretive. They don't want anybody to know how they folded those veils of color into the cast glass. I go, because that's all they've go,t is that one technique. I said, the only people that keep secrets are the people who only have one secret to keep. If you have a lot of secrets to keep, you're not going to be good at keeping them.

So I'm not secretive. It's remarkable because I've gone to people that are really secretive and asked them how they did something and they've told me. It's like, sometimes - like once I interrupted Dominic Labino talking to Fritz Dreisbach because I had a problem with something I was trying to make work. And I didn't know Dominic. I mean, I knew who he was; he was very, very important with Harvey Littleton - built the first glass furnace that an artist was able to dip in - a blowpipe into. Dominic was the genius glass chemist engineer and inventor, and Harvey was actually the promoter.

And so I saw Dominic at this conference, and I went up and interrupted him and introduced myself. He said, I know who you are, Paul; so what's up? What do you want, or something. I said, I'm having problems. I've been doing this and this and this, and I can't figure out why I'm not getting this, and he goes, oh, that's actually pretty easy. What you're doing - your A, B, and C is right, but D - if you change that D to a shorter time or something, you'll get E - the results you want. I went, thank you very much. I appreciate that. Sorry to interrupt you, and left - walked away.

And later, Fritz came up to me and said, that was so remarkable. Dominic doesn't share information with anybody. You walked up to ask him a question and he tells you the answer right away. And so after you walked away, I said to Dominic, what's up, Dominic? Why were you - you don't even know Paul. And he goes, I know who Paul is. And I go, why did you tell him the answer? And he goes, he did his homework. He asked the right questions. He knew what to ask me, so why shouldn't I tell him? I didn't tell him everything. He'd already done four-fifths of the work. I just told him the last step. He'd already done his homework, so of course I'll tell him the last part that he needs.

So that was a lesson to learn, and that's happened several times with people I know are very secretive about their techniques. They've told me, basically, I guess, because I already had thought about it enough to ask the right question. If somebody comes up to me and says, how do you cast glass? I go, well, do you have three months? I'll tell you. Or do you want the simple answer - the three-hour version instead of the three-month version.

But if somebody comes up and says, I'm casting in the sand and I'm not getting a good detail or something, and what do you think? What can I do? I go, mix your particle sand size from 120 and 200 - two different - sized

particles will give you better detail than only fine sand will because each grain fits together tighter if they're different sizes. I'll tell them if they've already tried it, done it, and don't see how to improve it. I'm the same way except that I don't keep secrets and I'm not known for keeping secrets.

So where were we going to move on to after that rambling discourse?

MS. RIEDEL: What's the Big Idea, but it seems like we've -

MR. MARIONI: Yes, I've covered that. Politics.

MS. RIEDEL: Writers and periodicals -

MR. MARIONI: Oh, writers, periodicals.

MS. RIEDEL: - that were significant or not.

MR. MARIONI: I'm going to try and be diplomatic here and as kind as I can be, but fundamentally critics are parasites in the art world. They suck off the art world and don't contribute back. I'm so sick of critics that basically write press releases. I mean, I've seen articles that critics have written in newspapers of shows they have not seen; they write article off the press release. They write the article off the book they've read about the artist. They write the article about what they think the artist is doing and don't even bother to go see the show. And I've asked a couple of critics directly: Did you see that show? And they go, no.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. MARIONI: Yeah. So I have very little respect for critics. They're parasites. They suck off of the artist and the art world and don't contribute back.

There are exceptions, Arthur Danto. I read Arthur Danto. He's more a philosopher than a critic. He'll delve into Leonardo da Vinci while he's writing an article about whoever - [Amedeo] Modigliani or something. He's got a broad view and he looks at things with a broad view. He's a smart guy. He's more a philosopher. He's more interested in ideas than being what we consider a critic. Most critics, it's like they go see a sculpture show, they don't talk about volume or space; they talk about how many shows that artist has had or how long he's been making this work, how many assistants he has, what color, these are all wood. It's like, I thought sculpture was about volume and space. You didn't even mention that once in the whole review of a sculpture show. So I have little respect for critics.

It has backfired on me, because I gave a talk at a conference. There was four critics, and I uttered the phrase, critics are parasites in the art world, and I've paid for that one. [They laugh.] Walter Darby Bannard will never forgive me. Not for that comment, for another comment.

I read the periodicals, too, and quite frankly they're all glossy, slicky paper with full-page ads for galleries. I know they have to generate revenue, but they're no more than a promo - most of the art magazines, particularly the crafts magazines and glass and *American Craft* and studio magazines. They have to generate revenue, and they go to the galleries that are successful enough to have full-page artists, glorious pictures of a single artwork on a full page in a magazine that - you could take - I don't have it, but the current issue of *American Craft* is like 80 pages, and probably 60, 50 anyway, are ads, so all it's doing is promoting the success. You might see four ads for Chihuly in the same issue at four different galleries. And then there's three, maybe four articles featuring an artist, and then there's three, four pages of single exhibitions or commissions or brief artist introduction to a young, upcoming artist.

Those things are good, but basically even *Art in America* and the big journals are the same way. They might be 200 pages or 160 pages of glossy ads and 40 pages of text. Most of what I read is, like I say, press releases. It doesn't delve into concepts or spatial relationships or color - things that are really part of an artwork. It more delves into how long the artist has been doing it and how he does it, and that this is his blue period or that right now all the young hotshots are the Chinese that are doing installation work with found objectives, automobiles and pianos. They don't really, like, focus on what they're writing about.

And a few critics - and I guess I should pull names. There's one critic that has reviewed me several times that occasionally writes an interesting, intelligent, insightful article, but more often than not he completely misses the mark. And so the last time he reviewed me for a national publication, I said, only on the condition that I see it before it gets printed -

[END TAPE 5 SIDE A.]

- because I'm sick of you missing the mark. And he went, absolutely not; I would never show an artist a review I wrote before it was printed - absolutely not. I refuse. I'm trying not to use his name. And I go, well, you've

missed the mark before, and I really am not interested in being in a national publication and it being bullshit. If it's going to be a national publication, how about we do an interview with me so that you can put your thoughts in and I can put my thoughts in. He goes, nope, absolutely not. I write the article. I'm the critic. It's my thoughts. And if you don't like it, we won't do it. I said, well, let me think about it.

The publication called me up and, come on, Paul, you've worked with him before, you know what he's like, and we want to publish this article. I go, okay, I'll take a chance, and particularly because I've talked to him about this problem I have, I'll take the chance. So he writes the article, he refuses to let me see it, and I go, what about just technical grammatical, getting names or dates right or something? He goes you're not going to see it; you'll get the first copy of the issue.

So it comes out, I read it, and it's like, what did you do, smoke a joint and go off in la la land and think that my work is about what you're talking about? What you say my work is about has no relationship to my work whatsoever. This is your fantasy. You might say you're the critic, and you have to right to express your viewpoint, but you ought to at least get in the ballpark. You should not be talking about my work when you haven't asked me what my work is about or what I was trying to accomplish, and obviously you smoke way too much dope.

And he said, well, I do smoke a lot of dope, but that's beside the point. I go, it's not beside the point; you went off on some tangent that seemed real to you at the time and insightful, but frankly has nothing to do with my work. I like getting the publicity and I like that you were complimentary, but I'd like it even more if you were at least insightful about my work. Talk to me, ask me, and then take your own evaluation. Was I successful in accomplishing my intent? I have no problem with you evaluating that.

That actually has been about two years, and it was the last time I consented to an article. I'll consent to interviews because when Richard Yelle started UrbanGlass - I forget what it was called - in New York City, and Manhattan in the mid-'70s, he immediately invited me back there to - as a guest artist, and I immediately accepted, because it was one of the first public art facilities in the nation and it was glassblowing and it was in Manhattan and I thought Richard was a particularly sharp guy.

And he started a glass magazine. I think it was called *Glass*. It was a newspaper format, and for a couple of years while he was editor, whoever had a show, he would interview the artist. And so the artist got to talk about their work, and he added his insight as to what the artist talked about their work.

I was religiously devoted to reading it because I totally want to know what the artist thinks and I totally want another objective, outside opinion of whether the artist is on the right track. Like Arthur Danto: he'll tell you what the artist's intent is, and then he'll tell you whether he thinks the artist accomplished that. Of course, he's reviewing people he thinks accomplished it. But most of the critics today, they don't do that. They don't want the artist's voice in there. They think they're so important that only their interpretation is what matters. That's what they're paid for, that's what they're professionals as, but frankly if you smoke too much dope and go off on a tangent, you aren't even in the right ballpark. So why are we paying you to evaluate the artist when you're off in la la land? You got your own agenda. It's like these tangents I go off on while we're talking now. I try to come back for the point, but it's like -

MS. RIEDEL: And often they elaborate the point.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah, at least come back to the point. Don't just go off in la la land. [They laugh.] So I'm having a trouble with critics and periodicals, publications. Dick Marquis's book, *Objects* [Tina Oldknow, Richard Marquis. *Richard Marquis Objects*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998] is great. Tina Oldknow did a good job; Dick's an eccentric and interesting and intelligent character, and Tina Oldknow is able to express that and express it in an interesting, humorous, creative, intelligent way.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. That's a great book.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. And Robert Irwin's *Seeing Is the Act of Forgetting the Name* [Lawrence Wechsler. *Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982]. Robert Irwin - that's the artist's voice. I've got a deeper understanding and appreciation of Robert Irwin reading his words of his work. I've read Salvador Dalí's *Diary of a Genius* [New York: Doubleday, 1965] and several other books written by artists; [Leo] Castelli's book, I forget what it was called, about being an art dealer. So it's far more interesting to me to read what the artist says about their work. And if the critic is able to add to that, great, but seldom do I see that.

MS. RIEDEL: I think that Robert Irwin book is based on hundreds of hours of interviews with Lawrence Wechsler, so there was lots of material to work with.

MR. MARIONI: Yes. And my brother Joe, being a radical painter - and maybe I need to define radical painter as

recording the act of painting - no content, no imagery, not even abstract. You would probably call them monochromatic - a yellow canvas, a green canvas, a blue canvas. He and his fellow radical painters call it radical painting. And of course, they're way over the edge into hermeneutics. It's all about words and theory and concept, and the painting is almost like footnote to the hermeneutics. That's fine; that's what they want. And my brother Joe is particularly good at that, and there's a whole school or cadre of hermeneutics. It's become a subset of the art world.

But, frankly, to me, art is an expression of the human spirit, not an intellectual jerk off. [Laughs.] What do they call it? Mental masturbation. Art is not mental masturbation. Art is an expression of the human spirit. It has to touch my spirit. So I can get minimal art, and now I could sit for 20 minutes in front of a Robert Irwin until I absorb the atmosphere, but personally it's not my taste, only my respect that I will sit there and look at minimal art until it strikes me. Not my taste, only out of respect for what they're trying to accomplish.

So everybody has a different viewpoint, thank God. If we all thought the same, it would be a terrible, terrible world. If we all made the same art, it would be as boring as hell - hell's not boring - boring as Bush. [Laughs.] So thank God there's all these different voices. Thank God there's all these different ways of approaching it. Thank God we can be civil and argue and yell and scream and dismiss and support different things. That's what makes life a richer experience. I definitely don't have the answers. I have my personal viewpoints, but no one else has to accept them.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's talk about the humor that runs through your work.

MR. MARIONI: Humor is so crucial. We so desperately need it. The fact that we've lost hope is bad enough. I mean, on the blackboard there is my favorite quote from [Franz] Kafka: "There is infinite hope, but not for us." Of course, classic Kafka, but so true - [they laugh] - there is infinite hope, but not for us. It's just like one of those classic statements. There's two statements up there - what's the other one? [Friedrich] Nietzsche, "We have art in order not to die of the truth." And so, again, it's kind of so true; that's what art does. Humor is such an important part, and informally we talked about defusing tense situations with clients and commissions with humor rather than getting mad or ignoring the problem. Humor is so important in society.

I desperately say, where is Lenny Bruce when we need him? It's like Lenny Bruce was the pioneer and in his era, but there's a million more targets today for Lenny Bruce than there was in publicly saying "cocksucker." There are a million more targets that Lenny could successfully attack and entertain us with. And humor, I find, is an important part of it.

And every once in a while I will focus on humor in my work; the Whistling Vases are about two things. I've seen Francis Bacon's retrospective in New York. I forget where. MoMA maybe - I can't remember - five, six, eight years ago. And I love Francis Bacon, and also by seeing how he could paint a human figure so that you weren't sure if it was right-side up, upside down, but you knew it was a human figure. It had enough skin color and shape and protuberances to know.

And I looked at that very carefully and thought about how far can I reduce the human figure and still make it immediately recognizable as a human figure, so as soon as you look at it, you know, even though it's nowhere near. So I ended up with the Whistling Vases, which are only a butt on one end, a naked butt and lips on the lip of the vessel form. Nothing else, no arms, legs, breasts, head, penis, nothing - just a bare butt, cute butt, tight little cute butt and lips. Everybody knows, as soon as you look at it, it's a human figure. That was my goal: reduce the human figure as far as I could under the influence of Francis Bacon.

Humor is also a very important goal in that series of pieces. They're kinetic; they rock and wobble crazily. Most of my kinetic pieces have a pattern, a rhythm in their rocking. But the Whistling Vases - they're made in a certain shape because I understand geometry of curves, weight, balance, counterweight, how a piece will rock and how long and what direction and all that. These were made to rock crazily, wobbly, wiggle their butts, spin around and kiss you. [Laughs.] I thought they were a complete success. They did both: they were funny and they immediately reflected on the human figure and in a funny way. They were in motion. Most people thought they were too weird, and I didn't sell a single one out of the show. I put some in auctions, which is a guaranteed sale. And actually the Bronfmans - Charles and Andy [Andrea] - bought one in the last Pilchuck auction, before Andy was killed. And they have a great collection, so I got in a great collection by default, by putting it in an auction and they bought it out of the auction. They have several of my pieces, by the way.

So the humor part of it - it's like we need humor, and everybody takes art too seriously. And I swore I wouldn't be an artist, because my two brothers were such snobs and so pompous about, I'm an artist; I was like, screw you. I'll be outside working on my hot rod [laughs], and I'll take the garbage out on my way out. But anyway, people take art far too seriously. People take everything far too seriously and analyze everything to death, but - so a little humor, I like. Humor entertains me and, hopefully, everyone else in life. With no hope and a bleak future, we need humor. And often, it's like they say that people in refugee camps in Lebanon that were getting

shelled by the Israelis in the late '80s were eating grass to stay alive and writing poetry to keep their spirit alive.

And so that's the way human beings are; crush them and they will sprout right back up and write poetry while you're crushing them. That's the way human beings are, and thankfully that's the way humans are. Who knows how many times some tyrannical lunatic has tried to crush the human race or species or tribe or subset. We spring back. So humor is a part of that, and so I like to put humor in.

I'm good at ridiculing myself. I don't need other people to do it. I appreciate it when other people do it. At the end of every class I have ever taught, I always say, okay who does the best Paul Marioni voice imitation? And the whole class points to one person. I go, okay, let's hear it. How good are you? You've been practicing for weeks; how good are you? Come on, do it. And they get all embarrassed and they do the Paul Marioni voice imitation. [Riedel laughs.] Why not? I got a weird voice. Why not be able to laugh at it or make fun of it or realize that other people are. Dante was really good at it. He was so good at it he used to be able to call up and order supplies; said hi, this is Paul Marioni, send me a bill, I need whatever, and he'd order stuff and I'd get the bill, and I go what's this for? Oh, give me that. I ordered that. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Was it ever an asset - your voice?

MR. MARIONI: An asset? Occasionally somebody goes, you've got a really sexy voice - occasionally. Or, you got a memorable voice. Like, I'll call somebody on the phone and I don't even need to say, this is Paul. They always go, oh, hi Paul. I can't even give a stranger an obscene phone call. Pick a number out of the phonebook and call up and they go, is this Paul Marioni? [They laugh.] But I have a distinctive voice. I have a large nose. I make jokes about it. I always kid - people are kidding me about my nose. I go, I've got a real nose; you've got that pathetic little fake nose - that's half a nose, and you're making fun of my real nose? You're just jealous because you don't have a real nose. I know I've got a big nose. How can I deny it? Dante once asked me, was your nose born and the rest of you grew on later? I go, you just keep it up; you'll have a big nose, too. I said, when you grow up, you'll have a big one, don't worry. Marina got a pretty good-sized one.

But we have to be able to laugh at ourselves. Unfortunately, most of us take ourselves far too seriously. It's, again, part of the, I'm important; my life has meaning. It's fundamental. It's who we are. We want that meaning and we want to think that we're important and made a difference. We want our life to have meant something. I understand that. That's a fundamental. I understand that; I just don't buy it. We're insignificant. We're nothing. And this is the point where you're supposed to say, "I'm *next* to nothing," after I claim I'm nothing. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry. I wasn't cued in on that.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah, I fed you a good line - a perfect opportunity.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm trying to tie up loose ends now.

MR. MARIONI: And I'm okay with that. I'm not afraid of dying. I've had a rich, full life - far longer than I deserved. I don't care about the history books. I'm happy to fade into obscurity. I had my 15 minutes of fame. Thank you for that. I'm happy to be insignificant and fade away. I've enjoyed my life. I've had tragedies, sufferings, mistakes, painful, but overall I've been a lucky man. I've really enjoyed my life. I was part of a movement that got started and spread worldwide and will be here for the rest of humanity. How lucky is that - to be part of a movement like that? I've had great, deep, loving friendships. I have wonderful kids. And I don't need fame or history books or anybody to thank me for anything or feel like I was important or made a difference. I really don't need any of that.

It's like I said, ego, I see as your enemy. It gets in your way. What I need is, like, a frontal lobotomy, so that I could get rid of the past, so I could only think about the future. I focus on the future, but inevitably the past creeps in. Memory creeps in, past experience creeps in, and I really don't care; the past is past. Whoever said the past is not only over, it's not past, was wrong. It is. Why linger in the past? You cannot change the past. Yes, mistakes were made. Yes, we had too much fun, but why linger on that? We are only going towards the future. I would like to only think about the future.

MS. RIEDEL: We linger for a minute in the -

MR. MARIONI: Briefly in the moment of the now.

MS. RIEDEL: And in the past of GAS, we were going to talk about your experience -

MR. MARIONI: GAS and board experience -

MS. RIEDEL: - and board of directors. You were president for a couple of years, yes?

MR. MARIONI: No, I was president of Canyon Cinema, but I was never president of GAS, and I will not seek nor

will I accept the nomination. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: But that community was significant for you, yes?

MR. MARIONI: GAS is still significant. I mean, GAS is why the studio glass movement succeeded, because Henry Halem, Marvin Lipofsky, Fritz Dreisbach, and a few others had the incredible insight that if they were going to make something happen, they had to get together and share information and be supportive of each other, before I came on board - before I met any of them. So they started it, and it's been singularly important in the success of the studio glass movement; the fact that the people explored and got excited about the medium of glass, got together, shared information is the single reason that the studio glass movement took off and succeeded.

A lot of people played a part, but that fact that people - the GAS - of GAS - is it, period. And the people that played a part deserve credit, and the part that they played is important, but the fact that in the beginning they got together and shared information, supported each other in order to move forward, is what did it. Education - the form of education, cooperation instead of competition.

It's like, what was his name? Marcele. French guy tried to blow glass in the '20s or so. Marcele Marineau. Blew glass in the '20s - one guy. It never got off the ground, never went anyplace else. One guy couldn't make it happen. George Orr, one guy, talented, insightful, future-thinking, couldn't make it happen. Several guys get together, share the information, support each other - it starts moving forward. Several more people join in, it starts moving a little faster, bigger. Several more join in, and suddenly you have a movement. As long as it stays cooperative, sharing information, education, it kept snowballing, moving forward.

One person cannot start a movement. [Mahatma] Gandhi did, but I can't think of anybody else. [Laughs.] So it's the GAS and NCECA and SNAG [Society of North American Goldsmiths] and all the other ones that have been vital, critical in the crafts medium. And we haven't talked about art and craft and that we buried that dead horse hopefully 20, 30 years ago. But in the crafts medium it's still difficult. The Northwest Annual this year is being held at the Tacoma Museum. It's about 40 artists. It's open competition. Not one single clay person, not one single jeweler, not one single glass person in the Northwest - got into the Northwest Annual this year. That's pathetic. You can call the Northwest Annual an art annual, but you cannot exclude the bulk of artistic talent working in glass, clay, and metal in the Northwest.

MS. RIEDEL: That's extraordinary.

MR. MARIONI: Yeah, I haven't raised hell with them yet, but believe me they're going to hear about it.

And it was the same with Flintridge in California. You know that one, Flintridge Foundation. They started up about eight years ago for grants to mature artists - had to be working 25 years or more. California, Oregon, and Washington. First year I applied, they got 10 $25,000 grants. All 10 went to California, and so I wrote them a long, angry letter. Why do you have an open competition for California, Oregon, and Washington when you think you are it and all 10 of them went to California artists? Just have a California competition. Don't waste Oregon or Washington artists' time. They called me up and said, we received your letter; we thought about it. You're right; it's an open competition for California, Oregon, and Washington. I said, what's even more pathetic is one of the jurors was from Oregon and one of the jurors was from Washington, and yet they gave all 10 grants to California artists. That's pathetic.

So they said, you're entirely right; we will keep it open to Oregon, California, and Washington. Second year they gave grants, out of the 10 grants - I can't remember - possibly eight went to California, one to Oregon, and one Washington. I might be wrong; it might have been eight to California and two to Washington and one to Oregon or none to Oregon.

And I called them up and said, you bothered to call me up and tell me that I made my point two years ago when I wrote you an angry letter, and this is pathetic. I don't expect any quota. I don't expect you to have, like, five in California, two in Oregon, and three in Washington, but this is pathetic. You're wasting our time. Get your act together. You want to be a professional grants organization, philanthropic; figure it out, get your act together. Don't waste our time and don't insult us as artists. And so, okay, Mr. Marioni, point well made and we'll make sure we have a more balanced selection.

Last year, two years ago, I think it was five in California, two in Oregon, and three in Washington - all painters and sculptors. Not one single person worked in any crafts medium.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is pretty extraordinary, on the West Coast especially.

MR. MARIONI: And so, next angry phone call. How can you say this is open to all the visual arts? It's not. It's for painters and maybe a few sculptors. It's like the Guggenheim [John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation] in

New York. When [Robert] Motherwell was the juror at the Guggenheim. All the Guggenheims went to New York painters. Why is this a nationwide, all-media grant opportunity when the juror is Motherwell, and he only gives Guggenheims to New York painters?

The next year, what was his name? A sculptor from Idaho that did *Back Seat Dodge* [Ed Keinholz, *Back Seat Dodge '38*, 1964] - he's dead now. It's in the Whitney - a shortened old car with a couple in the back seat fornicating. What was his name? Lived in Idaho - anyway, a major piece in the Whitney after I complained that all the Guggenheims went to New York painters; the next year that sculptor in Idaho got one, and the rest of them went to the New York painters.

So two years ago I complained to the Flintridge, not one single person in the crafts media has got any of your grants. It's been five years now and it's open to all media. Why don't you just stop saying it's open to all media. This grant is for painters and sculptors. Oh no, no, it's open to all media. And I go, you haven't proven that and I'm just not going to leave you alone. I called you up every year. And they go, we know who you are; [Riedel laughs] you've called us up every year. We listen to you, Paul. Tell us what's on your mind. We listen to you. I go, okay, not one single person this year; two clay people from Washington got Flintridge and so that's good. I applied, I didn't get one, but it's good. It's still good. My feelings aren't hurt. They're doing what they said. And then the letter comes out: We can no longer fund Flintridge. This year's will have been the last. So it took seven years to get my point across to get them to do what they advertised that they did philanthropically, and now they're out of money and they can't do it anymore.

So I've been on boards of several organizations. I've decided not to do that anymore, mainly because I don't like to fight with my friends. And you go on a board and you become friends with everybody, and by the time you've gone off the board, you've fought with them. And fortunately, like on the GAS board, when I was on there, I really pissed off several, two or three of my friends. One of them - I won't name names - one of them is the curator of a major museum in New York and he doesn't speak to me anymore, even though I apologized. And the other one, who's a fellow artist, who wouldn't speak to me anymore and I've apologized to, and now we're best friends again. It took a couple of years.

My intent is not to piss people off. My intent is to move us forward, and I move us forward by being blunt and direct and saying what's on my mind. Here's the problem. And like Malcolm X, I try and zero in on the fundamental problem, not all the smokescreen around it. And so because I'm blunt and direct, some people take that wrong or are offended by it. I won't say, take it wrong; they're offended by it. But really, beating around the bush, I find you can go off on the wrong track or not get the problem solved. Being diplomatic and polite has the same shortfall; you might not get the problem solved. Being blunt and direct, at least you can talk about it, and you can focus in on what the simple problem is in the middle of all this bullshit that's going on.

I'm not particularly - like I say, I don't want to piss anybody off and I don't particularly care if people like me or not. I'm who I am. If you like me, great. If I like you, even better. If you don't like me, see you later, have a good day. I want to move forward. I'm looking at the future and I don't hold grudges or want to linger in the past.

I find that, as I've said, I don't expect to get my way, but I demand to have my say. And if I say it blunt and direct, and if I offend you, I'm sorry that I offended you. I didn't mean to. I said it blunt and direct so we can attack the problem, see what your thoughts are, what my thoughts are, what someone else's thoughts are. Often that works great and it quickly solves a problem. Sometimes it totally backfires and people get mad at you and never forgive you. So I kind of feel like there's a new problem coming down the road at a hundred miles an hour. I'm sorry I offended you on this last one, but excuse me, I've got to see which way I've got to dodge for this next problem coming down the road.

So I try not to linger on that, and occasionally I go back and try again. And I have apologized to people who were offended, even though I didn't intend to offend them, only because I do want to move it forward, and so if somebody is offended, you're not likely to move it forward.

And occasionally, like the man in the audience at Arrowmont, I have successfully changed their mind completely. So that's rewarding. That encourages me to be blunt and direct. And often I'm asked to be the spokesperson for some problem. It's like behind the scenes, there's politics in everything, every school, every publication, every gallery, every critic, everything has politics, and often it's one of the reasons I freelance instead of contract teach, because contract teaching, I just got sucked into the politics of whatever school I was at - all the schools I've taught - contract teaching at, I got sucked into the politics. It's not why I'm there. I'm passionate, so I get involved, but it's not why I'm there; I'm there to teach. So freelancing was much easier. I didn't get involved in the politics.

A lot of times, though, because I've been blunt and direct, I'll be at a school and something's going on, everybody's talking about it behind the scenes, and then they'll come to me and go, Paul, would you bring this up at the board meeting, please? You're the only one that can do it. And I go, yes, sure, I agree with you. It's a

problem and yes, we need to solve it. And nobody is willing to talk about it openly, so, yes, I'll bring it up. And I'll bring it up at the board meeting, and everybody starts cleaning their fingernails and examining the floor. It's like, hey, wait a minute, you guys; don't leave me dangling out here by myself. You asked me to bring it up and now I'm not seeing any support. Come on, you guys, we're going to talk about it. I'm bringing it up and we're not going to ignore this issue. That's part of the problem; nobody has been willing to talk about it. You asked me to talk about it. You're not getting away now; I'm not letting you off the hook now. We are going to talk about this issue. And I bring it up.

At some of the schools it was over pay. I don't believe in asking artists to volunteer their time and talent to the extent that we're asked today. There's too many good causes, too many worthy causes. You can give to the AIDS halfway house, the burns clinic, Pilchuck, Penland, Haystack, the opera, the gay men's choir. It just is endless. Everybody wants artists to contribute time or talent or product.

When this all started 25 years ago, I told everybody, you're going to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. The artists have good hearts and are supportive, particularly of worthy causes, whether it's a food bank or whatever. Artists are liberals and humanitarians and supportive, and they're going to support you, but you're going to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. You've got to agree to only have an auction this year. Not every year because it's integral to your budget. Or you have auctions for four years, and the fifth year you have an auction and all the proceeds go to the artist as a thank you for the four years that artists donated their time and talent.

Everybody said, it doesn't work that way, Paul. I go, I know it doesn't work that way. I'm trying to make it work that way, because you're going to bleed us to death. I said this 25 years ago when the auctions started. Ten years ago I said, I'm bleeding to death. I'll give three pieces a year to an auction. I'm not giving 13 anymore, or 18. I'm going to give three, and I'm sorry, but I have my priorities. Certain things I believe in are going to get my work free to an auction, but how can you make 50 percent of your annual budget by relying on artists' good will? You're not a professional organization. You haven't developed the base, the infrastructure to support you, whether it's an endowment or gifts of philanthropists or whatever. You're not a professional organization; 50 percent of your budget is coming from the goodwill of artists. Get real. Why do we have to keep supporting you to keep you alive?

John and Anne Hauberg funded Pilchuck for about 10 years - millions of dollars out of their private bank account. And then John Hauberg said, the school's built, the infrastructure, the facilities, the program, housing, food - everything's done. I'm done. You've got three years and then you're weaned. I don't give any more money. You've got three more years; figure it out. I've been paying all the bills, yet this was about after 10 years. You've got three more years. Get on your own two feet.

That's the way I feel. I haven't given them millions, but that's the way I feel. You want to be a professional organization; you develop that. It's essential. That's your budget. That's what keeps you functioning. That's essential. Wean yourself from artists' generosity. When you have a calamity or catastrophe or disaster - the school burns down - artists will give all their work to an auction to raise funds to help you out, but don't make us 50 percent of your budget. Nobody listened - nobody. Where are we today?

It's not that I'm particularly insightful. I make a lot of predictions and I'm often wrong; that one I was right. That's where we are today. All the arts organizations rely on it, and hundreds of millions of dollars are raised off the generosity of artists. For years I said, give the artists back 50 percent; that's what the gallery does. You still get 50 percent for nothing. You don't even have a gallery or a staff or lighting or invitations or wine and cheese. Give the artists back 50 percent. Well, we can't do that, Paul, or we won't have enough money for next year. I go, well, artists are expected to give you 100 percent? Give the artist back 50 percent. You're still getting 50 percent. Artists will feel much better about it. Collectors will get better work because the artists will give better work. It's a win, win situation. You'll get more artists that will donate. We can't do that, Paul.

MS. RIEDEL: No one ever tried?

MR. MARIONI: After 10 years, now a lot of them are giving 10 percent or 20 percent back to the artist - after 10 years of me arguing with them. Artists are too generous, but artists have struggled, so they are sympathetic. It's just like anybody that's ever been poor is forever sympathetic to the poor, even after they aren't. But anybody that's never been poor ignores the poor. So artists are sympathetic. They've been there. They've struggled, so they're willing to help, but we're being bled to death. It's excessive, particularly with less government funding and with less philanthropy.

John and Anne Hauberg came from old money. They gave away millions and didn't expect anything in return. These young Microsoft millionaires, they want to buy a Porsche. They don't want to support Pilchuck or buy an artist's work. They want a Lamborghini and a house in Florida and one in Seattle, both. They aren't philanthropists. One supporter gave $5,000 to Pilchuck and wanted to know why he didn't get a building named after him or a plaque or anything. It's like, John and Anne Hauberg gave seven million; they never got a building

named after them. They never got a plaque. They never even asked for one. True philanthropists are getting scarce.

If you read that Warren Buffet is giving $37 billion to Bill and Melinda Gates, is remarkable. Bill and Melinda Gates are stopping childhood disease in poor countries around the world; they're promoting education, giving vaccinations and clean water and stopping malaria. They're doing a world of good, to use a pun, and it's remarkable. They've got the money to do it, and it's remarkable that Warren Buffet would say, I don't have the time or knowledge of where to disperse my wealth, so I'll give my wealth to Bill and Melinda Gates. It's remarkable. I mean, the guy should at least have a statue on the Mall in Washington or be canonized after he dies. [They laugh.] But it's getting fewer and fewer.

When I started 35 years ago, there were patrons. They paid artists monthly stipends just to keep them working. John Hauberg paid -

MS. RIEDEL: What's changed, do you think?

MR. MARIONI: Greed - personal greed. Reagan said it as president: Greed is good. And whoever said, whoever dies with the most toys wins. It's greed. It's personal greed. I want all I can get. The more I get, the bigger man I am.

[END TAPE 5 SIDE B.]

And they don't think about other people or artists or suffering or any of that. Anne Hauberg, she's still alive, 87 years old, but if she hears a young artist is struggling, she just coincidentally shows up at her studio and buys a piece. That's the way she is. That's the generosity and the spirit of a full, magnificent woman. It's not about what she's going to get. They never - John and Anne Hauberg never ask for anything at Pilchuck, ever, even to the smallest detail, nothing, and they gave seven, I think $7 million to build that place. That's the generosity of a full spirit. But today that's not happening. I mean, the Shirleys [John and Mary Shirley] give money for educational things, and have been very supportive and generous towards things that are educational.

And there is a few collectors that will, like, support an artist, not with monthly stipends, but will go to each show and buy a piece. And there's a couple that do that for me, couple of collectors. They go to every show I have and buy a piece and have for years. There's one - I have one - I had a couple of early patrons, the Sindlers in San Francisco, huge, huge art collectors, took a liking to my work and bought my work and then met me and took a liking to me, and were very, very generous and supportive of me. It's Allan and Lenore Sindler; they're in their 80s now, and I'm sure are unknown, but they were major, major art collectors for years.

And I have this one doctor that has bought a piece from me every single year, usually at Christmas, for the last 20, 22 years; just kind of shows up before Christmas, and says, what did you make this year? And looks around and goes, well, I think I'll take that one. Can I take that one? I go, sure. And it's his way of supporting me, and there's some collectors in L.A. that have been buying my work. Every show now for about eight years, they've bought a piece. And they've been buying some of the best pieces, and they said they were going to give them to L.A. County [Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA]. They've already agreed to give my work to L.A. County. And so - but they're few, they're very few, and I don't know a single artist today that gets a monthly stipend from a patron. The few actually sell work. They come and buy work.

MS. RIEDEL: Shall we talk briefly about your collection?

MR. MARIONI: My collection? [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Five hundred pieces?

MR. MARIONI: Out of control. Over 500. There's 100 Dante goblets right there on those shelves - 100.

MS. RIEDEL: How many years does your collection span? Well, right. We've discussed that -

MR. MARIONI: Moved - moved into this building January 1, 1979 - December 30. The collection dates from there. I collect - my previous collection is in my home in California in East Bay. And so, yeah, over 500 pieces of glass -

MS. RIEDEL: Spanning 35 years?

MR. MARIONI: They - no, everything is from '78 on. Everything I had before, that is in California, because I didn't plan.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. MARIONI: I have to take a break.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

[Audio break.]

So you were talking about your collection.

MR. MARIONI: Collection, okay. By the collection, I have - we were going to talk about the glass collection because I have over 1,000 artworks, and more than 500 of them are glass, contemporary studio glass. Soon as I got interested in glass, late '69 or early '70, I immediately started - I had my first show in '71, and immediately all these other artists came out of the woodwork, and told me they were working with glass, trying to make something happen, and we cross-infected each other with our enthusiasm. And I immediately started trading work, my work for their work.

There was so much talent and so much excitement and a lot of clunkers. [Laughs.] None of us was very good, but it was exciting. We all thought it was a radical advance, and we have made radical advances, but those early years, we made a lot of doorstops. [Laughs.] Clunkers, heavy, ugly, crappy glass, but I started collecting immediately just because of the excitement of what everybody felt about they were doing, and what possibilities were. So what we are looking at in my home in Seattle is more than 500 pieces of glass from the contemporary studio glass movement.

My collection's different than most because, first of all, I'm not a collector. [Laughs.] I can say that with impunity. But by that I mean I don't go to the galleries and buy the big names, the successes. Most glass collections have the Chihulys and the Bertil Vallien, all the usual suspects, whereas I have everybody - people that started in glass and were influential in their early days and then went on to become doctors or stockbrokers, who don't work with glass anymore but were instrumental in starting a studio glass movement. So I have a lot of unusual work. I also - I have work by well - known artists like Chihuly that tried an experimental piece and didn't like it and didn't go in that direction, and gave me the piece and then went off on another direction. So I have some very unusual pieces by established artists that all the other glass collectors have, but they don't have the oddity piece.

So I never tried to put on - by collecting, I never tried to put on my sense of did I like it or not. Whether I liked it or not was irrelevant. My only criteria for collecting was that the artists express themselves, because, basically, originality is not being the first person to do something; it's almost impossible to be the first person to do something. Originality is expressing your idea in your own way. Sure, it's an idea another artist has used. Sure, it's an idea 500 other artists have used, but if you express it in your own way, you're being original, and so that's been my criteria.

So people all the time come in here because this room we're being - talking in - is jam-packed. I have 14-and-a-half-foot ceilings, and it's full to the ceiling with my collection. And people come in here all the time and say, why don't you get rid of the ugly ones? I always say, which ones? And they always point at different ones, everybody; like beauty is in the eye of the beholder, ugly is in the eye of the beholder, equally. And so I laugh, because I'm curious which ones they think are ugly. They're some I think are ugly, but it's not the same ones, and I'm not going to get rid of them either because I don't like them or because I think they're ugly; I actually like some ugly things, not all of them.

But I want anybody that was expressive, and that's my criteria. So consequently, I have a weakness for that, and I have a house in California that I lived in in the late, middle '70s, and I quickly filled it up. It's packed full with a collection of artworks, and then I moved to Seattle in late '78. I've been here far too long; this is a much bigger space and way too full. I have over a thousand artworks just here, and - but Ann and I bought a house in Mexico 15 years ago, and the guy that sold it to us wanted to sell it to us furnished and we said, no, we wanted it empty, and it's already full. [Laughs.] In 15 years, it's packed full with artworks from Mexico that we've acquired.

In fact, we have a mask collection, about 300 masks, that a major museum asked us to show this year, and I think it was March and April, two-month show. We showed our mask collection in a major museum, and everybody marveled that it was the best mask collection in Mexico. There's bigger ones, but not as diverse as ours, and so we're actually going to give that entire collection to that museum so that the public can appreciate Mexican masks.

Unfortunately, what they call artisan is what we call the crafts, is disappearing in Mexico. It was always made by poor people, so the few middle class and rich, of course, didn't want to go near it because it was made by poor people. But it's a staggering amount of talent ,particularly in ceramics and copper and baskets and masks, wood. It's a phenomenal diversity and staggering display of talent that they're losing culturally; it's disappearing. We see more and more plastic crap from China each year in Mexico. Sad and disappointing, but we happily will give our mask collection to a museum down there so that Mexican people can continue to appreciate their own talent.

Here, the glass collection, I'm trying - I'm working on gifting it to a museum, and it's in process. So I'm not going to talk about it, but everybody comes in and looks at the collection and basically - and my artwork, because I work figuratively and surreal, basically the paintings, drawings, prints, all of that, photographs, and a lot of my artwork have faces or figures on them.

And one time, I sublet my apartment to a Russian man. Right after the Iron Curtain fell, he came to Seattle with his buddies to get into the fishing industry, and he sublet my apartment. When I came back from Mexico, I asked him how he liked staying here, and he said that it drove him crazy. He had to go out everyday and take a walk, and I said, why is that? And he said he had too many faces looking at him. [Riedel laughs.] I'm Russian; I'm afraid of people spying on me. I don't like people looking at me, and you have hundreds of artworks in just this one room that are looking at me. [Laughs.] So I could understand that. They lived in fear. They didn't know who to trust, who was spying on them, and so he -

MS. RIEDEL: And there are hundreds of them.

MR. MARIONI: There are hundreds of faces in here, and so I could understand that, but that's what I like, and so that's what I've collected. And I've said to Mija earlier, I feel like I'm out of control because I have over 1,000 artworks in just this one apartment, and then in a house in California, a house in Mexico, I have no idea how many art works are there, but several hundred in each place. I feel like I'm out of control. I had never meant to be a collector. I just have a weakness for people that express the human spirit, and - but Mija just interviewed Dick Marquis, who's a close and dearly loved friend of mine. He has hundreds of thousands of objects, and so everytime I feel like I'm out of control, I go up and visit Dick and I feel okay. [They laugh.] But I am out of control; he is just that much further out of control than I am.

So now I've quit collecting. People that have been here and see it, they will often give me stuff so it can get in my collection, and, of course, I don't turn anybody down. And I recently did a good, big favor for a good friend of mine. And she said, I've got to pay you for this, Paul. I go, don't pay me; send me a drawing, and she goes, I thought you've stopped collecting. I go, I did stop collecting, and she says, why do you want me to send you a drawing? I said, I want a drawing of yours and I don't want any money for the favor I did you. Just send me a drawing. I'll donate it to a museum, or I'll put it in the portfolio and try and find a space for it someday. But I'm hopeless; I can't stop. [Riedel laughs.] I mean, I'd stop, but it's like smoking. I quit - saying I'm going to try and quit smoking. I'm not going to try and quit smoking; I'm going to smoke till I die. I'm saying I'm stopping collecting, but I'm lying. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: There's not much space left.

MR. MARIONI: Out of control. What was the footnote we were going to add?

MS. RIEDEL: We were going to talk about the complete lack of vandalism in your public artworks, with one exception.

MR. MARIONI: The lack of vandalism. Yeah, we've done a lot of public art, and Mija brought up - to bring this back to add a footnote to working in public venue with a Percent Art program, we did a piece [*Portal*] in 1988 in Greenlake Park in Seattle, here of Greenlake, its Community Center, and Greenlake has the highest vandalism in the state of Washington. So of course, they were very reluctant to pick us as glass artists to make something in glass that was going to go in the park, where the highest rate of vandalism was, and I argued that if they like it, they won't break it. Well, we installed that piece in 1988.

About a year ago, I went back to look at it and it hasn't got a scratch on it. It's never been spray-painted with graffiti. It's in perfect condition in - what, 18 years later, and so maybe I was right that if they like it, they won't break it, because there's still a high rate of vandalism in that park, but maybe I was just lucky. [Laughs.] They're more interested in destroying the toilets and the restrooms than they are in destroying the artwork down the front of the building, but maybe I was lucky.

But in 35 years of doing commissions, and at least 50 of them in public spaces, the only piece of vandalism we've ever had in all that time, with all that work, ironically, was in a chapel in Swedish Hospital [*Reflection Wall*, Swedish Medical Center Interfaith Chapel, Seattle, WA, 1997]. Someone came into the chapel and smashed one panel of the wall we did in there. The minister said somebody was mad at God, and I said, no, somebody was mad. [Laughs.] But ironically, a chapel in a hospital is the only piece we've ever had vandalized, so go figure that. Try and figure out why that is, when we've worked in public venue for 35 years and had pieces - it's like our piece in the federal courthouse. There was a shootout. The man was killed right sitting on the bench at our piece, so - but the piece didn't get damaged, and - but, so figure that the only piece that ever got damaged was in a chapel in a hospital.

That was a challenging and interesting experience and a learning experience because it's a multi-faith, multidenominational chapel in a hospital. It's whatever religious beliefs you had, you can go in the chapel and

pray for your loved one that's a sick patient in the hospital. And they express that and it was - it wasn't an open competition; it was an invitational competition. They invited about 30 artists to apply and then narrowed it down to about, I think, six of us, and then interviewed us, and picked Ann and I.

So basically the challenge is, what kind of artwork can you make for a chapel in a multidenominational chapel in a hospital? That was quite a challenge, because whatever imagery you would do would fit one religion and not another. For instance, the Quakers have no icon, obviously, whatsoever; neither does the Salvation Army, only the cross, but not Jesus on the cross; the red cross is their symbol. But they have no statues or saints, or Jesus, or Mary, or any of that, and I believe the same is true of Judaism; I'm not sure.

But - so basically any kind of image was out of the question and even abstract. So Ann and I thought long and hard about it and decided that we had this slightly curved wall, 10 feet high by 15 feet wide, with a very gentle, shallow curve was available, no windows. It's an interior room in a huge hospital, and so we actually thought about and decided if we could just create white light, a wall of white light that people could get lost in their own thoughts, no matter what their religious belief, was like looking into a fire; everybody likes to sit and look at the fire, you get lost in your own thoughts.

So regardless if you're Buddhist, Jew, Christian, Muslim, whatever, you could look at this wall of white light and just get absorbed in your own thoughts, praying for your loved ones that are being operated on or sick, or being, hopefully, cured. The testimonial book in the chapel, the things people had written their thoughts was heart-rending, tearful, just to read what people wrote about their loved ones that were recovering or overcoming illness was unbelievable - could not read more than three or four pages without bursting into tears. So we knew it had to be a strong and heartfelt experience.

We came up with the concept of a wall of white light that would suck you in and allow you to go wherever you wanted in your own mental space, and initially - and it was a short track. We had five weeks to complete this, and initially, we thought, great, we'll get a movie screen and glue it on the wall and coast out of here with some money in our pocket. And that - we thought that would solve our wall of white light problem. Well, the problem with that is you have to project light onto the movie screen in order for it to be a wall of white light. So as soon as you project light on it, you have a projector projecting the light. Well, if you're in the chapel, you will cast a shadow on this light wal,l and as you turn around to walk out of the chapel, you'll be looking at a projector projecting light in your eyes. So that was going to thoroughly destroy the meditative experience of praying for your loved one.

So suddenly we were in deep over our heads. [Laughs.] Way over our heads. We could not do what we thought and pocket some money and skate out of there easily. So then I went on a massive campaign of consultation. How can we create a wall of white light when we have no natural light and we cannot have projected light? And God, I talked to everybody, went to every lighting consultant in the city of Seattle, stage lighting, industrial lighting, every lighting expert, and nobody - everybody scratched their heads and said, I can't see a solution.

At one point, a friend of mine steered me to one of the guys that started Industrial Light and Magic, who has since retired and lives up here, and so I went and met him - brilliant guy - and I explained the problem to him, and he thought long and hard and we visited for an hour or more, and then he basically said, it's a problem I never would of thought of and I really can't see a solution. How can you create a wall of white light when you can't get behind the wall? It's concrete, and you can't project light on the wall because of the problems of shadow and the light being in your eyes leaving, and there is no natural light? It's an interior room, so good luck -

MS. RIEDEL: You couldn't do it from above or below?

MR. MARIONI: There was a small cove space to create above and on two sides, and - but that wasn't going to be enough because it wasn't going to fill 10 feet by 15 feet, and we did put light in that small cove and that helped, but basically - and I called people all over the country, everybody I could think of that knew anything about light, and explained the problem, and told them that I needed a solution. We tried every type of lighting, and interestingly enough, black light partly worked, but the problem with black light - we set up - there is a lighting company in Seattle that has all kinds of setups like for stage and theater. So you can mock up what you want to see.

With black light, the problem was - it worked pretty well - but the problem was that both Ann and I and the consultant at this company found that after about five minutes in black light, you kind of got a headache. It was kind of made - you furrow your brow, your forehead, and kind of was irritating, not in any obvious way. It just kind of was there. It was like headache material, and so we all agreed that it wouldn't be good to subject people to black light for a longer period of time. If it was starting to bother us after five minutes, it was not a solution.

And probably three weeks went by, and I was starting to lose sleep over it. I was starting to wake up worried and not be able to sleep well, and finally, I thought, really we probably were on the right track in the beginning with

the concept of a movie screen. So let's go back. We had bought a sample of movie screen when we realized that you had to project light on it, so we had the sample. I went back one day, after about three weeks, and looked at it and saw that a movie screen, the cloth fabric was very, very tiny, less than one-millimeter glass beads glued to it. They'd spray it with glue and pour all the beads on and the excess falls off, and so it's very, very tiny little glass beads that when you project the light on it or a movie, it shows.

It's just like you can project the movie out into space and you can see the light going out into space, but you can't see the movie. By having the white screen with us, about the size of a small sand or table sugar, glass beads filled the screen, reflected the light back. So I thought, well, if there's tiny little microscopic glass beads do that - same on stop signs and highway signs that reflect your headlights, same tiny little glass beads. It's so tiny, it just looks like a textured white paint, but anyway, I thought, maybe if we upped the size of the beads - and so eventually trying, finding suppliers, and working with up to three-millimeter beads.

So eventually, I realized that the glass beads will capture the light, and if we put a mirror behind them, we could double the light, because the reflection would be in the mirror and the light would be reflected back through the beads. So we completely covered the wall with three-millimeter clear glass beads, chemically bonded to a mirror, so you couldn't see the mirror. It worked great and it's been very successful. It's beautiful, subtle, ethereal, and people go in there and get lost in their own thoughts. No shadow, no projector light, anything. It worked really good and expanded our thinking, and we developed that process further. So challenges like that are good to develop, grow your talent.

MS. RIEDEL: This disc is just about to wind up with a minute and a half left. So I would like to thank you for all the time you've taken. You've been really generous.

MR. MARIONI: Well, it's my pleasure. You asked interesting questions and had interesting responses, and were respectful to my opinions, and so I thank you also.

MS. RIEDEL: I appreciate you taking the time to document everything so thoroughly, and I'm sure we could go on for another 10 hours [laughs], but next time.

MR. MARIONI: Come back in 15 years and see what I have to say. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: There we go.

MR. MARIONI: I might not even remember my name at that point. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Unlikely. Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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