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Oral history interview with Eddie Dominguez, 2006 July 27-28

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally-recorded interview with Eddie Dominguez on July 27, 28 and August 1, 2006. The interview took place at the artist's home in Roswell, New Mexico, and was conducted by Stephen Fleming 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.

Eddie Dominguez and Stephen Fleming 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

STEPHEN FLEMING: This is Stephen Fleming interviewing Eddie Dominguez at the artist's home in Roswell, New Mexico, on July 27, 2006, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. And this is disc number one. I believe this is track one.

Okay, Eddie, when and where were you born?

EDDIE DOMINGUEZ: I was born in 1957 in Tucumcari, New Mexico.

MR. FLEMING: Could you describe a little bit about your childhood and your family background?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I'm one of eight children. Tucumcari is a small community. At the time that I was being raised, there was probably about eight to ten thousand people. It was located historically on Route 66, so it was sort of a little tourist community more than anything.

Growing up there, art was not really available to me, although there were lots of local craftspeople making things, and so, I saw that kind of stuff growing up there—attended Catholic school from grade K through fifth, then a public school in the sixth grade and then junior high and high school. And upon graduation, applied to the Cleveland Institute of Art, and studied there until 1981.

MR. FLEMING: I'm going to go off the script a little here because you covered a lot of territory in that first answer. What are some of your earliest memories of living in Tucumcari? When you think about being a young child, can you remember anything specific about your life as a very young child?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I was always interested in making things. I think that, as a child, I was always driven by that. More than anything else, I was interested in the idea of creating. Anything that involved any kind of creative process was always interesting to me. I think it's how I filled the majority of my time growing up, always looking at that kind of thing and for those sorts of things.

MR. FLEMING: Tell me a little something about your mom and dad, what they did for a living and your connection to them?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: My father was a bartender in a private all-white club, and my mother was a maid in a small motel. Tucumcari is filled with motel rooms. If it's famous for anything, it's that you can probably find a night's stay there.

And so I grew up in looking at those two things. But my parents were always very supportive. As I said, I come from a family of eight kids, and really, my parents supported every one of the things that they were interested in, and mine was art, so all the time, they were in some way trying to supply something—material, a tool, something like that, for me, encouraging it in any way possible, making space for me to do that.

MR. FLEMING: You were the youngest of your siblings, is that correct?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: That's right.

MR. FLEMING: Did you spend a lot of time before you started school with your mom on her job? Or who took care of you and how did that work?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I know that my parents would take us to their employment with us, and we would help them do things. One of my earliest memories—well two of them. One was going to help my father clean the bar. And it was a private club, and there was this one room, and I used to love to go into that one room because it was filled with things, interesting things to look at: Christmas ornaments, all kinds of decorations, they would

decorate the bar with.

And I loved that stuff. I mean, things—I can recall the New Year's Eve paraphernalia, and how exciting and beautiful that always seemed to me because it was like a box full of glittery objects and playful, useful, sort of cheap ornamentation, decoration, things like that. And it was always interesting, to me, there—a certain kind of order that was in the bar—the crystal glass always shining, all the glasses set up in rows. Things like that—a certain kind of order that was always very appealing to me, and a certain beauty to that kind of stuff.

My mother, on the other hand, cleaned houses. And, there was this one house that I used to help her clean, and I would dust. I loved doing that the most because it meant that I could touch all these personal objects that were contained in this house. To me, all this stuff is really quite beautiful, not anything like what I grew up with—a certain different kind of structure, of furniture, of things like that. It seemed very extreme to my personal surroundings. It seemed wealthy, and in a way, it seemed unavailable.

And it wasn't that really. That was just the eyes of a young kid looking at all this stuff, but the house was filled with carved wood and tapestries and woven rugs and satin bedspreads and draperies and thing like that. I always enjoyed—any kind of interior environments have always interesting to me, so, I liked that. It was sort of old-lady-like—pink and light colors, fluffy and ruffly, appealing.

MR. FLEMING: Could you describe a little bit Tucumcari's main street and the ambiance, the character and quality. This must have been early '60s, early to mid-'60s. What was that like, walking up and down the main street of your hometown?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I can say that I've walked up and down that main street many times and all over—[laughs]—in and out and behind the buildings and in between the buildings. And it's rustic; it's old and it's falling apart. You sense a feeling that at one time it was very alive and that things were really being used. But when I was growing up, things looked like they were not being used and they were falling apart—sort of rustic and rough. I liked that—the plaster falling off the walls or dirty windows, looking through dirty windows, to sort of mysterious spaces.

MR. FLEMING: The kind of objects that were being offered for sale to the tourists at the time, do you have anything to say about that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I wouldn't have known what the tourists were buying, really. We didn't buy anything. I enjoyed looking at stuff. It wasn't what I would call a lot of things for people to buy. Although, there's an occasional curio shop, and as I got older, those places became more interesting to me than when I was growing up, since they were unavailable to me, really. I would go in there and I would look at the trinket shops. Again, it had to do with a certain kind of order—a lot of one thing all stacked in rows.

MR. FLEMING: At some point in your elementary or high school education, you began, presumably, to have some inkling that art or craft was going to be part of your life. Do you remember when that happened and what kind of things motivated you in that direction?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I've never thought of being anything other than a person who made things. As I said, that was the earliest interest. And I had a lot of places that I was doing that—mostly, you know, like any kid drawing at the table with pencil and paper, working with sticks outside, building things, working in my brother's upholstery shop restoring things.

MR. FLEMING: How about teachers or art classes—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Oh, yeah. I lost my thought there. Well, I think that—in the first grade—and I struggled through school, really, until I got to art school. It's all I really wanted to do was make art, and of course you have to do lots of other things in school—good thing. But, I was in the first grade and I was asked to draw this clown. And she had a very—a system that she wanted us to work within. And there were circles using a bottle caps. I just wanted to do something different with mine.

I got in trouble for that, but what I can remember was that it was interesting in comparison to everyone else's, or was just steps in other directions that no one else was thinking of, and details that no one was putting into their clown. Of course, I was putting in as much detail as possible with the ruffles and the bells, painting each disk different colors and making different patterns. But the things I remember the most about this clown was that it had a gesture. And all of the others were very stiff and mine had sort of movement. And so, I can recall that and I can even remember how it was colored. So it's vivid; that memory is very, very vivid, and I think it's because at that moment, I was realizing something that was internal.

And then, I got into the third grade and that nun, I think, was an artist, though I wouldn't have known that if she never said that. She really explored art in a way that no one had done for me. And one of the things that I

remember the most clearly was that she let me break my Crayolas, and then using the side of the Crayola to color, rather than the point. And she was showing me how to create things in the round, and how to shade various colors into one another. And that was—you know, after I started that, there was no turning around. I colored everything like that. But, she provided and—what is the word—

MR. FLEMING: Motivated?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, motivated it, gave me permission to do it, that sort of thing.

MR. FLEMING: What about when you got into public school in sixth grade?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, still in Catholic school, I was doing extra credit projects and making banners, religious banners for the church. It was like the hippie time of the church, and people playing guitars and hanging handmade weavings, not weavings, but making these banners. And a lot of those banners exist in my mind, and they all had text and imagery, and were all pro-religion. But what—I wasn't as interested in that as I was in cutting the stuff out and assembling them and gluing them together and presenting them. I mean, I was interested in the process and not the product, at that point because I was being told what to put on them. But, creatively, I was doing my own thing. And that had a lot of texture and a lot of color and, of course, some of them were pretty potent.

I can remember one, I was being punished for some reason, and I couldn't go to religion class, which was fine with me because every time I didn't get to go do that stuff they would always give me some kind of art project to do. And I did this one very large banner out of torn paper. And it was black and white on one side and color on the other. And the black-and-white side dealt with lust and colorful side dealt with love, so it must have been the religious lesson we were learning. We aren't to be lusty—to be loving.

Anyway, I had this sort of division on how it was two-sided and I think that had a lot to do with how I even do things now. It also is very clear, to me, in the terms of the imagery that I was using. It was funny because I was saying black and white was dark and color was happy. So, even if there was an image on the one side that dealt with happiness, if it was black and white, it seemed to lack something.

MR. FLEMING: And you were going to mention when you got into public school, how was that differed. What was that experience like having to change?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I think the thing that public school offered me that was really pretty exciting was the change of culture. You know, all of the Spanish kids went to the Catholic school, and so you were really never integrated into any other culture than your own. Other than my father working in the all-white club, which seemed very separate and unavailable, and my mother cleaning houses for Anglo people, those were the only other people, outside of my family, that I was introduced to. Occasionally, I'd meet the tourists in the motels, and that was always interesting because they always represented another place that seemed really, really far away, and interesting, intriguing.

MR. FLEMING: Well, in order to get into the Cleveland Art Institute [OH], you must have done something in high school to develop your portfolio or, at least, motivate you in that direction. What kind of things happened in high school that kind of led to you going off to a college of art?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I always knew that I was going to go to an art school. I knew that since I was in the sixth grade. And I had the good fortune, on one hand, to visit the Art Institute of Chicago. And, I guess, that was the first time that I saw anything like that. So, you know, once you see something like that, well, you're changed forever.

And I remember, it had to be a Ryman painting I saw, Robert Ryman painting, because it was an all-black painting and I had never seen anything like that before—huge paintings of abstractions and wild things that I couldn't even have imagined, were all housed in this one building. And in addition to that, was an art school.

So, at that moment, I was driven to go to art school. Now, I didn't do anything in particular, to prepare myself, and there was certainly no one around who was helping me do that. So even though I was introduced to abstraction and things like that, I was still more regional in my own work, painting old barns, or pretty landscapes, and the things that I saw around me.

MR. FLEMING: I understand that at some point, you decorated the outside of a motel? Or did some painting work on one of these motels in Tucumcari?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, when I was in college, a good friend of mine and I painted the outside of this hotel—a little way to earn some extra money right after I got out of graduate school. I was very thankful when they finally repainted it—[they laugh]—because I had to see this and it was down the main drag, too, and in front of a

bar I painted a rainbow. And it was a very crooked rainbow. I was also really happy when they painted that out because I wasn't a muralist. I was just, like, interested in making something big and not really sort of knowing how to do that right. So it was wrong for a long time, but a little quirk, I like that. If it was art, it would have been one thing, but since it was a decoration in front of a major hotel, it seemed like another—

But, I was fearless. I would try. I painted the inside of a bar when I was in high school, and I saw that you could make money. I saw that I was making like 10 bucks an hour, and that was like, wow, I can make money doing this stuff. So every Christmas I would go paint windows around town, take time off my other job of bussing tables at a restaurant, and I would paint windows for people.

I personally had been decorating the front of my parents' house for Christmas since I was a little boy. I was already pulling out the decorations and fixing them up and just sort of sabotaging the house for the holidays with all these decorative things that I would make. And I would work on that all year. Making Christmas presents for my family, that was another outlet to make stuff, I would make them whatever they wanted. If it was an oil painting, if it was a landscape, or an abstraction, whatever they asked for—sometimes they'd give me the pictures or things like that. I was always preparing for the holidays.

MR. FLEMING: Your interest in Christmas I guess sort of reflects your interest of the idea of decorative, that creating a decorative environment or altering your environment in some decorative way, and you've always, that's always been something you've been interested in, the Christmas holidays as a sort of focus for this kind of energy?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, I would say that—you know, it's odd, but I would say that any holiday, but Christmas mainly, it's magical. I like the way things were transformed. You'd see them one way one day and then another way the next day and a sense of joy that people have around the season. But, it's always the double-edge because I think it's both the saddest times for people and the most joyous times, and I like that; I like when things are really extreme that way. Movies are made like that, around the holidays. People's tragedies in their lives emerge. Family issues and joy—it's all intermixed and it's all shiny. It's all glittery. It's lit up. I like that.

MR. FLEMING: Well, let's try to get to art school now. Any thoughts about your earliest experiences at the Cleveland Art Institute and what the effect of being in a different part of the country and around different people, and other art students, teachers?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: That was one of the most magical time in my life. College and graduate school offered me the most—I don't know how to say it—art school was the place for me. I only applied to the Cleveland Institute of Art because I only had one portfolio. There was no one around me, or my high school art teacher who could assist me in putting together a portfolio there. In fact, most people were trying to discourage my application at all. And my high school guidance counselor used the excuse that my family is too poor to send me to a fancy art school, or that I really wasn't smart enough to go to college or that maybe I wasn't even talented enough for this sort of thing.

But, it was something that had been in me all those years. I really trusted my decision in becoming an artist. And so since no one could help me with the portfolio, I pulled everything off the walls and whatever objects I had on tables, and I wrapped them up and I put them in a very large crate, and I shipped it.

MR. FLEMING: UPS?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Not UPS; it was a trucking—like a big truck. And I loaded my crate on that big truck and I sent it to Cleveland. Well, they accepted me.

I laugh about that now because I think they would have accepted anybody who had that much will, to want something that bad.

MR. FLEMING: How did you travel out that August or whenever it was? When you traveled out, did you drive yourself out or did you travel by bus? And when you first got to Cleveland, had you been out of Tucumcari much before you got to art school?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No, I really was pretty much in Tucumcari. The trip to Chicago and one other trip that I can recall was to California, but that trip was not art-related at all. That was the first time I had ever left Tucumcari. And then the second time would have been to go to Chicago. And really, that wasn't about art either. It was just by accident, really coincidental accident that I was taken to this place that would have changed me from that day forward.

MR. FLEMING: What was it like when you got to Cleveland?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, for the first time, I can remember my excitement. We drove across country. My sister

had just gotten married to a man who lived in Michigan, and so we were driving her car cross-country, my brother and myself, and it was an adventure. I was leaving home and I was really, really sad, although, I was really, really excited. I had never really left the family, so knowing that I was going to be gone for five months before I could ever come home seemed like a huge sacrifice to me at the time, but, one that I was willing to make to go to this place in Ohio.

And I remember walking into this building and just feeling like it was the greatest thing I had ever seen, walking into all the classrooms and seeing how they were set up for making art, and all these teachers who were willing to teach you a little method of sorts that would try to stimulate ideas. When you're a student, you're very young and pretty uninformed.

Coming from Tucumcari, maybe I was more uninformed than most people in that art school. I can remember feeling a little bit out of character and out of place because some of those students were so talented, had grown up with museum schools and private classes, and just to see how able so many of those students were, and how far behind, really, I was in terms of technical things. I didn't know things because I thought art was about technical things. I didn't really credit how creative I might have been because I just wasn't able to manufacture the things that I was seeing in my head as well as some of those other students, but in time and through training you sort of catch up. And art school was great.

MR. FLEMING: So, presumably, at some point in art school, after one or two years, you discovered that you had an interest in ceramics. How did that happen and what was that like?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I went to school to be a painter and a sculptor, and I really wanted to be a painter. And there was this program in New Jersey, called the Delaware Water Gap, and it was independent study, and there was seven people from UCIA Independent Colleges of Art. And so I went there for a semester to do landscape, on-site painting. And down the road in Walpack, New Jersey, was a place called Peter's Valley. And our model, we'd have a drawing class a couple of times a week—our model was from this place. And she took me over to visit this program and since then I've been a part of that place for a long time, on and off.

But, it was the first time that I saw a major craft community and how different craftspeople lived. Residencies, the kinds of crafts that were going on, weaving, glass, wood, furniture-making, pottery-making, weaving, clothing. And, at that point, I was interested in all that stuff. Visually, I was even drawn to it, really emotionally. But, I still had it in my head that I wanted to be a painter.

And after serious thought, I switched and became interested in the clay area. The thing that was intriguing to me about the clay area was that it had a nice sense of community. And at that point, I really needed to have community. Painting seemed very insular and quiet and you didn't really talk about your work before it was complete and it all seemed very private. I wasn't very good. I never had a good idea it seemed, in painting. So, I was always going against the grain.

Making objects seemed fairly natural to me and I think it's because I grew up doing that kind of thing. You know, the furniture seemed familiar; the weaving-like fabric that my mother sewed together, quilts, all of a sudden, all of the influences that I had in early childhood found a place. And up to that point, I hadn't felt that before. It was always in training or studied—you know, a landscape painted by some dead famous artist. No one ever talked about the crafts, so I didn't know that there were crafts out there. It's not part of our history; we're not encouraged to take it in art school, even though it was an art school. We didn't have to learn anything about crafts.

Art ended and crafts began. I had to relearn the history; I had to learn the tradition; I had to learn about other cultures that did this stuff because it was not being instructed, even in art school; it was always marginalized, and that's fine; I understand that. Also, part of what interested me in the crafts was that it seemed underdog, less than. And I find that fascinating that there were these discriminations being talked about and that there was a conversation, or even argument about all these things. And they seemed very common and ordinary to me, and that's part of the controversy, is that they are that, but they're very special. The things that I find in them and the content that I feel exists in the crafts is interesting to me and has always been.

MR. FLEMING: Presumably, sometime when you started working there in the clay department there at the college, did you have a teacher, particular teachers that had influence on you in that area?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, all of my teachers had an influence on me, including my craft—ceramics teachers. At the time that I was studying, there was a lot of shifting of faculty and so I never had the same teacher twice in all the years that I was studying crafts, which was a blessing in disguise. I mean, no, there is not a real relationship with my mentors. It was like every semester I was getting a fresh new point of view, male and female, guest artists, sculptor, potter. It just happened to be the way it was when I was studying.

Judith Salomon was my one primary teacher who was there all through my program, but I didn't always study

with her because she was doing other things, although she was kind of always available. And because I switched over from painting to ceramics, I also went into the program late, so I didn't have the regular three-year study that every other classmate had. I came in, really, sort of towards the end, with great interest.

And I had disciplined myself already. I had been taught over the years that I was there to learn something new. I had always been painting; I had always been drawing; I had always done all these other things, but the idea of making something that I had no awareness of, complete new technologies, I felt like I was really getting something, learning something.

MR. FLEMING: When you applied to graduate school, I guess you went to Alfred [New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred University, Alfred, NY]. What was your portfolio like that you—[they laugh]—applied to Alfred with?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I've always been sort of a mixed media artist, and I've always enjoyed working in a wide range of ideas. Though they're all rooted in a very similar way—you know, the landscape, the object, the domestic environment, pop culture, I mean the influences in my work are pretty consistent. It's what I make that isn't. And so, my teachers were always—and you know, I always had a different teacher, so I always felt like I could make a sculpture for this one or a pot for that one, sort of satisfying the requirements. I didn't know what I was doing was just adding, adding, adding. I never was interested in a single focus.

And that was problematic when I was applying to graduate school because my teacher kept saying, “Eddie, you have got to focus.” If I heard that, I've heard that all of my life. I think my focus is that I had no real focus. But, she asked me to focus, and so I made pottery. I tried to make some hand-built pottery and some wheel-thrown pottery and the aesthetic, really, was Japanese.

I think I was looking at Asian ceramics because it seemed to be so beloved there. Crafts were very alive. It seemed that pots were of value there, and it would have been the first time I saw that. Now, in my own culture, Indian culture, Spanish culture, I think that the objects they made—you don't see them, either. Pottery, you don't see it. It's really side street, junk shop, hobby, that's the kind of ceramics I saw growing up. So, when I saw Japanese ceramics, it would have been the first time that it seemed to be a part of a culture really blended.

Anyway, so I made this portfolio of 25 pieces, and that was a real portfolio. At Cleveland I did have mentors who were going to instruct on how to go through the process, but mine was still fairly simple and straightforward. I mean, the reason I chose Alfred, really, was because three of my teachers had studied there, so I was just familiar with the place and so, it was the only school I applied to. And when I applied—[laughs]—to it, I put in my letter that if they didn't accept me this year that I'd be applying next year until they finally did. Pretty simple.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] So, presumably, you got in. How did you find Alfred?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Great. Alfred was the second-best thing that ever happened to me. I guess, in graduate school you begin to think about the things that are really critical and important to your work and the things that really matter. And, it was there that I started to review and reflect on the histories of my personal family and growing up in New Mexico and coming from a small town, influences being very based on what's around you. And so, I started to look at those sorts of things.

And it happened, really, when I was making a tombstone for my niece who had passed away in a car accident. I was in grief, and I really wanted to make something special for her because part of the reason I decided I wanted to be an artist at all was to give my work away to my family. I mean, I'd been giving gifts to them all of my life and I was saddened by the thought that I wasn't going to be able to give her anything because she was too young to really need anything. She was 18 when she died and I thought, well, I'm going to make her tombstone.

And I was in graduate school at that point thinking that graduate school meant that you would do something other than something like that. So I asked my professor, Tony Hepburn, if it would be okay with him if I made my tombstone. Many years later, Tony said that it was a question that he'll never forget, and he gave me permission—it was an intense time. I made this piece and all the time that I was making this tombstone, I guess I was really asking what are the most important things? And what am I really looking for here?

I wasn't going to waste any time making things that had no value to me, that were no longer going to be formal; they were no longer going to be based on art history. I was now going to start looking at the things that seemed more important and nearer my family, the house I grew up in, the place I grew up, the surroundings, extended family, friends, things that were nearer, things that I had experienced not only the things like art history, which I really hadn't experienced. I was just being trained to see it and recognize it, but it had no real personal value to me. And so, I stopped making art from that stuff.

MR. FLEMING: I guess another faculty member there was Wayne Higby?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Wayne Higby, also a pretty important influence. And since all my teachers, I've had a nice on-going relationship with over all these years, and in many ways they have been supportive in other ways other than just teaching me, making things happen for me. Again, even in graduate school, as it would happen, I had a teacher every semester, different, and that's because they were taking sabbaticals and things like that, so it just seemed that in the four years that I studied crafts, every semester I was with a different teacher.

MR. FLEMING: Were any of those teachers particularly influential, more than, say, another?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No. I would say that they were all equal because they were all giving me what I was in search of. So, I didn't really put them into, like, I think he's better or I think she's smarter or any of those sorts of things. I really felt that every teacher that came into my life was really there to try to help me get to where I was needing to go, and so, I valued them all. They all seemed to push me forward and make me think in ways that were challenging and so I figured that every teacher I ever had I had for a reason and they're all number one.

MR. FLEMING: We've talked about how rewarding you found your educational experiences. I know it must be difficult to imagine what it might have been like not having university training, or in your particular case, a specialized art school-type training. But do you have any opinions about the difference between artists and craftspeople who are trained academically or within an institution, and those that are self-taught or learn through apprentice relationship or just through a village tradition?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I guess you find your way. You know, everyone gets different opportunities. I certainly made this opportunity happen for me. I was driven towards it and nothing was going to interfere and get in its way. I would have done anything for it; I know that now. I did that then.

I guess, I have ideas about being a self-taught artist because up to art school, I was a self-taught artist. There was just no one who was teaching me anything. People were spending time and showing me stuff, but it wasn't a training; it wasn't like, oh, you're going to be an artist; let me show you this. It was just because I was wanting to know. I mean, I had seen my aunt crochet at home. Give me a needle and thread; I want to try that. I'd seen my mother sew. Give me a needle and thread; I want to sew something. I'd seen my brother build something—I need some sticks and nails. I was constantly trying to find something within all these materials that were surrounding me.

I was influenced very regionally, I think that I was a regional artist growing up and I think that I'm a regional artist now in my mature years. I think that I prefer it. I like what happens within a place. My interests aren't going to Chicago or New York, L.A. I mean, I understand that that's a way to move art, but I've never felt great desires—not motivated to do that. My work has found its places in all those places, but not because I put high effort into it. I like the flavor of the region and my work has always been spiced by it.

MR. FLEMING: Okay, they have a question here they suggest we ask and it goes something like, have you had any involvement with Penland School of Crafts [Penland, NC], Haystack Mountain School of Crafts [Deer Isle, ME], Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts [Gatlinburg, TN], Pilchuck Glass School [Stanwood, WA], Archie Bray Foundation [Helena, MT], or other educational institutions devoted to crafts? Could you describe some of your experiences?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I've been involved with most of them, teaching workshops, but I would say that the relationship that I've had the longest is the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine. I've served on the board of directors for nine years and continue to do outreach work there. The thing that I did at Haystack as a board member was that I started bringing the community into the facility and working with kids, working with the nursing home, the elders, working at the elementary school, at the day care, creating mosaic murals in celebration of craft, and a way of bringing art into the classroom, and bringing these different people who had been part of this island for a long time actually to this place called Haystack.

So, in my years that I was involved with Haystack, I really went to very few other places. Penland, I've done a workshop there, and it's wonderful, too. I think these places like Anderson Ranch [Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO] and Archie Bray and the different various art camps that instruct people, give people opportunity to work with someone to make something. A lot of these people are artists. Some of them have other jobs, some of them are doing just art. But, it's a place where people can get together for a very intense period of time and really brainstorm and motivate yourself to go back to your studios or to your classroom or to your job, that feel that you've had this really incredible experience. And that's true of all of them, as far as I know. And my experiences have been that.

I, personally, have never taken a workshop. I would like to do that. It was never available to me when I was a student because I just couldn't afford those kinds of luxuries and I wish that that wasn't true. I wish that they would have been available to me. I wish I would have had a scholarship or—I always felt like I had enough in school and when I got out of school, I started doing the workshop circuit right away, and so I never really got to

experience that on the other side. Except, one year when I was at Haystack, there was a visiting artist in performance there. And I took his workshop and it was the first time that I'd been on the other side. And I learned so much that I felt the responsibility of what it is to be the teacher of these things because you forget sometimes how important it is and how hard it is to learn, and how easy it is to misunderstand and how easy it is to be unclear. So it really made me think about how to instruct differently because I took this one workshop.

MR. FLEMING: Well, there's a lot of territory there that we could delve into, but since we're getting a little low on time here, I just—one thing I'd like to ask you about is that you've done a lot of work with kids. You kind of touched on it there in talking about Haystack. What is that motivation to work with children? How is it for you as an experience and kind of what's your take on working with children?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, it's kids that I work with the most because those programs are already in place. You know, when I do the workshops at Penland or a place like that, I have the opportunity to work with adults, but I feel that when you work with a kid and you work with them early on, that you're providing them with experience that could make a difference in their life.

Growing up in Tucumcari, where there was no one around to ever—other than my family, but not an artist coming in and saying, "I'm an artist and this is what art can be." I felt, I guess, a need, a desire to do it, growing up. I remember when I was a young kid saying that if I ever had these opportunities, that I wasn't going to say no to them. It was sort of a little pact that I had with myself, that if I live my life as an artist and live my greatest dream, that I would pay back something. And the only thing I'm really good at it is this. So, this is what I can give back. So, when you work with kids, it's an opportunity it give back—

[END TAPE 1 SIDE A.]

—not always take. I'm all the time questioning it because it is really hard and, you know, it does take a certain kind of time. And I'm always reminded, every time, to the primary reasons why I do this. And I guess the most clearly said, the most clearly stated, was this young girl in Albuquerque who was—I was working with these kids at risk in a very impoverished area of Albuquerque. And I asked this little girl at the dedication of this mosaic column project that we did in the park adjacent to their school how she felt. And she said, "Important." So, when you get an answer like that, it only reminds you of the reasons why you do these sorts of things.

MR. FLEMING: Okay, well, it brings me to this kind of next rather interesting issue. Could you talk a little bit about your ethnicity, how that relates to how you view yourself as an artist? You can probably touch upon being here in the Southwest, being a guy. I know it's a tough one.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, it's very complicated, you know, the whole thing. I mean, our histories and our psychologies, and the kinds of things that happened to us growing up, and the kinds of influences that come in and out and the kinds of things that you see or don't see, all that kind of stuff.

Growing up, I guess I never really thought much about my culture. It's what I was. I was made aware that there was separation, as I saw my father worked in an all-white club and my mother mainly a maid for Anglo families, so there was always this illusion in my head of separation of culture. Schools were segregated, that kind of thing. I never saw anybody of real success in my culture. I didn't know of an Hispanic artist that was successful. So, it somehow seemed harder and further away. That's how it seemed to me. I was driven and I knew that this was my future and my family's very driven and motivated, so I saw success happening within my own home. But, the things that I saw outside of that house were often scary to me, and the influences that were surrounding these low-income, uneducated people.

My parents were uneducated. They only went up to the third and sixth grade. But, the value of education was in our home. So, I never equate intelligence with formal study, although, when you do study—I think we're going to talk about this later, too, you know, the art-trained, university-trained, we've come on that, versus self-trained. I think that we're all self-trained; we just do it within these places.

I think there's a lot to talk about when we start talking about art education and art-informed and art-educated artists versus the sort of—you know, you even subdivide that into the visionaries or the outsiders and all that kind of stuff. It's like everyone is interested in divisions, so cultural divisions, art divisions, gender divisions, sexual divisions. I mean, really, if you're not in a place—it reminds me of how my dad used to order those glasses, you know, big glasses, small glasses—not confused—everything straight up on the—so you can see what you're getting. All of those kinds of things, it was just there.

I remember when I was in art school, I was doing these platters and I was double-dipping because I wanted to work in clay and I had to make a deficiency up in drawing, so I thought, I'm going to do drawing on clay. And when I took it to my drawing teacher, he said, well, aren't these just a little too Mexican? And I was speechless. It was like, either he didn't recognize that I had culture in me because we all look alike to him.

And when he said that, he said it negatively. He didn't say, oh, wow; these are like Mexican-y, kind of, like, you know your culture. Instead, he presented it in a way that was negative, so of course, I immediately dismissed my culture and thinking that if I'm going to do anything of any value in this field, it can't be generated by my culture; it has to be really white European art.

MR. FLEMING: Or Asian.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Or Asian. But, that was in the crafts, which you know, the minute I went into the crafts, I really started seeing more cultural separations too. And I think it's because that's how I was studying it. I was taking an African anthropology class and sociology class and they would bring artifacts up. Look at this beautiful carved wooden bowl or this painted vase or talking about the history. But it was the first time that I was able to see craft and it always seemed to be in sort of a primitive culture that wasn't really often recognized by Western culture, or in art history.

MR. FLEMING: That's interesting. It seems to be that you're suggesting that you were—it was permitted to be ethnic in crafts because crafts were divided along these ethnic lines, Asian, European, or what have you, whereas the art instructors were less likely to give you leeway to be ethnic in your art-making activities.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, yeah.

MR. FLEMING: Interesting.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, part of it, too, is because I think they were so uninformed about the crafts anyway. I know lots of other cultures make—every culture makes crafts. But the cultures that I was studying—and again, I was studying and I was naive, ignorant on many levels, so any time anybody gave me information, it was, like, brand new to me. But, that's what I saw, so there were assumptions that I was making.

Of course I know Europe has beautiful porcelain and China has porcelain—the more you know, the more you know, and the less you know, well, then you're limited. And I was limited in art school, that's why you're in school. I teach and I often talk to my students about how little they know. And they get mad at me and I tell them, you know, they're not even artists yet and they get mad at me.

And I tell them, I'm only teaching you from what I know. And I know that when I was a student, I thought I was an artist, but I wasn't, and I knew that I was in a place to learn and that's what you need to do, is learn because you have a whole life outside of school to use all that knowledge and not to mask it by this other illusion of what you think you could become. If you're going to become an artist, you're going to be working on it all your life, not just six years of academic training. That's easy.

MR. FLEMING: All right, I'm going to stop it now. We're in the 54th minute and, partly for technical reasons, I just want to check on how we're doing here, and I think we could use a little bit of a break. So, I'm going to try to figure out how to turn the machine off.

[Audio Break.]

This is a continuation of an interview with Eddie Dominguez by Stephen Fleming at Eddie's home in Roswell, New Mexico. It's September 27, 2006, and this is the second disc.

All right, before we go any farther, and there are lots of interesting questions here, I'd like you to answer the question, is there a community that has been important to your development as an artist?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yes. Probably the most important influence I've had in my work period would be the year that I spent as an artist in residence at Roswell Artist-in-Residence Foundation in Roswell, New Mexico. That would be 20 years ago, in 1986, that I received this grant. The grant is called the Gift of Time, and I spent a year using that time very creatively.

Did a bedroom set there that dealt with all the issues that were of interest to me; ideas of gender, ideas of cultural divisions, the content in the work that year was probably, to date, some of the more serious content that I've ever explored in my work. All the issues that were primary to it, when I was informing myself, started to become clearer, and more in-depth. And my time that I spent in Roswell, New Mexico, some of my best friends that I've made in life happened there. And as far as the community goes, the community of Roswell has always been very gracious and would also be the first time that I experienced that from a community.

MR. FLEMING: If I remember correctly, your graduate thesis show was a dining room interior that included the furnishings that would be typical of a dining room, but in your own special way. How about that? Could you just talk a little about the different room environments that you began to examine, explore during that period?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It seems more and more that that was a period of time, sometimes I wonder, although I have

ideas still in my head, and I'm never in a huge hurry to get things out. I figure things take as long as they take, but in graduate school, as I mentioned, I was feeling that it was time to really start to think about my very early histories and the kinds of things that were personally connected.

So, the dining room became a place for me to investigate ideas of celebration and family, the tradition of pottery making, the ideas of sculpture and installation, and painting. All the other forms of art that I'm very interested in, was then, still am, a complete multimedia. Though, I think, all the materials that I work with are based more in a craft, I believe that they are also informed by fine arts. So, my struggle and my work for has always been how to weave the two together. So the installations offered a convenient way to explore that because a room, for example, contains many objects. So I was free to explore a wider range of objects and their meanings.

So the dining room dealt with the table and place settings and tablecloths and chairs, and dealt with personal history as much as the history of ceramics. Where *The Bedroom* [1984] really started to stray away from that kind of formal thinking that I was, maybe, using in school, and started going into a completely different way of approaching my work. I can remember at the time always asking if I was making art, am I making crafts, what am I making? And, yeah, I was making a bed, but could the bed be art? I don't know. My concern wasn't that. I was a part of this residency, which was already giving permission to me as an artist to do what it was that I needed to do. And at that time, it was to explore the bedroom.

And the thing about *The Bedroom* that was really interesting is that not only could I work with all kinds of different materials, but that the materials started to suggest a meaning. That hadn't really happened in the earlier work. So this was new to me. The idea that metal could be masculine or that velvet could be feminine or that certain kinds of things meant something already in their histories. Their histories are like a dresser is a storage container, like a vessel is a storage container. So some of these things were becoming clearer and making more sense even though I didn't know what I was doing.

MR. FLEMING: I seem to remember that the installation included a bed, headboard, as you said, dressers, quilts, there was also lighting fixtures. Could you just describe how it was that you wanted to explore not just the conventional crafts in a narrowly defined way, but up to including things like the lighting fixtures?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, the thing about my work, is that it's always based on the very ordinary and the very kind of things that we know that we use daily. A lamp is something that is common, very common. You don't have to ask too much of it except that it turns on. A quilt, you know that it gives you warmth. But if you start thinking of a lamp in terms of light, an object, then it could enhance its meaning, so that the light suddenly became mood, atmosphere. The quilt not only became warmth, but there was a sense of intimacy that occurs with the making, as well as the sleeping underneath it—you know, a certain history about the quilt. The dressers. We know what they are.

And I guess what I wanted people to begin to see is what else are they? And that's what it was doing for me. The dresser became a metaphor for a female, the bureau for male—the masculine self-portrait. The quilt sort of started to ask questions about gender issue. You know, is it a feminine art form was the question I was asking myself at the time because I'm this guy making a quilt. What are the social implications of all of that?

As a child, I was tortured when I made a quilt because I was a guy making a quilt. And suddenly when it became something that my artwork needed, all of those sort of stereotypes became something that I could ask questions about, added meaning and depth to that work.

MR. FLEMING: When did you begin exhibiting your work?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I've always exhibited my work.

MR. FLEMING: And can you recall the character of those early exhibitions?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Absolutely.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] Okay, could you describe –

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Even though Tucumcari didn't have very much, I was trying to set up shows where ever I could, doing certain kinds of things. The local craft fair was a way at Christmas for me to make some stuff to try to sell for the holidays. At this point, art wasn't just for my family anymore. I really wanted to see if I could get my art out in the public eye and Tucumcari was the only eye I had.

I was making things like bread-dough sculpture. You mix bread and glue together and I was making these little mushroom sculptures and filling little baby food jars with different kinds of seeds and tying a ribbon around them and painting objects, little paintings of things, and it was just a way—so, those were my very first ways of trying to exhibit my work. And then, moving up to the public library when I was in high school and again in

college, showing locally wherever I could. Whenever there was a juried exhibit in Tucumcari, I tried to hang one of my paintings in it.

What was interesting, at one time there is sort of a sad reality of a small town, maybe, or sort of the cultural prejudices or whatever, but I was—I called my mother and wanted her to submit a painting for a show at the First National Bank, which was our local bank, the nicest building in town. And the art league was having a show. The person who was the president of the art league at that point wouldn't accept my work because she said I was no longer a resident of Tucumcari. I was no longer a local because I was off in college.

I remember feeling really sad by that, especially because it was—the person who was the president was one of my first art teachers that I took lessons with when I was in high school. So it really felt like the lack of support from this person. And I'd always kind of experienced that from anyone outside of my family. And I hate to think it was caused through racial issues, but I believe now, that that was probably true. She didn't support me; she wouldn't even write a letter of recommendation for me when I was going to go to college. So there's always that edge in a small town like that.

So, there were those kinds of shows and then, after art school, I began to show—trying to show—at this one first gallery called the Mariposa in Albuquerque. It's in Old Town, and I used to go around, there and I knew there was an art gallery there. And so, I just took a box of my objects into her, but only after she had juried me into a show.

MR. FLEMING: Her name?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Fay Abrams.

MR. FLEMING: Right, Fay Abrams.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And she had juried a show that I had applied for outside of Tucumcari, it was one of the first times. And so, I thought she gave me an award, so I thought maybe she would maybe accept the work. It's all very scary when you're beginning, you know, and you're taking your product and putting it out there for consumption, of some sort, you hope. You don't want to keep it all, even though a lot of the work that I make, I do keep, like the bedroom and the dining room and any of my installation work, or a lot of my multimedia work—is never really made for the market though occasionally, some of that stuff did sell. My reasons were different. It was more about exhibiting.

So, I went into that gallery and then applied for a job with the state to work with kids through arts and education program. And at that point, one of the jurors was the director of the Roswell Museum and Arts Center and he was interested in presenting my work for an exhibition that they have there at the museum. That sort of started moving my work into a museum setting.

And at the same time, I was given an opportunity to show at the Santa Fe museum [Museum of Fine Arts]. And at that point, I was invited to—by an art dealer in Chicago who was curating the show for an art dealer in Santa Fe. So I had an exhibit in his gallery, was part of a major craft exhibit that she had curated—her name was Esther Saks—for the Museum of Fine Arts. At the same time, I was at the museum and also a part of this artist-in-residency program [Roswell, NM], so things were beginning to happen in terms of exhibiting my work, both on the regional and national level, at this point. Things like that were beginning to take form.

So then I was invited to become part of the Munson Gallery in Santa Fe, NM], and I had been with the Munson Gallery for 17 years until Larry Munson passed away. And so, that was my local gallery. And as I said earlier, I am more interested in being in my own region. Although I wanted my work to go all over the place—and I was doing that—I was most comfortable showing within my state, even though the work goes to many other places.

MR. FLEMING: Those early exhibitions, maybe not so much the ones in Tucumcari, which, presumably were a lot of painting, but your first exhibitions after graduate school when you were, I'm guessing, showing more ceramics, how did they manifest themselves? What kind of work did you show there? How did you put the show together? What were the themes, I guess?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, whenever I mount an exhibit I generally have a range of things in them. I've never been too media-specific. And although ceramics is a primary interest it's not my only interest. And so my exhibits have always shown other work, things made out of wood, metal, glass, collage, painting, stacks of this and that, collections of stuff, have always been—photography—all the medias. I make a clay work that are dinnerware sets that form—that stack into sculpture. I'll make just a plate. So I think the history of a plate is very different than the plates that I make as dinnerware sets that are arranged into flower gardens.

My primary interest isn't only in the function; it never has been, although, I'm very interested in things that do function. For me function is just another way to speak about a content. So even though my plate maybe is not

practical to use, the idea that there is an illusion that it can be used or a reality that it can be used is secondary.

I'm not a potter that makes pots for daily use. I'm not even a potter that makes pots for ceremonial use. I don't consider myself a potter, although I make pots. I never have thought of them, even in the beginning when I was trying to do functional work, say, when I was in college—even then I was more concerned with the aesthetics, the beauty of the object and less its function. And I think to be a good potter you have to think of the function first, and it really is somewhere down the list.

But when I was shipping work around the country I found it impractical and—I don't know where to go with this.

MR. FLEMING: Oh, well, obviously anyone familiar with your work would realize that a lot of times the installation process is fairly complicated because you make elaborate pieces that involve a lot of different components. So I guess you're referring to how difficult it is to ship all that work to someplace, have it installed properly, with some kind of knowledge behind it, without you having to travel there and deal with it yourself.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Was a problem; still is a problem.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] How do you feel that the market for American craft, if you can call it that, has changed over the course of your lifetime?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I think that there are a lot of serious collectors out there who are now buying ceramics or crafts, across-the-board crafts. I do believe that collectors are interested in one or the other. Sometimes it is hard to find a collector who is interested in both. But I have found my work going into both sides. People who don't collect ceramics are interested in my work and people who do collect ceramics—sometimes I don't know for sure if they are as interested because it really is leaning towards sculpture and not just pottery.

I think that there always has been a market for the craft movement. It began with the idea of marketing domestic objects here in America. And if I have to think about what American craft is, you know, it really is rooted in the late '60s and '70s with the sort of the movement of the craft, doing the craft fairs and marketing, all these sort of things started to happen. In a way I guess there is a deficiency in terms of how crafts are viewed in art history.

And so I think the movement here—and it really is American because we know that in other countries that crafts has been just a part of—not in all countries I know but—I don't know. It's complicated for me.

MR. FLEMING: I know that you've wrestled with this your whole life. Essentially many people think of you as a ceramic artist, particularly since you've graduated from Alfred and had some success with your ceramic objects. And obviously you have moved way beyond that, and had actually moved way beyond that before you actually began to market your work as a ceramic artist.

But some people have referred to ceramics as an art ghetto, and I'm guessing they are thinking about that in terms of marketing their work. Do you have anything to say about that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, It seems like an awfully negative label; although, I do believe there is some truth to it. I think crafts people just have different ideas about how to live, and how to make, and what it means. I can't speak for all crafts people; I only know what I think and feel and what other colleagues' thoughts are.

But my mother used to say, you've made your bed now lie in it. So I understand that when I went into crafts that it was already being marginalized by the conversations that I was having. People would ask things like, are you still an artist? And I would say, no, I make—yes, I'm working in ceramics. And immediately I could see that they weren't convinced that I was an artist anymore.

It seemed accessible to them, even people who had never made anything. Wow, you know, you hear things like my grandmother paints pottery. Okay. I think that is great. I have nothing against that. I know plenty of grandmothers who paint paintings, too, but somehow there is a division, always. Even in a place like Tucumcari where I said art didn't exist there was a division. So art has filtered its way even through the smaller communities, and in part of that is that there is division. But, hey, there is division in everything. There is division between men and women, between art and crafts. It's just the way the culture seems to set everything up, by labeling it and dividing it and categorizing it. And, well, I kind of appreciate that because I like order, I like arrangement, I like control. I'm not different than a lot of other people.

MR. FLEMING: Could you describe some of your relationships with art dealers, craft dealers?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Some good, some bad, but always interesting. When I was trying a New York gallery I thought they were just a little bit too pushy and it sort of—startling to me. I had worked with Larry Munson who

was so generous and easy going. And pretty soon you start learning the business. And it is a business, and I believe that. When I make art it's my life; it's what I do out of passion, but outside of that you have to market it and move it forward if you want to make a living off your work. And that is what I wanted to do.

So I've had dealers that have been really generous and I have had dealers that have been very dishonest. And so the lessons are good to know what to watch out for. When you learn from the school of hard knocks—and that seems to be how I have always learned—then getting a hard knock once and a while to remind you of things is a good thing. My glass is always half full.

MR. FLEMING: Okay. You've spent a number of years teaching in a university. What do you see as the place of universities in American craft movement or arts and crafts, and specifically for artists working—in your case I guess you would say clay?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I have taught. I teach at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. I've always felt a teacher in me—I mean, working with kids, working with adults, working with college kids. It's just sort of this interest of mine.

Education was really valuable to me. I don't know what I would have done without my art degree. I think I needed to go to art school. It's what I had to have. So many people can teach themselves or go through various workshops but I really felt that education was something that is never something you can take at all for granted. And I valued mine so I feel it is really, really important. I think the things that you learn at a university beyond the discipline that you're studying are of great value.

I do believe that we are educating a lot of artists, and I'm going to use the word artist loosely here, because I think not everyone that goes to college to get an art degree is going to make it. I think that it takes a lot more than talent to make it in this field. I think drive and desire and passion are more important than talent. Talent is overrated.

MR. FLEMING: There is another question that sort of touches on this obviously equivocal relationship you have with your particular craft area, or the one that you're typically kind of associated with. Could you discuss your views on the importance of clay as a means of expression and what are its strengths and limitations?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Hmm.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.]

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, ask me that question again.

MR. FLEMING: Let's see. Well, discuss the importance of clay as a means of expression. I know that you work in a variety of materials but for the sake of this interview let us concentrate on the clay for, at least for this question.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Okay. Well, clay is my primary material. It has allowed lots of things for me. I do love clay. But I don't think making art is about a material. I think the material we choose to use is important. Of course, I'm going to contradict myself here maybe but I believe that the idea in a material kind of just goes—I use clay, I love clay, I have no prejudices against it. I have no prejudice against any material.

MR. FLEMING: Do you see any particular strengths in clay? Is there anything about it—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I know that one of the things that I admire about clay is how difficult it is. It's beautiful. It's manipulable, but it also technically has lot of things going against it. I mean, it's fragile, for one. And I like the fragileness of clay because that to me is a metaphor for life.

I like that its history, it's old, that our earth is made from it so it's very rooted in something very basic to us all. So clay and dirt—you know, it grows things, it builds things. I mean, yeah, I make pottery out of it but clay is technological as science is. It's as old as earth is. It's very basic. I love that about it. I love that it is used to make space shuttle computer equipment, toothpaste, pottery, dusting powders. I mean, it's basic. Part of my attraction to it is that it is just so ordinary and so available. It's just outside your front door. Pretty common.

MR. FLEMING: I know you've done a few commissions in your day, could you talk about some of your most interesting or important commissions?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, the only commissions that I have really done is when I worked with the community, although there was a collector named Stéphane Janssen who commissioned me to make several pieces for his home. And this was the first time I had ever made my artwork for private collector on a sort of commission level. Now, he didn't have any guidelines. He didn't say I had to do anything particular; I just had to do whatever it was that I did. He had been supportive of all my work and all the different materials that I had

worked in. So I made him work, none of it was clay. But it was a commission. And I felt freed.

But my fear of commissions is, and I've said it in the past, is that I think, “What is wrong with the piece that I have in the studio right now?” What is this idea of making something special? What's wrong with this other one? So those ideas of commission I didn't like because I really felt that it was going to commercialize or in some way corral my creativity.

Now, when I do public art installations and I'm working with the kids that is a whole different deal. It's a way—what I especially love about those things is that they are public and permanent and so it becomes public art. And I feel that there is social responsibility there, as an artist.

And so for me, though I really don't apply for commissions, I generally get invited by different organizations to do these community projects. And it's the way I do it, again, because I'm not so interested in the race. I'm not interested in the competition or trying to come up with some specific need that the public art commission wants or the guidelines or the—all the other stuff that is associated with the public commissioned work.

So I am interested, more recently, in ideas of public work because I want to increase my scale, and in that way commissions are going to allow for a certain monument to happen in the work. You can't really do that kind of stuff always just in your own studio and try to find a market for it. So, you know, it's kind of a double-edged sword in that I'm interested and not interested. But if my work is going to move me toward something like that then I will move in those directions, even though there is a part of me that resists. When the artwork is asking for something, you know, I usually don't argue with it.

MR. FLEMING: Well, you sort of touched on this a little bit but is there a political or social commentary aspect to your work?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: All of it. I think right from the beginning. And I think it was those early influences in parochial school when I was making banners that were saying something. There, it was about religion. When I work with kids—why do I work with kids—because the government isn't supporting art in the schools, so, I mean, there is a political edge. I mean, I may not be making art that speaks about it directly but indirectly I'm working around the edges of things that I see as problems.

But in my own work I often deal with social—well, yeah, I always have though, even though I do it in a decorative way and kind of a beautiful way. It's kind of like what I was saying about Christmas; it's a mixed bag. People reflect on the holidays in ways different. So I've been dealing with issues of religion in my work for a long, long time. I've been dealing with issues of gender, you know, what is male, what is female. Cultural, you know, the fact that my work is—looks and is made by a Hispanic man—is talked about. I make flowers so that's weird.

There is always—if there is one side there is always the other, and I look at both of them. And often you don't see it in the work but it's in the soul of the work. And occasionally it's right out there in the work—you know, you can see what it is. I'm not disguising it or masking it or any of that kind of stuff. But I like beauty. And sometimes when you deal with social and political issues it's hard to make things attractive because the subject isn't. So how do you make something beautiful out of something ugly? It's not always easy.

MR. FLEMING: You did a series of work a while back that had to do with your hometown, the main street of your home town, and some of the characteristics of your home town, both the memories of it and of the current situation in it. Could you kind of compare that with how you feel you're received by the actual citizens of your home town?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, one thing I can say about the different people that do know me in Tucumcari is that they always ask me if I'm still an artist. So I guess they knew that about me since that is what I've always been all of my life. And they keep wondering if it's—if I'm changed, and that will be something that never changes.

I didn't show my work very much in Tucumcari. And even though I felt like I wasn't supported by the people who could have supported me when I was young, I didn't fear them anymore when I returned to Tucumcari in the '90s, and that's when I did this whole series of work on nostalgia. And not the political edge, you know, they were more romanticized. I did the *Main Drag* by walking up and down and photographing every building on the highway. I photographed people's homes in the neighborhood. I did a series of work that collected objects from trinket shops. So Tucumcari, in a way, was very, very valuable to me as an inspiration.

But I have a lot of real negative feelings about that place. And I don't blame anyone particularly, except that it didn't really have what I needed. And when I went to art school it had what I needed, and so it was not the fault of the town, necessarily. Art is a luxury and Tucumcari it didn't have a lot of it, a lot of luxuries. It was practical place so art was not—is not that practical a thing, I don't think. I do it out of drive and passion and every other reason I can come up with, but it is a luxury.

MR. FLEMING: Could you talk a little bit about the similarities and differences between your early work and the work you're involved in today?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, it is sort of making full circle. I feel like making things that I was thinking about as a little boy and things that I thought about as a college student and things that I'm thinking about now as a man. And how do they change? Well, like everything—slowly. But I think the things that are in it, its roots, are still the very things that were informing my work right from the beginning, and that's ideas of family and environment. I don't think those things have changed. How they look on the outside maybe. Sometimes you improve.

MR. FLEMING: Recently your work has taken on somewhat more figurative kind of element. Could you talk about the role of the figure in your work, and maybe even specifically your own body as a point of departure?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, the reason I started doing the—I'm involved in some digital photography, working from the computer and doing prints and altering prints. And it's at its very beginning stage.

But the reason I chose it is because I thought it was so much like clay and so different. There was something about the figure that reminded—

[END TAPE 1 SIDE B.]

—me of the clay out of the vessel. I mean, I've heard it for years – you know, the lip, the foot, the body, all these sort of parallels that were made to the figure when speaking about ceramics. So it seemed like a parallel to me so that in order to get the photograph I had to process it through the machine, kind of not so different than forming a piece of clay and then having to process it through the kiln, and in the end it is a surprise. You know, as it is coming out of the printer, it's not so different then my opening the kiln and manipulating the color. It's not so different.

I mean, clay is my basic tap that informs every other material that I work in as much as painting is also a tap, a secondary root, you might say. It takes both. It takes both roots in order to grow this thing that I make.

MR. FLEMING: Have, like, the sort of physical issues that you've had to deal with with your own body kind of made you more aware of—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, it gave me a more personal reason. As soon as—I suffered a back injury which put a big halt on everything, primarily my vessel making, my wheel work, my pottery, anything of substantial weight. So, yeah, I like the fact that a piece of paper weighs nothing versus a pot that could weigh up to 100 pounds. So there was that practical kind of reason.

But now that I've experienced these different things that my body is giving to me I really felt that I now have something to talk about beyond the formal. That's how come crafts was always so appealing to me really because it—I have never approached it from a formalist way. But every time I ever did painting or tried the figure I only had that because I didn't know how to talk about it. But when it became more personal, like making the tombstone for my niece like—then I really understood the thoughts I was having. I was not feeling like I was making these things up, that they really came from an experience or place. And so the marks that I was making had meaning to me.

And I'm very interested—and it wouldn't be the first time that I've been interested in the figure. When I was in graduate school I tried. When I was in college I tried. I've always tried but I always failed. And that doesn't keep me from trying again. When I was working with clay, though I failed there too, I felt like I had more successes. At least I was getting outside opinion that this was good.

In my figurative work, you know, it's always been there; that's all I can say. Even though it's maybe now just sort of coming out on the table it has always been inside of me trying to come out.

MR. FLEMING: Could you talk a little bit about your reaction to how your work has been received by others; in other words, comments that people have made or critical comments in magazines or reviews, or that sort of thing?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I've been fortunate with my work. I feel that it had an audience over all these years. I think that when I made the dinnerware sets, now that I look back, I think that—I believe that I have an original idea, which was kind of exciting. The day I discovered it even, I felt that I had an original idea, and this is hard to find, and it's hard to let go of. I mean, I've been—I'm 25 years making dinnerware sets. I don't feel like I've come up with the complete answers to them so I still want to investigate them. But it is the most common thing I've made; it's the thing that I've made the most of. And they've been very well received, I suppose.

MR. FLEMING: Is there—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Some people like them. I'm sure some don't like them.

MR. FLEMING: I know.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: That's the way art goes. I mean, what are you going to do?

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] Is there any particular written criticism of your work that was inspirational, meaningful, inspired you or angered you?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: All of them. I think it's really difficult to write about someone's work. I personally haven't read criticisms that I think are very good. But I don't know; I'm not a critic; I'm an artist. I know what I make, and a lot of other people have tried to write about it but very few people have really hit it. I often feel like they're not listening.

MR. FLEMING: So do you have any particular ideas or whatever about craft magazines like *American Ceramics*, *American Crafts*—any of the magazines, those craft magazines that might have crossed your path in the past?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I don't subscribe to any art magazines. I read other people's art magazines passing by, especially now that I'm involved with university life I feel like I have to keep—

[Audio break.]

MR. FLEMING: Okay. Excuse us. We had a technical difficulty there and were interrupted in the middle of our interview. We're continuing. This is track two. Stephen Fleming interviewing Eddie Dominguez at his home in Roswell, New Mexico.

You were just saying about your relationship with art magazines or craft magazines that you don't read many of them. But you said that since you've begun teaching, you've maybe paid a little bit more attention to them. Could you go back and maybe continue your thought about, you know, how important are periodicals, *American Craft*, *Ceramics Monthly*, those kinds of things. I think that's where we were.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Okay. Well, I guess I think that they serve two functions. One is that they stimulate artists and give artists ideas of what's going on and what kind of work, you know, they're making in relation to what's happening on a more contemporary scene. The other, I think, is that it informs collectors and keeps collectors abreast of what's happening in the field and who's doing it.

So I guess they serve, you know, as a sort of educational manual, which is why I started becoming more interested in them when I started teaching, more than I was when I was just a studio artist. Now, I do believe that when I first started working, in mid ‘80s, I did subscribe to a few periodicals—*American Craft* was one I recall—and was using it then to try to do that, to stimulate my creativity and to keep a—to know what was going on around me.

MR. FLEMING: You've been teaching now and giving workshops for a few years, I'm guessing, and has your kind of view of your work or your view of art and craft generally sort of changed much since you began teaching? And what kind of influence has the activity of teaching and giving workshops had on you during your career?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I have given quite a few workshops, probably close to a hundred workshops and lectures across the country at various art camps, universities, local civic centers, elementary schools, middle schools, things like that. And I can say that when I first started giving workshops I was early in my career and I really had a lot less to offer; a lot less to say, you know, in my instruction. I was limited because, well, I had only been working in my work for a while. And I've always taught from what I've experienced because I feel that was just a better way for me to give what I wanted to share.

But over the years, it's become more and more difficult for me to run a technically based workshop. And a lot of workshops—one of the requirements, and recently I have become more interested in having conversation about art and, you know, aesthetics and the kinds of things that I'm interested in or that the participants are interested in, and maybe make something. And I think that was a major shift because at one point I really was more interested in sharing an approach, a technique, a method to try to help people stimulate their ideas. But more recently I've changed that and have become less interested in giving technical information.

MR. FLEMING: Kind of a parallel to that, have you noticed any significant change in either the way art is taught since you were a student and or any differences in the way art is approached from an art school or a school that specializes in teaching art and the university art department?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I don't know really. You know, I think about what it was like when I was student and

really, when I got out of graduate school, I was just focused on going out and making some work and opening up a studio of wherever that might be, you know, in the back room of someplace. I didn't have these ideas of instant success. I just didn't know when success would come or when you would market your work or what was going to sell, and those sorts of things. You know, it seemed more basic.

I think that now there's a huge competitive edge among students and there are so many students and so many art-educated students that just numbers alone of students coming up. Maybe it was like that when I was a student but I don't remember it like that. I mean, these students feel instant, quick or, you know, before they exit my program they've set up their web pages and things like this.

The competition through the available technology has really changed. Professional looking packages are easier to accomplish than they were 25 years ago when you were really typing things by hand and xeroxing your articles and, you know, taping them together. I mean, you put a lot of effort in putting together a package, which now they're instant packages, you know, already tapped into your computer.

MR. FLEMING: This is a kind of a tricky one. I'm kind of going to drag you back into clay a little bit, ask you in the, you know, last 25 years or so—I know these are difficult because our perceptions when we're students or graduate students are focused on sort of our own efforts and not so much paying attention to the world in general. But as we get older and start teaching at colleges and stuff like that, we begin to look more outward and have more of a sense of the world scene.

But do you feel that there's a direction that ceramics in America is moving? How do you think it rates with work that's coming from other countries? Are we moving forward? Do you like the direction that it's going?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, change is change, it's always happening. And I think what I see now are—seems to be a more—a move towards installation in clay. And I don't remember clay installation 25 years ago. I had made an installation and I was interested in installation so there must have been that scene already happening. But now I really feel that many people are working with multiples or technologies, incorporating other materials in with clay, and that was less apparent to me, at least 20 years ago when clay objects were really clay objects.

Now clay objects often are in combination with something else; a prop, a paint, a mixed media of some sort, metal, anything like that, glass. And as far as trends, I don't see a change really. I mean, I think that when you talk about pots, pots have always been about pots and their use and their function and that seems to be fairly traditional. Where the change is occurring, as I see it, it's in more of a sculptural arena where people are exploring large scale and things like that.

MR. FLEMING: Well, I guess on parallel with that, how do you see the difference in clay as a material being accepted in the art world today as averse to when maybe you were a student?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, you know, I wasn't involved as a student with what was going on as much as my instructors or teachers had tried to encourage. I was really trying to learn my craft and try to find my own voice. And I found that difficult to do when I was being bombarded by all these influences of what was going on in the field. I'm straying away from your question.

MR. FLEMING: No. It's good. No.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I don't know where my point was going.

MR. FLEMING: Anyway, let me just ask you this thing. I noticed – and, you know, we're close to being the same age, but I've noticed that in the years since I was a student, there's a real difference in the notion of regional. And earlier in our interview, you talked about how you felt much more comfortable here in New Mexico or working out of your own region rather than spreading yourself around the entire country, although obviously you've done a little bit of that as well. What do you think about the idea of regional influences? Do you see that as a diminishing thing or as an expanding thing?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No. I think art will always be broken up into regions. And I'm not saying that there's not a weave that goes through from one end of the country to the other, but I do believe that each place has its own character. And I know that for my work that's important. To know what's surrounding me is important. My work comes more from what exists outside my door than it does anywhere else so it just makes sense to me to work that way. And when I'm in Nebraska I really look at what the Nebraska landscape is or wherever I'm at I try to see what's right in front of me. But that's what has been the source of my work for a long, long time. So—

MR. FLEMING: Sort of piggybacking onto that, how important is the working environment? You know, some artists have very specialized kinds of way they have to organize their working environment. How do you handle that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I've had all kinds of studios—started off in a garage and currently working in a garage again. So I just don't think that art requires—it does demand a certain kind of space but I think that you ought to be able to make art anywhere, out of anything. I don't believe that, you know, it's based upon what facility you have, although, I guess that if you're making monumental sculpture, you're going to set your facility up to accomplish that so I guess it's based on need. You know, you'll find a warehouse if it's huge or a shelf, if you're making small.

So I've never been—felt limited by space and I don't know what my ideal space would be but I know that I like order in my space and I know that I work in a quiet space. I don't care for music when I'm working.

MR. FLEMING: I know that you said—and I can relate to this because of a similar experience, but you said when you were in art school that one of the things that attracted you to working in ceramics was the communal kind of environment that ceramics seems to promote, whereas painters tend to have to work in isolation, behind closed doors. How about now, all these years later? How do you feel about that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, almost the exact opposite. [They laugh.] You know, I couldn't imagine really making my work in the community environment, although when I do a workshop, I do it there; when I'm teaching I sort of do it there, but when I'm working, really working, and really focused on what it is I'm trying to do, I really need quietness and not a whole lot of activity around me.

Now, I enjoy communities still, and what attracts me about community is the sort of gathering of people trying to accomplish something. Well, I get that when I teach so I feel satisfied there and don't feel that in my studio time that I need to have it in place there, although it's still a problem for me and that I do make things that are larger scale and need assistance. And I have worked with assistants and many assistants and I don't mind having that kind of activity in my space but I don't view that as a community environment; I view that as a working studio with help.

MR. FLEMING: Okay. How important is the idea of play for you, in being a creative person?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I can't say that I enjoy every aspect of my work. There are parts of it that I simply have to do to accomplish what I want in the end. There are elements of play. I feel occasional joy when I'm making the work so I guess I equate that with play. But I also play in that I explore and I experiment. Now, I would call that a sort of playful approach to making even though—maybe the things that I'm working on are serious in their content or, you know, complicated in their method or something like that. I still view that sketching as a sort of playtime where I'm less serious, even though I'm very serious about what I'm making. I feel that I can make as many mistakes as I need to make when I'm doing that and I find that kind of fun. But it's not like a game; it's more serious. I don't go to my studio just to have fun.

MR. FLEMING: Okay. Recently you had an exhibition that was fairly controversial in Santa Fe. It dealt with a subject that's pretty present in everybody's mind these days, I guess, the subject of religion. And I know this is a kind of strange area to kind of venture into but I wonder if you could talk a little bit about why you were exploring those particular kinds of images that I guess a lot of people interpreted as referring to the Catholic Church, your experience with that growing up here in New Mexico, what exactly was it that you were involved with?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, the rosaries have a long history for me in that they've been present since my childhood. I mean, I've been aware of them. And religion has always played a key role in my family, my grandparents and extended family. I personally have never been that involved with religion other than I did attend parochial school from K through five, but then I sort of lost my faith, and never really looked there again. However, I do think that subliminally that it was always present in the work.

Over the years many people have suggested it to me and I immediately rejected the notion that it had any kind of religions content at all, well at least religion, as I had understood it growing up. So, you know, I do make shrines and I do talk about celebrations, and I do pay homage to things, and I do all that sort of thing, which I think has a religious edge to it, a reverence towards things, the land, that kind of stuff.

And so I've been accused of being, you know—with this last work, of being sort of very pro-religion. I can understand how someone would see that when they see a crucifix or a rosary. But on the flip side of that, I also notice that people that are troubled, kids at risk, or prisoners or things, you know, and places where maybe religious imagery would be inappropriate, to ornament your body. I see that all the time, too, and it doesn't say anything about religion.

So I guess when I made these rosaries I was sort of searching through my history for a meaning in religion or what's currently happening on the political scene. So my work often is based on these sorts of thoughts, although, always not in its translation or its visual translation, you might not see that. I don't want to be a politician or a religious fanatic but it is a part of my history and my history has always been what I make work

from.

So this being part of it, the time came, finally, when I was looking at it. I think it deals with issues of death more than anything or of absolute hope, and other things that we—a lot of religions share in common. I just happen to use this particular icon, mainly because it was the most popular one and so it would be easily identifiable. And I understand that it would be coming with a lot of its content that's already built in and I'm just sort of looking at that, you know, not really judging it.

MR. FLEMING: Well, I noticed a lot of your—well, just about everything that you've worked on over the years, sort of seems to be directly derived from a very immediate experience, something that you saw in your own environment or was familiar to you in your own environment. And those rosaries and crucifixes seem to fall into that category, that it was more an icon, like you suggested, that was your point of departure, and not particularly advocating one thing or another, simply celebrating it as something that you saw in your everyday life, like a dining table or a bedroom—the bed in the bedroom, the chest of draws, all of those things—you've celebrated all those things. They don't carry quite the same connotations but they are something that would have been common for you to see in your daily life.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I did make a piece that dealt with religion and, you know, that whole idea of being born again. And it was a piece that I made in the late '90s, and it was a dresser and it had a figure in it—a nude figure of me giving birth to myself. So I guess you look at that subject matter and you look at my more recent work and you can see that there was—it was a ground that I was trying to cover over the years on different levels—occasionally this or that, you know, like sometimes it's figurative, sometimes it's decorative, sometimes it's functional, sometimes it's sculptural. But just dealing with the themes that I have experienced, has really been the motivator for most of that work.

It's always been that way ever since graduate school when I started making work that I felt dealt more with the personal than a universal, although, I think that the things that I have experienced, many people have, so it's not that uncommon. But I stopped making art from art back in graduate school. Really, I stopped looking at that stuff and started looking at other stuff as influences, even though in my earlier studies it was rejected, these ideas of the personal or nostalgia or, you know.

MR. FLEMING: Gee, there's a couple of, you know, areas that at least do a couple of different things that I'm interested in, and one of them is that, you know, you came out of—you were at school pretty much when, certainly on the West Coast, funk artists like Robert Arneson were having some influence and he was somebody that spent a lot time exploring common objects, or, you know, the mundane, I guess you could say. Did that school have any affect on you or was that a conscious move on your part to make a connection between yourself and those sort of West Coast ceramic artists?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No. I wouldn't have been, you know—in school as much as I was learning, you know, I couldn't get it all inside, and quite know about movements here or the funk movement, though I had heard about it. Actually, when I was in graduate school my professor, Wayne Higby, refused to talk to me until I went to New York and saw a show of seven West Coast artists because I guess my work, in a lot of ways, was relating to these people.

Although, you know, as naive as I was back then about the art world and what was going on in it, even back then, I remember seeing artists like Kenny Price. And my first thought when I saw Kenny Price's work was why did they put all his vessels together in one cabinet? I had been helping in the school gallery for four years and I would say that that probably had the most impact over all of my studies at the art school. It was really helping John Paul Miller set the exhibits up in the gallery. It was there where I was interested in what was going on. The idea of arrangement and working with other people's artwork was interesting to me and that's really—touching the work meant more to me than looking at it in a magazine or meeting an artist. You know, those kinds of things seem more real.

Again, they were based on an experience that I had personally and that's different than when I go into a museum. I know that you see work and you're—sort of get inspired by it but it's really not connected on a personal level, which I kind of need to have in order to really get what people are doing.

MR. FLEMING: I don't want to lose my direction here but obviously, again, I'm kind of focusing on the ceramics here, but the stacking issue obviously at some point made a connection with you. Could you just speak a little bit about how you came to sort of discover that particular characteristic?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I was a potter and I was interested in making dishes and one of the things dishes do is stack. Everybody stacks their dishes; there's nothing new about that. It's very old it's always been that way. People stack stuff to create space, you know, because you can't leave everything out. So that's really where the idea came from more than anything else; it's just the idea that folding or putting things on top of each other is common and ordinary.

And a lot of my ideas come from very common and ordinary places so I wasn't looking at well who was stacking, like [Peter] Voulkos, or who was cutting, like—you know, these are people I was aware of and I'm sure that they were feeding me on certain levels. And I was gathering information because I was learning and you just don't always know exactly where your root tapped into.

But I do know that as far as stacking goes, maybe it comes from, you know being the last of eight kids, always seeing numbers—something from small to big, you know, all that kind of stuff that dishes in our house and how they were—in a small house how everything was stacked in order to create space because, you know, you needed that. I mean, I think it came from those practical places.

But then I also discovered—one evening in graduate school, I was sitting at my table working. And I guess you could call it an epiphany and you only get a couple of those in your lifetime I'm sure. And this particular night I had some pots on top of my table and just didn't know what to do or what the next step in my work was going to be. And I put a little cup on top of a glass and I said, hmm, this kind of looks like something besides a cup and a glass. So I got a couple of more cups and glasses that I had in my studio and I started putting them on top of each other. And I saw a sculpture made out of pots and I remember that as clear now as then, that moment when I saw that and from that moment forward, well I continue to see it.

And I do know that when I was in college my teacher occasionally would stack a piece on top of another piece to try to encourage a more interesting form since I had shapeless forms. And they would put things on top of each other so I would see beyond what I had made and that's a practice that I have too, with my students. I'm constantly flipping their things upside-down or sideways or trying to offer them another way to see what they're looking at or what they might be looking for. And I think it was that moment that I had in graduate school that has, from that moment forward, been what my work is about and it doesn't matter what material I'm working in, clay or something other, it still involves this idea of piecing together.

MR. FLEMING: It's superimposing or—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Constantly, always there.

MR. FLEMING: —collaging on top of—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I mean, there could be a million reasons; there might be one. I don't know. I just know that the need for me to multiply and put it all together has always been there.

MR. FLEMING: You also—your ceramic work, particularly, is characterized by a lot of handwork—I guess you call it superficial handwork that happens after the vessel is made, carving, scoring, et cetera. Could you talk just a little bit about that? I think the other day you said something about your dad cutting up potatoes. [Laughs.]

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Oh, yes. [Laughs.] Well, faceting always reminds me of my dad cutting potatoes and slicing. You know, it just—I guess because I want to be able to apply it to something personal that's meaningful to me. So when I can think of my father cutting a potato when I'm making a pot, I think that's nice, you know, and I understand that there's a history of faceting. And I know it's been throughout ceramics but the reason I cut, I think, is based on those sorts of things. My mother was a seamstress and my brother was a carpenter. Things have always been cut and re-pieced and so I think that's where that comes from. I'm sure that's where it comes from.

MR. FLEMING: How about color? You use a lot of color in your work—certainly in your earlier work, it was very colorful. Where do you think that instinct or that predilection sort of arises?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I often think about that myself. And I have gone though all sorts of styles of work but color has always been present, even if it is the lack color, you know, black or white. But as far as my choice of colors—well, I was just asking myself this question yesterday—why I keep wanting to make those colors so solid, so flat, so saturated. You know, why is my need there to make color so flamboyant. It's often been said it's because I'm Hispanic and Spanish people just love to colorize, and that's true. But I don't think it's true for me. That's not the reason.

My early influences in painting, you know, the Fauve painters, I love that in [Henri] Matisse, and how they were always using flat, bold color and sort of decorative motifs was interesting to me. Sunsets—I like it the best when color seems to be at its most saturated, like a deep water, more than things that are very light and translucent—just aren't as appealing to me. Wow, I can't make those colors. I try and they always still come out really bold.

But I also think it's a camouflage. When I'm working on something where the content might be really difficult, I tend to start to glamorize them by beautifying them so that, you know, you get to see the other side as well so it's not just about dark or sad. Color offers an opportunity for joy, an expression of joy, even if you're dealing with a subject that is not easy, like the religion—religious stuff. I used color there but not always. It's a flower—

you know, a flower's colorful.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, and do you—you've done a few flowers in your day.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's not like I made that decision; I mean, God made that decision, you know, bright yellow sunflowers. You know, if you're going to make a sunflower, chance is pretty good it's going to be bright yellow.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: If you're going to paint at sunset, there's going to be orange and red.

MR. FLEMING: That kind of gets me, speaking of sunsets. You know, you grew up here in New Mexico. A lot of people in other parts of the country and perhaps the New Mexico Tourist Bureau tend to try to create a certain idea about New Mexico. Do you think just the landscape, the quality of light, the character of the whole region, do you think that really shaped you or as you say, is it just sort of a more immediate thing that—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: You know, it has absolutely shaped me. I mean, the things that I've loved from my childhood and still today, are—sort of exist here in the Southwest. The sense of the rough-cut land is very similar to how I approach the surface of carving a pot. The way things are colored around here—say, you don't have green in the desert, but in my opinion, you have every color of green. It's not like Vermont where they say that's green, but it's just like one color of green, this sort of dark green.

And so the desert has offered a range of color value. It is in the middle of the day very saturated with light and its hue, but in the evening, it becomes very bold in its color. Things light up. The grass looks smooth like velvet but it's really like needles. The sand is smooth but it's rough.

You know, and if I think of the surfaces of my work, I see that. I see that sort of rough, rough, masculine harshness against this sort of very soft, the polite colors, glassy, smooth. It just offers a nice contrast, which has always been in my work as well. And we talked about gender earlier, we talked about childhood histories, we talked about art education, I mean, those are two contrasts. What you learn in school and what you learn at home living your life, you know, with all the parallels and what makes them the same, and why are they different, are subjects that have always been interesting to me and I can trace them in my own work.

MR. FLEMING: When did you start carving those, you know, clunky pots that you were throwing back in the '80s? [Laughs.] When did you decide that you wanted to start really, you know, gouging them out and using that looped tool?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Right away. I started cutting the clay immediately. My first projects, for some reason, involved cutting and reassembling. The pots, you know, initially it is because—I was accused of making them too heavy and so one way to take the weight off was by cutting it away. And at first I was just doing, you know, pseudo-Japanese cutting and mark making and then eventually, I started seeing imagery again. As a painter, I was always interested in imagery but when I started making pots, I lost the sense of imagery and started of thinking about only surface and form. And really, the pots were absent of color. They were brown, wood-fired atmospheric—that kind of thing.

And then when I started realizing that I needed color again, I was reminded of my early works in painting in fabrics and fibers, and those sorts of things and color started to come back in. And so the idea of gouging clay was to me like making a brush stroke, you know, so creating the texture. And those are probably the two main reasons that I started carving the work. Also, you know, hobby ceramics, I think, has a pretty heavy impact on the work, and it's always highly marked and carved and stylized.

MR. FLEMING: Why do you say that the—in what way did the hobby ceramics—and when you say hobby ceramics, what exactly are you talking about?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I mean the little elves and their Santa Clauses slipped in clay and the Easter Bunny and—

MR. FLEMING: The kind of maybe—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —all the saints and you name it. You know, they were casting it in Duncan hobby ceramic facilities. When I was a kid, I used to get an occasional gift of a figurine to paint and I would paint them a lot like the saints that were in my house since that was the only model I had, how they painted statues.

MR. FLEMING: Those things were fairly common, too, in the tourist shops that were down on Main Street, along Route 66, I remember from growing up; were you aware of those, the—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: That kind of stuff wasn't in Tucumcari when I was growing up, that I was aware of. If it was a store that cost money chances are we weren't going into it too often and, you know, occasionally we would

stop. I do remember one junk store—I like junk stores. I always have.

This gives me an opportunity to talk maybe about a great influence in my life and that would have been my aunt—my mother's sister, who never identified herself as a crafts person but always was making things. And she was the one person that was consistently making things. Every time I went to her house, I would know there was going to be something new.

MR. FLEMING: Lupe?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Auntie Jane.

MR. FLEMING: Auntie Jane.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Tia Juana.

MR. FLEMING: Tia Juana, okay.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And, you know, she made this room where she housed all her things. And I loved that space because everything in there was handmade. Even some of the furniture, I'm sure, was handmade. But it was a shrine and it was just loaded with, not one quilt, but 20 quilts on the bed; not one doily but—everything that you could hang a doily over was—all the curtains, the rugs were braided—anything—pipe cleaners—photographs. It was an unbelievable space, really. It was her space.

And I think that, you know, that had probably the greatest impact on me growing up. I mean, in terms of my childhood that would have been probably the most critical influence.

MR. FLEMING: Well, you brought it up. What about the idea of the handmade? I mean, you know, in exploring some of the questions that are provided here by the Smithsonian and obviously it's very directed towards the crafts, and obviously your career has sort of skirted or encompassed—I don't know which—that whole craft aesthetic, what about—I mean, in this day and age, what about the idea of handmade things? Do you have any thoughts on that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I've only made handmade things. You know, my whole life has been involved in the making of objects of some sort. And I am really caught up on the craft of things. That's true. I guess over the years you keep practicing to get better and better and try to perfect your style and make it—I don't want to use the word slick, but understood and you sort of improve the quality of the hand. I can remember in graduate school and my thesis, oral, someone said—I think it was Wayne Higby—something about the quality of the handmade object. And he was referring to an area that was filled with mistakes, but trying to resolve how to do it, and I couldn't waste any time, so even though I had made a mistake, I was willing to accept it.

And there was this one really interesting part of that piece that is the test area and that was the quality of the handmade object, the sense of imperfection that I find very appealing. I really look for that, the beauty of the hand—

[END TAPE 2 SIDE A.]

—in the object. And I think that was probably one of the reasons why painting was less interesting to me, is that somehow I didn't feel that I was touching it. I mean, I guess you could finger-paint, and you could do all that stuff, but I wasn't—somehow that wasn't coming out naturally. When I experienced clay, all of that was part of the nature of the material. All the high-touch, the carving, I mean I could be all over that piece and I felt more physically connected to it. And it involved my hand.

MR. FLEMING: So, I guess you're drawing a distinction, really, between the notion of just handmade or handcrafted and actual, physical touching the object—or repeated interaction between your hand and whatever it is you're making, whereas the notion of a handmade or a handcrafted object is sort of more abstract. I noticed that—I'm looking at some things here, even though they come out of a computer printer, there's some excessive touching that's going on—piercings and mark-making, and it seems like that kind of happened no matter what kind of material.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It doesn't matter. When I was in Roswell doing the residency program, I had a bunch of paper and I remember just grabbing sheets and perforating them, and just the physical act—it's sort of violent. [Fleming laughs.] You know, I have this sort of—I've been told that I have this sort of sweet character, and that I'm real nice. There's a side of me that looks nice, and then there's this other side of me that just wants to slap things and kick things and rip them and poke them and tear them and burn them and all these sorts of approaches to my work that I use.

You know, I don't know, it's aggressive. And maybe it's the contrast, you know, so that the finished object is

more gentle in its appearance, but the act of doing it has always been very aggressive. And I know that people notice that when I'm doing a workshop or something. They see me get on that clay and it's like I'm wrestling it or I'm making love to it. One minute I'm kissing it, and the next minute I'm just squeezing it. Clay is able to take all of that.

MR. FLEMING: So, like a woman? [Laughs.]

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, well, it's androgynous really. Because it starts off soft and it gets hard. There's that whole sensual, sexual part of clay that I've always found attractive, too.

MR. FLEMING: Way earlier—and maybe on one of the other discs, you mentioned going to Chicago and sort of seeing art for the first time, seeing a big art museum, et cetera, and one of the people you mention is Louise Nevelson. I'm sure that the average sort of interested party who looked at your work might not immediately see a connection there. What is it about her and her work that kind of got your attention?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I've always been attracted to women artists, women singers, women makers, and maybe it's because my early influences were all women.

But Louise Nevelson, the first time I ever saw her work, it was like I knew everything she had made it out of, and I loved that. I didn't let got of the fact that it was an old chair, and a headboard, and a post, and a stick and whatever. It didn't lose its character. I could still identify it, and I loved that. I loved that I could look at a Nevelson sculpture and see that it was made out of old crates or—not all of them, because she was a big artist and did all kinds of things. It was that particular body of work that was probably most appealing to me was her wooden, sprayed gold, black-and-white contained boxes.

There's a lot of artists. I know a lot of these artists. I could throw out names of these artists that I know have had some influence on me. It would be funny to say Robert Ryman, who was a minimalist, but a lot of minimalist work influences me. I enjoy looking at it. I don't go looking at folk art all the time, even though my work looks like it was made by some outsider folk artist that went to college.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] You mentioned Robert Ryman, and now that even more, maybe, than Louise Nevelson —with Nevelson you can see though, as you said, she uses lots of component pieces of found objects and whatnot, and puts them together and makes something that's somewhat abstract. But Ryman, now you're talking serious minimalism. What is it about that that gets you?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Maybe it's the absence of everything, and yet everything's there, you know, like the stillness of night. When I look at a Robert Ryman painting, I think about how I love the stillness of dark, even though I work with bright colors. But a [Mark] Rothko painting or a [Piet] Mondrian painting, a painting of objects, or with Rothko—those sort of hot, beautiful colors—those kinds of things are more in the work than a history of ceramics. I have a hard time drawing—referencing names through a history of ceramics. I didn't teach myself that way through—I didn't discover my work that way.

But maybe it's the opposite. So often people think that the influences in your work need to look like your work. And I believe more that the influences in the work really don't look like your work at all. When I saw a Ryman painting, it opened my world up. It made me believe that anything was possible. So why is that not an influence? Why does it have to be—wanting to be more obvious than that?

MR. FLEMING: Okay, look, I'm going to stop here for a second because I'm getting concerned about our technology. So we're going to take a brief pause here and probably start on a new disc. So just hang on just a second.

[Audio break.]

This is, again, Stephen Fleming interviewing Eddie Dominguez at his home in Roswell, New Mexico, on July 28, 2006.

I'm going to go back and try to cover some of the area that we're afraid that we somehow managed to erase.

I want to ask you about community again. I'm afraid we lost that section. Could you talk just a little bit about the idea of community? You talked about your hometown, but are there any other communities that you've been involved—a lot of craft people are involved in various kinds of communities. Are there any kind of communities that you've been involved with that have been particularly important in your development as an artist?

You've been on a few residencies, et cetera. Is there any one in particular—[laughs]—that you remember?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: The artist in residency program in Roswell, New Mexico—Artists in Residence Foundation?

MR. FLEMING: No, it's the Roswell Artist in Residence Program.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I never get it right.

MR. FLEMING: It was probably called something different in your day, because that was a considerable time ago. Could you just talk a little bit about your experience on the residency?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I was just out of graduate school, and was sort of looking for a place to work. And the way that whole situation worked out for me was that I was applying for a job through the state of New Mexico, and the director of the Roswell Museum was a juror, and he remembered my work and he gave me a call and asked me if I would consider presenting my work at this invitational event here at the museum. And so that was my first time that a sort of director or curator was coming to my studio in Tucumcari. I was really excited about that possibility.

When he came, the first thing he said to me was, wow, you really need a place to work. I looked at my surroundings and I was working in the back room of a storage facility, basically. And that's where I was making my work from. I hadn't even really been making any work at that point, yet. I was just starting, but I was sort of inventing the next body of work. I was telling Wendell [Oft] what that would be.

So, I did complete that body of work, and I did set up that exhibition at the Roswell Museum, and then that's when I really heard about this program called the artist in residency program here. And that they—you apply for it, and there's a group of artists that work for a year under the generous support of Donald Anderson, and he set the program up. And it was a year of working.

And the thing that I discovered that year was what it was like to be an artist every day; working and living your life as an artist. And I would say that probably had the most profound impact on me than anything I'd ever done then and still. I've fed off that program for a long time in the things that I learned and discovered there. I was a young artist, and I was able to come again a second time 20 years later. And the difference was extreme, but still what was going on in the program was pretty wonderful—in terms of what it was giving and the kind of creativity that exists there.

MR. FLEMING: Well, there's a thought. Why don't you compare those two experiences, those very specific—your first day on the residency, which was in 1986, '87, and your more recent experience as a mature artist 20 years later and that was in 2001, perhaps, 2002? Fairly recently.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, gosh, how do you begin that?

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, that's a tough one.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's hard. I remember I was giving a lecture once and the guy from *Ceramics Monthly*, Bill Hunt, asked a question. It might have been 10 years ago, you know, sort of every 10, 20, 30 years like that, anyway. He said, did you know what you were going to do your first 10 years? I said, yeah, I really had this sort of goal. He goes, what are you going to do your next 10? And it was a difficult question because for some reason so many of the things that I was trying to achieve I had achieved, and I didn't know what the next 10 years were going to have. And I saw that leaps and bounds were turning into little steps, small steps, almost not-even-noticing-that-you-were-moving steps. Whereas, when I was the young artist on the residency the first time, I was jumping around, moving quickly from—it was a different way of working.

MR. FLEMING: Of course, you were married and with a child on your second stay.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah. Married with a child. I had a university position, had gotten to a certain maturity in my work. I was showing in galleries and actually selling, and the work was starting to be collected by museums, all of these other kinds of things that just aren't there, or accessible to you as a young artist. So I was free of all of that. The second time I came, I did a public art piece, which was different than just making this work that I wanted to make. I was working with community; I was exploring another whole way of working with community—bringing assistants into it.

MR. FLEMING: That was the pillars in Albuquerque [NM].

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, I was working with a middle school. So that was part of my residency, which I wouldn't have even thought of the first time. I was more self-involved. All I cared about was me. And that's what that program gave you; it gave you absolute time to just do whatever you wanted to do, providing materials to do whatever you wanted to do. I had no real sense of being practical. By the time I came 20 years later, a lot of the things that come into life were there now, and certain responsibilities. I had also came to the grant the second time with a back injury, so I was going through a major life change.

I think the things that I experienced—the first time was about discovering things. The second time was sort of a rediscovery of things. What now? Now that I'm sort of slowing down, for one, and, I still move quickly, but in comparison to being young—

MR. FLEMING: Well, we might have covered this. [Laughs.] Since there's no real convenient way to review this interview, short of listening to the entire thing from beginning to end, I'm going to ask you again about your involvement with other institutions, Penland, Haystack, those kinds of things. Could you just run through that again? How have they been important to you? You're going up to Archie Bray, I guess just pretty soon again.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I think these art camps all have a certain kind of energy that you just simply tap into when you're a part of them. Now, the Roswell residency was different in that it was an artist working in a studio. These other programs are—more often offer instruction which makes it different because you're there to teach. And I never have taken a workshop myself, so I don't know it from the other side, other than one time when I was teaching at Haystack I took a performance workshop.

Of course, I've been interested in performance ever since, because that's the way it is with me. You know, something comes in and I need to get it back out. And so there's a part of me that wants to do performance work because I've had this experience, as I said. My work comes from the experiences I've had, and then I want to translate them to some visual format through whatever materials necessary. If clay is the necessary material, then that's what it's going to be made out of. If it's something other, then it's something other.

But these camps, the neat thing about them is that everything is available so that it's not just clay; it's wood, it's metal, it's glass, it's fiber, it's performance, it's things like that, and so there is a whole different kind of energy because of all the different art disciplines being exercised and instructed. People go here to be motivated and to learn something new. And so my interaction with a lot of these places has always been to try to give—motivate them and try to offer something new, since that's sort of the focus of these programs – with the exception of Haystack. Haystack Mountain School of Arts, which is located in Deer Isle, Maine—I became a board member for nine years.

And what I did as board member with Haystack is that I became part of that community, and started working within the school systems, in the nursing homes, and in the childcare centers and things like this. Over the years of working there, connection to the community and Haystack was formed—directed by our directors Stuart Kestenbaum, who is a poet and a writer, and his wife, Susan Webster, who is a printmaker and painter.

So they were very involved in the community, had children that they were raising in the community, so Stuart expressed interest. And so that was what was so different about Haystack, is that I went there on the off-seasons when there wasn't a school; it was using that facility to do other things with the local community. And it also gave me a sense of private time, which I really need to make new work. So it's always been a place that's been transformative for me. Every time I go, I expect now to get something new—an experience, a feeling—see something; think something. That's what that place has done for me. And I think that's what it does for everyone who goes there. I've just been fortunate enough to go many times and experience it on many levels.

MR. FLEMING: You're going up to Archie Bray here in just about a week or two from now. What's going to be happening up there? And were you there before?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I never was there. I, over the years, have been interested in going and just somehow life gets complicated and the more mature you become as an artist, the more complicated things become. In my youth, when I was freed from so many responsibilities, and the only thing I had to make was art, things were different. More work was being made. So now I'm looking at this residency at the Bray as a way to jumpstart a new project. And the work that's currently happening in my studio is more figurative in its nature—some landscape, maybe. And so I'm going to go there and I'm going to try to look at that and make something from it. And I know that it can happen there because I know so many people who have gone there and things like that happen for them. So it must just be the energy that's in both of these places.

MR. FLEMING: Are you going to do a workshop up there?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I'm also going to do a workshop. I've had a longstanding collaboration with my friend, Doug Casebeer, who's the director of the clay program at Anderson Ranch in Colorado, and he and I have been doing collaborative work since graduate school. He and I were students together. And I have gone to the ranch also for many years. And there it was always to explore new ideas. It was the only reason I went up there. Occasionally I would do workshops, but it was always in combination with someone else. I worked with Doug Casebeer, Kenny Price, someone else, Joseph Bennion—just different people who were—we would instruct together and brainstorm. So that's what those places have always represented to me, is an opportunity to tap into a new source.

MR. FLEMING: I'm not sure whether I've already asked you this question or not, and it's a little difficult one. Do

you think of yourself as part of some big international tradition, or one that is particularly American?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I don't know how everyone else sees my work. I'm not—it is a funny question because it deals with the idea of success, international status—

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, the idea of international here in New Mexico probably would equate with success. I'm not sure that's the way that the question is really meant. It's more meant—how do you feel about—would you say—I'm guessing from what you've told us that your work really comes out of such a focused kind of immediacy of your own surroundings that it would have to be typically American. But, you seem to be able to look at work pretty indifferent to where it comes from. In other words, if you said your graduate work was all that shino stuff that you did based on Japanese work—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: That was my undergraduate work.

MR. FLEMING: Right, your undergraduate work, sorry.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I mean, I didn't know anything when I was an undergraduate. I was learning. The idea of art being—you know, I've always been influenced by many other areas—African art, Korean art, American art, arts all over the place, so I'm looking at things as they cross my path. Do I think there is a kind of scene going on that—I don't know. I really am focused on such a small place, you know, just a little place, that the idea of any influences outside of that aren't necessary in my own work. I'm not interested in travel—going around and seeing—not yet, anyway.

MR. FLEMING: You've been around the country quite a bit, but you haven't traveled abroad.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No, no.

MR. FLEMING: Could you talk about any artist, perhaps here in New Mexico, that might have had some kind of influence on you as fellow regional kind of artists? Obviously, New Mexico has a pretty big tradition of producing artists and craftspeople of its own that are pretty uniquely and characterized specifically as New Mexico artists. And I'm guessing that in a lot of cases you've been classified that way. Are there any other people, older artists, or what have you, that were around or are still around in New Mexico that inspired you or interested you?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: When I was in the program in Roswell, I guess the people who were coming into my life then—you, for example, Luis Jimenez—I've always been a big, huge fan of his work. He was an older Hispanic artist who made work about politics and sexual issues and I found that very alluring. I thought I appreciated his success because I knew that he was opening up possibilities for other younger Hispanic artists with work that seemed to be about who he was and how he was raised and the culture that he came from. I mean, he didn't leave that behind and he still had a very national scope. So I looked at that and admired that, so I guess he would be one artist that I would claim as a New Mexico artist that I admire.

Some of the others—people like Agnes Martin, who are really recognized as artists from this region—you know, she makes very minimal work and I've always admired that kind of simplistic—well, not simplistic—simplicity, and yet very layered and complicated on a lot of other levels. Georgia O'Keeffe, who painted in Abiquiu—I've always been a fan of her work even before I knew she was from New Mexico, but I think it was because she painted the things that I knew. I would look at her paintings and I could feel them, and I understood what they were and where they were at. Even without going to Abiquiu I knew that by the colors that she used and how she painted so softly the things that are very rough—would be another. And I'm sure there are more.

MR. FLEMING: Could you just recap for me the—I don't know how long this is going to take, but—any relationships you've had with dealers in the past that were important or memorable?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, all the different lessons that I've learned—there are so many—in the forming of a career and the places that you have to get your work to. I remember when I first got out of graduate school, one of the first major shows that I was going to do was an invitational called the Scripps National [Scripps College Invitational Ceramic Show, Claremont, CA], and different teachers invite different artists to participate. So this was my first adventure of going to the West Coast and mounting my work in L.A., and how exciting that was to throw the work in the back of the truck and get it there.

But then it had to get back, and they built a really elaborate crate because it was so fragile, and they needed to get it me, so they air freighted it. By the time I got through having that show I thought, who can afford to be an artist? Who can afford—when it costs more to ship your work than the actual price tag on the work—I knew something was wrong there. And I needed to fix that. So that was an interesting experience, as exciting as it was, sort of like, whoa, what do you do with all of that?

That was just at the very beginning and shipping work around the country to get it here and there is difficult. If

you're trying to make your living off of it—

MR. FLEMING: Particularly if you are working in clay.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And if you make multiple parts—so it's hard. But then I had a dealer in Santa Fe, Larry Munson, who I'd been with for 18 years and my relationship with him was so great. He supported everything I ever did, you know, the good, the bad, and the ugly. He had an eye that he could see the differences and still allowed me to present them in his gallery. And I remember asking him, I don't think you're going to be able to sell any of this work in this show. And his response was, well I sell your work all year. This is an opportunity for you to do something. I think he liked that I would do these sort of—I don't even know how to describe some of the exhibits that I had there in Santa Fe.

Then I had galleries across the country that I would ship work to or drive work to and show it. Part of the deal with trying to promote yourself and trying to support yourself gets very confusing. It's a touchy situation—you know, what it is that you make in order to survive as an artist? When does the work stop being pure and start being contaminated by the market? Do I see and recognize that occasionally in my work, yes. I would be lying if I didn't know that some of the things that I make there is certainly a market for.

I described it recently to a student of mine as the four corners of a room, and there is the center columns that support the room. And that one corner was the dinnerware sets and the things that I sell that I know I can sell and I have to make that in order to support the other corners of the room. So galleries have always offered that opportunity to sell certain products that I was making, and promote it. It also labels you. But, I've always worked in multi-media and I always sort of incorporated all these different works in my gallery shows, and a gallery is a business, so they worry when you bring something in that they might not be able to market. It is a concern and it's real. Like mine is making sure that I take something that I can market so that I can support the studio.

But shows like non-profit galleries, you can put—you know, their concern isn't in merchandising the work; it's just in showing what they are interested in. It's very different. And so I've had those exhibits as well, and working with those kinds of curators and gallery directors and it offers a different possibility for your work.

MR. FLEMING: Apart from Larry, who didn't sell—yours might have been just about the only work that might have been considered to even venture into the craft area. He had sold a lot of painting—primarily is a dealer in paintings. I know he was very supportive of you, despite the fact that you were producing work over a very broad range of materials and approaches. Are there any other dealers that you've worked with or are interested in or had dealings with that come to mind?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No, I haven't had dealings with too many dealers, really. You know, it's like—I feel and have had relationships with these people that you work years with. I wasn't hopping around trying to find the next good dealer, trying to sell my work. I'm not motivated that way. It wasn't necessary for me to do that. I was able to find a place for my work and market what I was making, and I was happy with that. I didn't feel the need to get it here and get it there and who's showing and the important dealers and who's making ceramics important.

And, yeah, there's dealers like that but I wasn't calling them. And occasionally I got called and I wasn't reacting. I just was slow-moving in that way. I had enough with what I had. It would have meant letting go of something in order to—

MR. FLEMING: Grab onto something.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Bring something else. And I was happy with the situations that I had, even though they may not have been classified as important dealers making the cutting-edge artists' careers. I don't know where to go with all of that except that my work has been my life and I was able to sell some of that work in order to have a life, and still don't feel a drive to sort of promote it. These things just sort of happen on their own for me. I'm not lazy. I work hard.

MR. FLEMING: What would you say—this is the old, very old issue, and maybe this is an opportunity to talk about it a little—the craft-art divide. If there's anybody that's out there right now, you probably are straddling the craft-art divide most obviously of people I can think of. Occasionally, you get craftsmen that are so enormously successful that they seem to bridge the gap somehow but it isn't through anything they're doing in their work, particularly, whereas you definitely work both sides of the fences. What's your take on all that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I guess if there was any political edge to my work, it's always been that one. They say—and I've heard many painters and sculptors who want to have a little argument, that there is a division. And it's true there is a division, or there isn't a division, or that's the '70s—that's gone by. Over and over, even just recently we had a critic visit our university who really had very little to say about crafts or—we only have

ceramics, so I mean, it wasn't like he had the other guys to deal with, or any of the other curators or critics that we've had at our university seem to not have a whole lot to say about our community, our disciplines.

And in fact, occasionally I ask a question about that—how can crafts and art co-exist—and in his mind it was bringing craft over to art. And that would mean the death of craft, and only the life of art. Where really, you can't homogenize it like that. Craft is craft. Art is art. I always compare it to male and female. When you want to make them both the same, or you can just say human being. So using that as a kind of tool for me to think about the sort of discriminations that exist.

They're real, and I know they're there. It's never stopped me from working in these materials. I understand that it's present. How do you battle that? I don't know. I would think that maybe art historians could begin talking crafts in terms of the long history that crafts have had and the parallels of what's been going on. Like they do in sculpture, like they do for architecture, like they do for painting. They omit crafts. I do have a problem with that, because I know that if you put everything on the table that everything was happening at the same time, and that some things are being—I'd like to see what that is. And until that begins to change, I don't see that there's going to be—all this always sounds so negative.

MR. FLEMING: I think—I don't know—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Art has not been generous to women, right; there is that. Crafts has not been generous to women, and yet it's primarily—women are primarily working in the crafts discipline. When I give a workshop, if I have one man, or two men out of 20, that's pretty good. So that's what I see. But then I see galleries and museums and collectors, and all that, and I hate to talk about it like that, but there is some truth to it. I see things—it just exists. There's prejudice, there's discrimination—that has been a part of my life always, growing up. It's a part of my work still. It's present. I'm aware of it. I have not tried to change it. I just personally am an artist who works in clay and makes whatever it is that I make. But I've been aware of it as an issue because it's always been discussed. And craftspeople are also guilty of doing it too, because they look at the hobby ceramics or folk art, and they have plenty of criticisms for that, too. It's like—

MR. FLEMING: Everybody's go to have somebody to look down on.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: But I guess the minute—if you're just honest in your own work, you can't let those kinds of things guide it.

MR. FLEMING: One of the things that I've noticed is that crafts tend to have its own collector base. Art tends to have its own collector base. A lot of those collectors won't collect what's considered the other thing. So if you have a person who's collecting ceramics, they tend to be focused on craft-based ceramics. And if you have a person who's collecting art, they tend to focus on what they consider painting and sculpture. And so strangely, the market drives it inadvertently; dealers tend to line up with who their clients are. The stage is set for the ongoing debate, which has certainly been going on as long as I can remember.

Let's just pause for a second here.

[Audio break.]

MR. FLEMING: We talked about your schooling and your life at art school. I always think that one thing interesting about that is all the things that might not actually be obviously pertinent—[laughs]—but obviously had an influence, but aren't directly related to your specific education. You haven't talked much about your family—your current family, being married, settling down, all that sort of stuff.

Of course, we haven't touched on any of those more awkward areas that we kind of threatened to get into concerning your last show. And I don't know that you want to go there. And I don't know how much personal information they really want.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: God, if I really told the reasons why I made that work that's dealing with religion besides just the superficial stuff—I mean, it's true; all of that's true. It's just—I just have a more rooted reason, but it doesn't really have that much to do with that, but it lives inside of me, so every now and again—I mean, if I really made the work as that, it would be ugly and I don't want to make it—although I'm getting damn close.

MR. FLEMING: No. I don't think so. Who knows where—that's those funk artists. They were the ones that kept trying to make ugly things kind of beautiful, or beautiful things ugly. I'm not sure what they were—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, I have always like that—the beautiful ugly.

MR. FLEMING: That's why I asked you that question about West Coast funk, because strangely, your work seems to kind of—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I can't tell you how many people have told me that.

MR. FLEMING: Oh, so I'm not the only one—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I had Jan Drasbock, who said the first time she ever saw my work was in a California house where they only collected California West Coast art.

MR. FLEMING: Like David Gilhooly.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, and, and it was filled with all of that stuff, and then there was my work. I was one of the very few artists they had outside of that place.

MR. FLEMING: California, yeah.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And I can see how easy my work would go into the funk movement. Or, it how it looks like folk; it looks like funk.

MR. FLEMING: Well, folk and funk—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It looks like historic European ware—the eccentric kind of soup tureens and the British picture pots, the narrative pots—

MR. FLEMING: What are those things called? Toby mug? Yeah, Toby mugs.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Every frat boy had one. I mean, that is how—

MR. FLEMING: My mom loved those.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: You know the asparagus, lettuce bowls that—

MR. FLEMING: Yeah.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I mean, there are so many truthful—how do you talk about? It's like a white hair on your head. You don't know when you got the first one, and all of a sudden your whole damn head's white.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] Tell me about it.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's like, when did you get your first white hair? Do you remember? Yes I remember that one. And pretty soon the influences are just popping out of your head. You just aren't labeling them—

MR. FLEMING: No, I know. I see—I've always known about your work that you don't go out looking – you didn't go out looking for influences. You just made work and the influences just popped out, I think. There must be certain, oh, I don't know, social—people out here in the west, California, self-consciously, but I'd say maybe here in New Mexico less self-consciously, have a kind of freedom from culture. We're not—kind of raised with a lack of culture, maybe. [Laughs.]

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Really? I'm like a white guy from New Mexico. I even forget that I'm an ethnic man. But I can tell you everybody who looks at me doesn't.

MR. FLEMING: That's right. Well, they had to remind—we had to be reminded by everybody else here in New Mexico that we had ethnic—all the ethnic stuff. It all came to us, just like the United States and everything else, so that we kind of have a weird freedom in one hand—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Why does that look Mexican? Why doesn't that look like a [J.M.W.] Turner painting or something?

MR. FLEMING: Oh, that's something I wanted to talk to you about, and I can tell you a little bit, and kind of goes to that, and by the way, he's referring to—

[END TAPE 2 SIDE B.]

—a large carved platter with a tornado that he produced probably over there in Nebraska.

What about scale, you know, big?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Are we recording?

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, we're recording. This is the unofficial interview segment of the thing while I try to figure

out – I'm going to add the official one—I'm going to have to go back and do some lengthy review work on now because—pretty fouled up.

But what about big, scale, the idea that—because your last show, you know, those are kind of jumbo objects.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Humongous is how someone put it in the catalogue. [Fleming laughs.] I haven't heard that word since the '70s.

MR. FLEMING: Humongous sort of says something about—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Humongous, retro language.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, they're—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well—

MR. FLEMING: —education.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, I like scale. I think scale is critical. It's one of the major questions every artist asks. And I wanted things to be big. And I can recall my problem that I needed to solve when I was a young artist was that I wanted to make big out of small. I tried making just big and they were always so awful. Every big figure I ever made was terrible.

But I would make nice little pots. And so, you know, the struggle was how do I make the nice little pot big without making a giant teacup, Alice in Wonderland kind of thing. I needed it to be a cup. So many ceramic people that I've noticed over the years, you know, when they make things monument they just make things bigger, and I—as much as I liked that, sort of, I wasn't interested in it myself. So the idea of a three-foot teapot just didn't strike me.

But I did want a three-foot object, so that's really when I started stacking too.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I found that through multiples I didn't leave my—the history of production pottery, which was definitely important in my early work. The method of making multiples and ceramics offered multiples. It was in its nature, in its history throughout history. I know that now, and in more contemporary works, multiples are hip and happening. That's not why I do things, although occasionally I seem to be right in the middle of the hip and happening stuff without knowing it. Of course, I don't think that my stuff is that.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] You're just in the middle of it.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: For an example, I did a text-based piece that was, it dealt with very personal issues. And the reasons I was making this piece dealt with ideas about the environment. And so I put words on these rocks. And I understand that was—there is word art—not poetry, I'm talking words on painting.

MR. FLEMING: Word art—somewhere out there.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And so I happened to be at the exhibition where a group of young students were discussing this work, and they were really criticizing the fact that I was trying so hard to be hip—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It seemed very dishonest and it seemed shoved and that it didn't—it lacked integrity and that I was just—that was these uniformed young artists looking at what is going on now and thinking that that work was being influenced by what was going on now in the art world. But in fact it was being influenced by what was going on in my studio at that moment—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —conversations we were having. So the only way I thought I could do it was by putting the text on the work.

So it's just easy for work to be misread, like the religious work that I made more recently. I mean, I've had a history of—from 40 years of looking at rosaries, and when I finally decide to make one it really talks a lot about the—a current situation instead of a personal history you might have or a relationship you may have with these objects. A lot of assumptions can be made about that kind of work. And I've never been one to describe it fully.

MR. FLEMING: It's interesting because just—I never thought of that exactly. But those huge rosaries are really just a collection of, I guess you could call them multiples. They're really similar in a way to the dinnerware sets in that there is a lot of discrete objects that go together to make up a fairly large—ultimately a fairly large object. And another person could look at those rosaries and just see a series of abstract ovals, brightly colored, different colors, strung together as an installation object. And the fact that you could call it a rosary or refer to it as a rosary or say that it's a gigantic rosary is kind of a secondary almost to this—the process of it being a creative object that came out of a desire to string together a lot of multiples.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Go figure. That's always there. It's always, always there.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, it's interesting.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Part of the reason—I was searching for a thing that I could make multiples of. So the rosary, there it was.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. It's a perfect—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It wasn't like a statue.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Only one.

MR. FLEMING: And it had the convenient characteristic of having rope going though it—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Indeed—

MR. FLEMING: —it so you could hang it up.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —in that it's like—it's also crafty.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's jewelry. It's like the art of the '70s when I did macramé—

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, making—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —before college, before art school, and I thought making art was making a belt—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —with beads.

MR. FLEMING: Right exactly.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I mean, that's the history of that work, you know, is watching my grandmother pray the rosary, watching my mother pray the rosary when there was tragedy in the family. So as much as those rosaries—I mean, they're a doubled edge. I mean, they could easily speak about reverence—

MR. FLEMING: Tradition.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —and faith and tradition of religion and culture or it could be almost opposite. And I like that.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I like that—I like that they sort of made you think about—or at least they make me think about it. But I can't—I don't know how the viewers are looking at it.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, well it's—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: But I like the fact that they're like artsy-craftsy.

MR. FLEMING: So this thing you said about your students is interesting—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Is it art? Is it craft?

MR. FLEMING: —that younger—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Is it religious or is it sacrilegious?

MR. FLEMING: Younger people think that everybody has as much contact with the immediate culture and are as quick to find out what the current trends are and so therefore they judge people assuming that they're employing all of these technologies to get themselves super informed and to be super up-to-date and not realizing—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Right.

MR. FLEMING: —that that's really only their generation that is so preoccupied –

MR. DOMINGUEZ: [Laughs.] With what is new.

MR. FLEMING: —with what is immediately happening now in trying to be current in a sort of a moment-by-moment or minute-by-minute kind of way.

And that probably affects popular criticism as well. They're assuming that the first interpretation of something would be the one that would be the most currently available issue that they're aware of. And whereas the artist, who probably made the work a year or two, over the course of a year or two and earlier—it's obviously a product of something that took some time to do—and isn't just an immediate response to some hip, happening, momentary kind of thing.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No, it took me 13 years to get to the rosaries—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —from my first attempt to my most recent attempt, and finally succeeded on one level to make work that's satisfying to me.

You asked earlier if there is a play. Well, there is the play. Life's a play, right?

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] Now don't start quoting Shakespeare on me.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Sorry. But it's just, you know. When I review my life and the kinds of things that changed it—

MR. FLEMING: Exactly.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —like my family, my child, my wife, my mother, my teacher, my friend, you know, these are people who come in and are willing to encourage and help you along. It's not a—my life and history is not a commodity. The things that I make have been.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: But the reasons I make them are not for sale.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Because I need to live my life as an artist and I have byproduct.

MR. FLEMING: Right. Well, you know—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: What are you going to do with it?

I remember a student asks me once—it wasn't really a student, in fact it was a colleague of mine—has my work ever been on the cutting edge?   That was the question. And I said to her, well, I think maybe at one time it was on the cutting edge. I think everybody has to cut the edge. But the thing is you keep on cutting. I would think you would want to get to the center of what you're work is about and not stay around the edge. And the cutting edge work is young, usually made by people who are in the birth of their work.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And when you get to the depth of your work, and that requires your history of your life, the things that you've done, at least—even if it's formal you don't have formal thinking without having a reason to think that way. You want to reduce your life like the minimalists and live simply. Potters have been doing that for a long time. They reduce their life. They had to live simply. I mean, one is a need, one is a choice, one is a—kind of, this is how I want to live my life. I've always looked at artists romantically. When I first saw a potter out in the country selling their wares, I mean, I thought that was a beautiful way to live. It reminded me of my aunt who made things and lived off the land.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Are these going to be important artists? Were they going to change the face of American art? Who is doing that?

MR. FLEMING: Well, I would just like to interrupt here for just a second to remark upon the fact that we had a little family of antelope that were strolling right across our field of view, the window that we're looking out here in southern New Mexico. And just to kind of put some context into where the interview is taking place. And the scene out our window is pretty much a horizon-to-horizon landscape of grasses with horses and other wild animals roaming around.

I was thinking about also answering some of these questions that we posed to you, and the very fact that we're posing these questions to you with words—and it's a recording that will be transcribed and then read by people—I thought how much easier some of these questions would have been for you to answer if we had just taken a digital camera, walked through your studio.

We could answer each question with some visual, just of what you're doing when I asked you the question about how does play enter into your work. And you just walk into your studio and you can see that play is very important in your work because of the—just the dozens of varieties of ways that you've attacked the work that you're working on out there—some of it serious, some of it just experimental, maybe even a little silly. But all of it moving towards some other destination, but in the meantime, preoccupied in a very basic way with just manipulating the materials.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah. I guess I have a lot of fun in the studio. I do. I play. I'm playing now for real.

MR. FLEMING: You're too modest. Yeah. No, playing seems to be a very important part.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I play.

MR. FLEMING: I sometimes think that none of us have actually grown up.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Hope for a little accident.

MR. FLEMING: Just keep playing around with it and maybe something will happen.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Something is bound to happen.

MR. FLEMING: It seems like it sort of worked out that way with you.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: That's all.

MR. FLEMING: Okay, look, let me stop it here for a minute. I wish we were—I was more accomplished at this. And how do we do that? It's here.

[Audio break.]

Now we're on track four.

We were just talking in your studio in there about technology, the modern technology, the wave of the future, computers, the Internet, digital printing and what not. You were just describing a book that you were sort of, I guess—a handmade book, in a way. Could you describe that to us a little bit?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: More recently my work—and it's even hard for me to believe, I shocked myself, and that is that I've become interested in a computer generated art. A year and a half ago if anyone would have even suggested that to me I would have laughed at them. I would have thought I can't even turn the machine on—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: – much less make work from it. But then in my studio one day the computer was in front of me and, I don't know, I said if I'm ever going to have a relationship with this technology I'm going to have to try to attempt to make artwork with it.

I started thinking about it in terms of my craft; I started thinking about the computer as being the potter's wheel and the printer as being the kiln and the inks as being my paints, and the clicker—the idea of the repetition, I loved that. I reminded me so much of pottery making that I click, click, click, click and things happen. So this whole idea of taking a—transformation, that the computer somehow offered transformation, and how basic it is—it's like you pulled up a piece of paper and you said this is, like, the most common thing, right, and everybody knows that. And that was attractive to me, the fact that it was ordinary, that people might look at my imagery and start even thinking that, well, I just made one of those the other day.

I like that because—but that is all about technology and technical information. The thing that is going to make the work is the ideas, right—the ideas that I have, that only I have, that belong only to me, and my personal histories—the forward histories, the backward histories.

But anyway, one of the projects that I took on this year was making a handmade book. I had always wanted to publish a book. I think part of what my work has always done is conquered fears. And I think I had a huge fear of the computer because I felt like you had to be some kind of genius in order to really use that tool, and what I found out was that you don't have to be. It wouldn't hurt.

MR. FLEMING: And did you—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: But anyway, I Googled myself up, and I started printing everything I could find on me.

MR. FLEMING: On the Internet.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah. And started making these prints of information and illustrations and different—and it's just interesting how far back you could go and how you keep finding yourself in these machines. I found that interesting to look at myself and read about myself.

MR. FLEMING: So how—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I know that sounds weird.

MR. FLEMING: How thick did the—how many pages did you—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: The book—didn't ever count the pages but it's about an inch and a half thick, an inch thick. I'm not quite through yet; there is still more stuff to find, and of course every day some body is posting something, it seems. But it was just an attempt to look into my personal background and to rediscover something about myself. And, like I said, I shocked myself. And just again I felt, as I had mentioned, an epiphany—whatever that means exactly—but I felt like I had one last year.

[They laugh.]

MR. FLEMING: And I see a lot of the work out there in the studio that you're experimenting with are digital photographs of yourself, of your body.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Strip-down naked.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. Is that another going-after-your-own-fears kind of thing –

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well—

MR. FLEMING: —challenging yourself?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah. I figured if I was going to start from the beginning I might as well start with my nakedness. It's kind of how I felt, and it's how I always have felt, I guess, as an artist sometimes. I was exposing sort of a very personal part of myself through these things that I make, sort of lets people into who you are, either the assumptions that are made about you or the fact that maybe some of those things are based on some kind of real thing.

An assumption would be that I'm a very religious person; that's why I made rosaries. But another assumption could be is that I like ordinary objects; that would be true. Or that I was stringing beads together because there is multiples, that I could color each one. I mean, all of those are based on some sort of truths.

MR. FLEMING: I noticed that a while ago, maybe a year ago, you were interested in tattooing and tattoos that were on peoples' bodies. And now I see that you used images of yourself, naked, unembellished, but that you've taken those images and richly embellished them through piercing, cutting, superimpositions, collaging, alternate colors. Where you think that—is that the same impulse?   Is that the same thing?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yes. It has been in the work all along. I don't think that they're different. I've been sort of piercing and cutting and—forever.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, you had—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: My clay work is based on all of that.

MR. FLEMING: I remember a whole group of work you did where you took snapshots, hundreds and hundreds of

snapshots, either of the house you grew up in or Tucumcari itself, or Main Street on old Route 66, and collaged many, many, many different, just conventional snapshots together. This is really before there were—computers were widespread. So presumably that same impulse persists.

I remember you did an early—the dresser, I think it was, the female dresser in your show that you had back when you were on the residency all those years ago. It was a collage of images that went together to make it.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Based on quilts.

MR. FLEMING: Quilts, right. The idea that quilts are made—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: All of my work has always been based on the handmade and on the craft. And as much as I want to say that it is fine art, it's all been based on the histories of craftmaking, handwork. Piercing has come from influences of needle and thread going through fabric or paper, which is what I do it on.

MR. FLEMING: And there is the traditional tinsmithing work that you see around—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's pierced.

MR. FLEMING: —in New Mexico, or lots of piercings.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And repousse.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —sort of hitting it with a hammer. I like that because a hammer is sort of a—it's masculine tool and I like the fact that I can hit something with a hammer or a feminine tool like a needle.

But I noticed that all the time growing up I was always characterized as sort of—well, I don't even know how to say this exactly. I think that my—I've always—I have felt labeled, even as a child, because I was an artist, in assumptions that were made about my character because I was an artist. And the materials that I chose to work with, all sort of leaning towards misrepresentations. I don't know. I don't know how to say it. I guess I fear saying it even. But I don't know.

MR. FLEMING: Well, I mean, did you feel like that was—getting the impression that what you're referring to is the fact that—and I probably experienced this is well—the fact that you were an artist somehow undermined your masculinity or meant that you weren't as—weren't normal in some way, that because you had interest and worked in materials that weren't traditionally associated with guys—is that sort of—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Stuff like that. But it's not always true because I work with wood and nails and that would have been acceptable or—but I work with fabric and thread and needles and somehow that was viewed differently.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: How I was thinking and why I was making – there was no difference. But how the public was seeing it—those early influences will certainly impact the work now. Why psychology does that I don't know, except that I know it to be true at least for me.

All the cultural stuff, all the racial tensions, the sort of elitist art school, all of that stuff—I mean, I come from simple beginnings and I'm involved in this world that's—of art which is fairly complicated and lives by certain guidelines even though artists don't. You sort of tap into that and it is sort of how it becomes. And the older I get the more of that I see.

I was recently at a memorial service for a friend [Luis Jimenez] who passed away and Terry Allen said—one of the things he said that maybe it's not an art degree you need, it's a law degree, and something about public commissions and how things are guided and ruled. And artists who have always worked against things suddenly are challenged.

MR. FLEMING: Swept up in some—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Swept up by—and I don't know how one keeps their work pure. I try.

MR. FLEMING: Well, I think that—at least from my personal experience, that—this gets back to being here in New Mexico—the idea of separating yourself or removing yourself actually from the most current trends or the most recent publication or the most latest and the greatest, in a way New Mexico is a refuge or a place to find sort of an inner peace simply by being in a remote, perhaps, location.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Right, yeah. I mean, I made the choice to do that consciously. I didn't want to involve myself in sort of that larger art world—I'm in it. It's funny. Some things just happen.

I was thinking about—now that we're reviewing and thinking about my past and how I never tried to interrupt my destiny, I just have always sort of moved forward and worked consistently and tried to think about the things that were critical and important to me and the things I knew I could discuss in my work.

Some things are so personal that they can't be talked about, and some things are so common that people think of them as being very superficial. And they could both be in the same piece, which is interesting to me. I mean, like this digital technology, which I'm working on now, is so common and ordinary that anyone could do it, but the imagery is so personal that it—not anyone would do it. But it is easy to look at that stuff and bring it down to the very basic of its ordinariness.

And I remember I was doing a series of prints at Anderson Ranch with this Tamarind [Institute, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque] printmaker and I wanted to print leaves. And she goes, wow, that is, like, the first thing first graders do when they're doing printmaking. [Fleming laughs.] I go, really? I like it even better now, because I like that it is that—that you'll make that negative association. How do you take it beyond? That's your personal life and history that you're talking about. That playfulness that has been talked about—it was always there. But it's serious play. I mean, I use leaves to print because I have this idea about nature and sort of how we dissect it and take whatever we want from it. So that pulled leaf printed on paper was taking something that is very natural and turning it into an unnatural thing. At the very same time it is as basic as first graders making their first monoprint. Rub ink on a leaf and press it—I did that when I was a kid and do it now still.

MR. FLEMING: How about your—the preconception or the stereotype of—and I think you've sort of mentioned this, that a lot of people associate you and your work as being very happy, upbeat, playful even, and yet that sort of seems to be contradicted by a lot of the work which is sort of dark and doesn't do that. How do you deal with that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Put glitter all over it. [They laugh.] I'll find some way to make it pretty to look at. I don't care how ugly it is.

The thing is, is that I like that; that parallel has always been in my work. The idea of gender issue—is it masculine, is it feminine; is it craft or is it art; is it—what is it exactly? And when you deal with things that are very familiar, well, that question becomes—is asked more often because I'm not trying to change what it is, I'm just trying to change how you look at it.

So I make a lamp. People have been making lamps forever; it's a very common thing. Making the ceramic base, there is a history there. So I make lamps and I'll make rugs and I'll make chairs and dressers. I'll make pottery. These are all things that are really familiar. How really—how sentiment or history, nostalgia—

MR. FLEMING: All right. Yeah. So I was just asking you about bigger craft organizations like American Craft [Council], NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts]. How involved are you with those organizations or any of those organizations?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, over the years—I wish that when I was a student I could afford all these wonderful opportunities that are available, and one of them would have been in NCECA. I think that as a student if I would have gone to NCECA it would have had such an important impact on me, but I was never able to do that.

I really was a poor art student. And the only thing I had money for was to buy my art materials and so I lived simply. I dressed with whatever I had. You know, the sacrifices that I made in order to attend an art school were—it was difficult but it was everything that I wanted so it didn't seem—it didn't seem like anything.

But in NCECA—over the years I've gone a few times. And I love it as an organization that is promoting clay. However, I've never viewed myself as only a clay artist and only working in one material. I've never done that. And so it has always been difficult for me to go and see it only as a community, because I feel that it—as much as NCECA was trying to build a bridge I also think that it builds walls. Because there was a reason that NCECA came to be and that was because there was a deficiency, and we as a community needed to get the intellectuals together and form a movement. So NCECA has represented a clay movement, which I really admire.

It comes with blessings and problems. There is a division and that sort of makes—that sort of defines it, these organizations because it is saying we're separate so we create a group. So I do have kind of problems with that except that I really love the social organization. I think people are really doing great things with it.

MR. FLEMING: Right. Clay people—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I wasn't an educator either, and it's the National Conference on Education in the Ceramic Arts. And so for 18 years I didn't teach.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And I wasn't even involved in the clay community in that way, although that is the kinds of workshops I gave. No one was inviting me to come and teach a drawing workshop, although I had been asked. Even though I work with all these other materials I am recognized as a clay artist. But not really, I think, because I work on the margins of things. I'm always that—I'm not a sculptor, I'm not a potter, I'm not a painter, I'm not a weaver—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I'm not a metalsmith, I'm not a glassblower, I'm not a furniture maker, I'm not a clothing designer, I'm not a antique restorer, I'm not—you know.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And, yet, I'm all those things.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, no. I know the feeling.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I'm now a digital artist. Some one asked me the other day—I said, oh, I'm doing some photography. And they asked, and what kind of camera are you using? And I said, I don't have a camera.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.]

MR. DOMINGUEZ: They looked at me funny. [They laugh.] It's like you need a camera to make photographs.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I just think you work with whatever you have.

MR. FLEMING: Right. It's interesting that even the nature of this interview and the organization, and the specific kind of program under the organization that the interview is being conducted, it's obviously constructed around the notion that craft is separate or needs to be thought of in some unique and separate way, and that tends to come out of the way that people think with words and have to form categories and then coalesce around those categories that are formed by the words themselves, rather than images which artists, visual artists, tend to work more with.

As I've noticed it over the years, that artists are the last ones to form themselves into the classifications, that they depend on people who think with words only to create the classifications, and then they have to spend the rest of their lives struggling with either their inclusions or exclusions from the various classifications.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I've always known that because of the way I work that I would never be really successful at any one of them.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: For some reason clay had a jumpstart. I did study it.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And maybe because I studied it it's part of what I have been recognized for. Although, I think, every other material I have ever worked with—

MR. FLEMING: You could have studied them, too.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well—

MR. FLEMING: You probably could have done furniture making.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, and I have. I guess if there was two—it's hard to categorize me and my work.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's always been blurry. Even when my teacher used to say focus, focus, focus, I think there was an attempt way back then to encourage me to pick something, and I couldn't pick something. I felt the

need to explore a lot of materials, even though I was not successful in working with them. It has never stopped me from trying.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: When they failed me in graduate school because I was doing figurative work that wasn't very successful it didn't stop me. Twenty-five years later I'm still trying, and I'm still not very good at it, but I'm not dead yet. I keep hoping that maybe by the end I will have succeeded in a lot of things that I've been interested in.

So it's hard to define me as a craft artist. It's hard to define me as a potter. It's hard to define my work. It seems very extreme from one thing to another. I'm looking at a platter on the wall now that has a painted and carved tornado, and I turn my head and I have a piercing of a back—a photograph of my skin, my scar. They're similar in that the tornado is like a scar into the land. They're similar. I can see everything about them that is similar but I might be the only one. But that is my job.

MR. FLEMING: You teach in a ceramics department at the University of Nebraska. How does that jive up? How does your job teaching in the ceramics department, which interestingly is also a subgroup of the art department as a whole and seen as a distinct entity within the art department, how is the way you approach your creative life and your creative making processes, how does that jive up with what goes on in the ceramics department?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, it did shift when I got there. My colleagues had a different idea of how the department was going to go, but that was when there was just two of them. And when I came in, well, I had this whole other idea about craft and it is very different than theirs. I don't care about technology and yet one of my colleagues is consumed by it. I don't know much about the history of ceramics but my other colleague does.

And so I tend to go in there and talk about the psychology of their work because I think work is made up of that; that's what I think, and since I'm teaching I get to teach what I think. And so for me it's like why do you poke and pierce and cut and burn? Those are my concerns. But if I see someone else doing that I want them to get to the deeper layers in their work.

The program also took on a very sculptural twist, which wasn't present; it was more focused on the vessel and pottery making. So when I came in that whole shift went and it changed.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.]

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It makes things comfortable. And then I go in and I don't want anything to divide; I want everything to kind of merge. On a political level that's not good. On an artistic creative level I think it's excellent for my students.

I taught a mixed media class and there was no clay in that particular class. And I was working with digital technology so somehow there was this whole metamorphosis going on. And I've always been interested in that. That's how come I like to turn dinnerware sets into flower gardens. That's how come I like bolts of fabric that turn into quilts. I love that material transforms itself from one thing to another. I've always liked that sticks become furniture. It what has been most appealing, always appealing.

I was just thinking about embellishment and my history of that.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, what about that?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, just when I was growing up my mother was always trying to make things look nice with things that were really not very nice.

MR. FLEMING: Right, jazzing up the ordinary.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: You would look at the coffee can and in her mind she saw a container to hold food—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —and so everything was recycled. Sometimes it wouldn't even change from what it was, only its reason changed.

MR. FLEMING: Sure.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: One day it's a coffee can, the next day it's holding beans.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I guess I think like that. It's my mother's fault.

MR. FLEMING: Right. Well, I had a question here, and kind of two-sided kind of thing. One is the disposable society we live in today doesn't really encourage a reuse of an object in some new role, typically with younger people.

And also, despite your interest in being in a broad range of art, craft, sculpture, vessel making, et cetera, et cetera—do you think there may be, some time down the road, some danger of the traditional crafts, say, like wheel-thrown ceramics—losing out and really actually completely disappearing out of the—either the curriculum of art schools, colleges or our cultures.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Oh, they can try; good luck. I mean, it's not dead yet and it has been around since the beginning of time. Good luck trying to kill it.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] So you think it is fairly securely here to stay.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah. Until we stop eating on plates, pots will always be here. Until we stop sleeping underneath things quilts will always be here. Until we can sit on air somebody is going to make a chair.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And if craft is undervalued it's because it's so valued on a daily need. It's like—

MR. FLEMING: Common.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's so common, but I always say that if every thing that involved craft in any way disappeared, we would be in deep trouble. We might have a pretty painting still hanging on the wall but it might not have that frame around it. Oh, but maybe somebody didn't ever figure out how to weave the cloth. If anything, crafts has been so integral from the beginning of culture that it might just be easy to dismiss because of its ordinariness and its extraordinariness.

MR. FLEMING: Well, crafts—although what we call now traditional crafts are really the original technologies. The ceramics are one of the very first technologies. It's a technological leap forward. And it's just that that leap happened quite a while ago we tend to not associate it with technology.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's always been rich in science and technology. It has always, from the beginning, been about that need for things that we use.

MR. FLEMING: How about your students?   You have had students over the course of at least a short period of time now; do you see the same kind of enthusiasm, interest, what have you, to either carry on with traditional ways of looking at things?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I don't teach from that, you know. I don't encourage it. I figure there are art magazines there; if kids want to look through them, I say there is a pile. I've done a few projects where I actually make them look at them rapidly. But I don't fear that there is a danger of things disappearing. I don't teach like that.

I mean, my students sometimes make very cornball things. Initially that worried my colleagues because they wanted to teach ceramics from a sort of craft history and tradition, and finding meaning from history or technology. And I was saying, well, there are other meanings that maybe my students could explore. And maybe they are toadstools and mushrooms or sorority emblems, or things like this, but this is the thing that I think they know and this is the thing that I think they experience.

So I would rather they explore how to work with the coil and the slab and talk about something meaningful that they have value in than organizing my class in a way that is going to introduce them to a specific notion about making.

My fear is if I start showing them Japanese work, like what happened to me, all of a sudden they start making Japanese-ish looking stuff, when maybe they live in the middle of Nebraska—they're more interested in the rusty nail that was on the barn. And I think that is a real thing. You know this sort of picture from a beautiful Japanese tea bowl they don't even drink tea. You know, they're drinking Coca-Cola and Kool-Aid; make something that would be for Coca-Cola and Kool-Aid instead of, like, a shino Japanese tea bowl, and drink soda pop out of it. I would rather they connect to something more personal. Anyway, other teachers can take care of the history and the other teachers can take care of the technology. You just have to give them what you feel.

MR. FLEMING: So how do you feel about the—what do you think is the driving aesthetic behind college art departments today?   What do you think that your department or the departments you've interacted with—what do you think that the faculties are—where do they tend to be standing?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: They're all different. I have one person there that would wish that every student could go become a famous New York City artist. Of course, I kind of think it would be nice if you would be just a good artist from the middle of—

MR. FLEMING: Wherever.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: —wherever you are at. I don't think that you need the West Coast or the East Coast because there is a lot of land in between.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And I hate that art is defined that way. I don't like definitions; I never will. I don't want to be defined. I want to make everything that I want to make. And I'm lucky that I have any career at all because of that.

[END TAPE 3 SIDE A.]

I could have easily sabotaged my career. I was consistent, however, with one of the pieces [the dinnerware sets] that I made. And certainly the Smithsonian owns one.

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And so do other museums. And the museums are collecting that work. I understand why. I'm not naïve enough to not know why. But that is not going to discourage all this other work that I feel I have to make, even if it's not museum collected, even if it's never collected—it does not stop my urge, and why I make them.

It would be easy to be caught up in the commercial sense of art, and I've already been accused of that. I know I've seen your eyes open up—so do mine, because I think, ah, how can anyone just put me into this one category of a dinnerware-set maker when I have this other whole big life that involves so many other things.

MR. FLEMING: Okay, here is a tricky one, kind of piggybacking onto the back of that. Are there any other ceramic artists or other artists that are kind of active today that you've encountered who have really excited you or you found interesting—either ones who you know personally or just because you think it's kind of—whatever it is they're doing is appealing to you?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: There are so many great artists our there.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, no—but I mean any one that—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: It's hard to know—

MR. FLEMING: —anyone that—well, why don't we start with a clay artist. Is there any contemporary people working, using clay in some way or another, today that you think is kind of interesting? Maybe they are friends of yours, who knows?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, it helps. I have to admit. If I don't know you then I really—I don't know your work. In order for me to know the work I got to know you. It's just the way I am.

MR. FLEMING: Well, you know—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I wish I could look at art the other way. I enjoy it but I never like stop and say, whoa, this is a great artist. I really need to look at this work.

MR. FLEMING: And just kind of—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: But, like, Kenny Price had an influence in my work, and he has influenced lots of young artists.

MR. FLEMING: Right. And he lives here in New Mexico up in the north somewhere, right?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah. And I know why I liked his work because he was making imagery that I understood. I didn't understand why they presented it that way. I understand now after meeting him—

MR. FLEMING: Right.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: And then I have the reasons and know the reasons why he does that, otherwise, I don't know how to look at that work. It becomes just a beautiful object that I enjoy.

Is there an artist?

MR. FLEMING: I'm thinking of people like Annabeth Rosen or—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I don't—

MR. FLEMING: —Arthur Gonzalez or—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: No, I can't name artists like that that I have a bearing on—that are doing some cool work? There are a lot people doing cool work. Yes, I love Annabeth's work. I love Arthur Gonzalez. I like a lot of stuff. Sometimes I don't care about the person who made it as much as I care about the thing that they made.

MR. FLEMING: [Laughs.] Okay. Maybe that's the way I should have posed the question.

[Audio Break.]

Okay, this is disc four. We're interviewing Eddie Dominguez in Roswell, New Mexico. Today we're in my studio. I'm Stephen Fleming, and I'll be interviewing Eddie. It's August 1.

And, Eddie, before we were interrupted last time we were talking about play at some point, and I would like you to return to that subject and speak a little bit more about, like, the inner child or whatever it is that makes making art so enjoyable.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Okay. Well, I can honestly say that as a child art was play, and everything that I did was a way to keep myself entertained at something that I already at a very early age had a lot of passion for. And, I guess, in the years following your childhood when you're in your middle school, high school, I think even then it was still a joyful experience, sort of ignorance in every regard in terms of how to do things. And so it was always moments of discovery, which are always a lot of fun.

When I think of college I also think about problem solving and the fun of doing that. Now, to play in that way, even in a serious kind of way, is fun. I've often heard from other people that—and I even kind of reacted this way when this question was first asked, is it fun, what about play? And I was thinking about that over the last few days and looking at my work that is currently in the studio, and I can understand what that is really mostly about is this sense of play towards a discovery.

And I said that I didn't always go into my studio and have fun but it always turns out that way, I think, in the end. There is a certain joy in accomplishments, in the act of making and then seeing what it is that you've done for the good or the bad of it.

I guess when I think of play or associate play I often think of games or that sort of thing and not really the passion or your life and the way you chose to live, but I guess the quality of play is really more important to my work than I credit.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. Speaking of your work, why don't we take this opportunity to talk a little bit about what is going on right now with you. We've talked a little bit about the last show that you had; I think we could have talked about that for three hours really.

But let's talk a little bit—because you're kind of taking a new direction, you're exploring some different things. You're in a new studio. It's kind of like a new chapter in your life so maybe you could tell me what—sort of describe to us what is going on in the studio, kind of, what your general feelings about it are at this stage.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, at the moment the work is dealing with a more figurative nature. And I'm doing self portraits, which are real self portraits in a—I'm dealing with things that are uncomfortable, content that is difficult, maybe the most difficult content that I've ever dealt with.

And the thing that I was thinking about play was that this seems to be the most playful work I've ever made in terms of not really knowing where it is going to go. I thought there was an irony there that things that were the most difficult to look at in terms of what I was trying to inspire the work by is coming out in a very playful way.

I think that I'm dealing a little bit with ideas of discomfort and pain and dysfunctions and things that aren't very glamorous in looking into those for answers. And I had always done that in the work, except that the questions that we're asking were not always so difficult to answer or weren't always looking at them so directly—indirectly, I think that the work had always had a notion of it—it's interesting, that sort of duality of a good and a bad or a hard content and a playful approach. I don't know.

MR. FLEMING: Could you describe, maybe to start with, just to help everybody out, the physical characteristics of what it is you're doing? You're using computer print, you're—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I'm doing computer-generated art. It would have been the last discipline I thought I would have been interested in because it seems so connected to a whole different way of thinking that I didn't think I was capable of doing.

But I guess that's the challenge in discovering what it is that you're capable of, is that often you'll work—or I have anyway—in materials that I am clueless about other than I think that the material itself is speaking a language that I'm interested in. For example, I was just looking at those tools hanging up on the wall and thinking about them as flat objects in terms of painting and illusions. And my interest, as much as I enjoy looking at that, I think that I like going right back to those hammers because I like looking at something all the way around.

Now, this new computer imagery is flat. Even though I'm texturizing it the images are basically flat. I'm using myself as a three-dimensional object but I am the object that I'm looking at. So it's dealing with emotions and feelings in a way that some of the other things I hadn't done in the past.

I've disrobed myself so I feel naked, and in a way compared that to a lump of clay, just looking at a lump of clay and what its potential could be. I looked at myself that way, too. And I thought, well, maybe if I just strip myself down to my nakedness like clay—even in terms of color, I like red clay and my skin is brown, and there was already that comparison that I was making.

And just looking at the computer in a way how I looked at clay and the processes of that—taking an image, manipulating the image, processing it through this machine, taking the print out—all seemed to be in relation to making something out of clay—coloring it, glazing it, putting it in the kiln, then letting the kiln participate. I found those things, though, they seemed very different, to be very similar.

MR. FLEMING: You said texturizing, could you expand on—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I started using my clay tools initially to do things. The fettling knife suddenly became a cutting tool for paper, or my needle tool suddenly became the thing that I pierced with—or sandpaper to remove some of the imagery, and things like that, using the tools that I have, that I know, to begin using this on new work.

And part of me sees them three-dimensional, like, the potential for them to be made out of clay. So in a way the computer has offered a whole different way to play that I hadn't experienced before, and it's the not knowing that is exciting. It's the surprise, kind of like when I opened up a kiln and all the glazes ran off the pot and the pots were stuck to the shelf. Well, that was a big surprise, but it was interesting to me to look at the melt. The same way with the prints—I'm not sure what is going to come out of the printer and sometimes I'm so surprised and shocked. But I like that.

MR. FLEMING: You were doing, using or interested in tattoos or body imagery. I noticed you were – could you describe how that fit into the work you're doing now?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: I think I've always been fascinated by tattooing because it was sort of this idea of how people ornament their bodies. I was looking at that, and I guess it's like a painting on a three-dimensional object. And I really like that; it's attractive to me.

I often tell my students, you got to pay attention to where you stop and look, and I was seeing that I was stopping and looking all the time. And so I had to pay attention to the reasons why, and, of course, I didn't know all the reasons. That is why you continue to work because you're sort of trying to unravel what it is that you stopped for.

And more recently I started seeing that the texture of the skin against the imagery was really the thing that was the most fascinating to me. It wasn't just the imagery or that a person was decorated but it was how the color was in the skin, similar to how a glaze is over a pot. I started to see that. I started to feel that. And it seemed that that was what I was becoming interested in. So, again, I couldn't paint a tattoo. I would rather put it my own—a picture of myself at least or texturize the photograph so that it began to goose bump up like drawing in clay.

MR. FLEMING: It also kind of reminded me of the pierced tin. You use a lot of—you used to use tin and/or metals, and you would score them and pierce them repeatedly, puncture them. So I noticed that some of those prints you've actually used a pin or a needle tool and repeated that kind of process.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, I think that whenever I bring a new material in, I really just use the processes that I already know. And a lot of times they're not correct to their material, but it works.

I can remember when I first started teaching I had a student and he would ask me, is this going to work? And I

would say, well, no, I don't think it will. And then at the end of the semester in the review he said, I got tired of Eddie telling me that these things aren't going to work and then when I did them they did. Well, I just took that advice.

MR. FLEMING: So you started taking your own advice?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, I took his advice. My advice was wrong.

[They laugh.]

MR. FLEMING: How about that—I don't know—in my teaching I found that I would tell students things repeatedly and then only to discover later that I needed to take my own advice when I was back in the studio. Somehow the teaching was helping remind me of things that I already knew, but they sort of came into consciousness or I actually was consciously aware of them when I had to actually start communicating verbally to other people the things that I already knew. Did you have that kind of experience in your teaching?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, yeah. You know, I mean, we're really limited by what we know. I mean, I think that as a teacher I realized more and more often that I don't know about a lot of stuff. The only thing I know about are the things that I've actually experienced. And teaching gives you lots of experiences that are not your own, that offer you an understanding about processes. And I find that probably the most stimulating part of teaching. So I try not to say, you know, that's not going to work because I really don't know. And I try to do that in my own work as well. I don't know if that is what you mean.

MR. FLEMING: Well, never mind.

When you did the—when you got your computer, I mean—obviously a few years ago the computer wasn't something you were particularly comfortable or interested in. What do you think was the turning point for you changing your attitude towards interacting with that very common piece of technology?

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, maybe the fact that it is so common, it's one of the things that sort of intrigues me the most about the material—is that, you know, I look at a print of mine and I think, wow, look at what I made here; it's just so amazing. Then of course someone else would look at that and they would just look at it as being absolutely basic. It's just interesting how what you don't know makes it—I don't have words to describe it necessarily.

But I remember sitting there in my studio, and I had described that when I first came upon stacking things and creating sculpture from ordinary objects. And I guess I was just sitting in my chair and I was looking at the computer, and someone—I was listening to music, which is something I hardly ever do in my studio, and someone asked, “Who is that singing?” I Googled the song up and all the information was there. It was my first time and I was hooked. My students were all the time trying to connect me to this technology because it is such a part of their world that it was sort of bugging them that I—they couldn't work with me through that tool, and so I just took the challenge on.

And it really happened because I was teaching a multimedia class. And often in school, students never have really enough time to work on something. And for many years my work was very time consuming and I tried to give it the quality time that it deserved. And so I challenged my students that I was going to give them only one project that they had to work nearly the whole semester on, and in a really focused kind of way. And I knew that it was going to be slow and difficult for them because they're people who are connected to the now, the quick. The e-mail generation, I call them. It's like the click of a button and it's sent.

So I thought, well, if I'm challenging them to take their time making something that I was going to challenge myself to do the opposite, that I was going to work quickly, and that I was going to absent beauty from my work in that I was just going to accept a lot of things. And my students were often reminding me, like, leave it alone, that—look at the beauty that is there instead of the beauty that I was imagining could be there. And that was really opening, in so that—so I was trying to do as much art as possible in a semester as I was asking them to do one object. And I stayed pretty much on that.

So I looked at the computer and I thought, well, I don't know a thing about you; you know, I've resented you. I felt that technology was being forced on me, and I was too old-fashioned. I was all about the hand and the object and the making of some things, from raw material to object rather than using all these, sort of, clicking systems that the computer offered. But that's the challenge that I gave myself.

And what I didn't know was that it was going to motivate this whole new body of work. I thought maybe if I stayed with it, like anything else, that you will find what it is that you're looking for. But it is a search in the initial beginning. And so of course I was just doing everything that I had done in the past, except trying to process it through this technology.

MR. FLEMING: And you're using a power book or what is the—

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Yeah. I had the slowest computer, the worst computer, and the worst printer. That's what I had in my office of course because I didn't deserve anything else because I wasn't really working on it in that sort of way. I could do what I needed to do with the sort of old technology. But as I started to progress I really could see the need, and I could see why everyone was upset with the slowness of this machine and all that stuff. Even I started to become impatient because it was all about making art quick. So I asked for a new laptop. And the whole thing changed as soon as I got a tool that was really equipped for the job, though I don't understand it completely yet in any—and I don't know that I ever will, but I'm learning, and that's exciting.

MR. FLEMING: Okay. We got another—oh. Okay.

So even speaking about things or dealing with things that might be a little uncomfortable, you say that working with those photographs of yourself or seeing yourself through the lens of a camera, whatever, is uncomfortable. And you mentioned in your childhood that not everything was that rosy, that there was some bad stuff. Why don't I just open it up here to let you kind of, like, meditate on how those things have affected you.

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Well, maybe they say everything—that funny book about everything you need to know you learned in the first grade. Well, if that is the case I had a pretty harsh first-grade experience. I flunked the first grade, so of course from that moment on you kind of begin to feel like you're dumb and you're looked at that way. And yet I was looking at the world so differently. I questioned things. And even though it often got me in trouble, a person who asked too many questions—but I had to learn that way because I knew very early on that there was no other way for me to learn, that if I didn't try and fail and try and fail that I was never going to have any successes. So, you know, okay, there I was in the first grade twice, and in a very small Catholic school with all my classmates ahead of me—so a sense of insecurity.

The thing that art always offered to me was a sense of something that was real and something that I really knew. And I knew that even in the first grade. I saw that when I made a piece of art that it provoked an emotion, even if it was a negative one. I was always getting in trouble for my art work. I used to get spanked a lot because I wasn't following the rules of—whatever the rules were. They wanted it to be red, well, why make it red when we can make it rainbow.   I just saw things differently. And those rules of—they seemed like everything else was bound by some kind of rule. In art seemed freed form all of those things. Even though they were instructing me to do it a certain kind of way somehow I never could do that.

I am ADD [attention deficit disorder], and I guess I have always been that. So I could hyper focus and, boy, when it came to artwork I hyper focused, but then it was—everything else fell to the side and was loose. I could never control that. But when it came to art I was there; I was always present for it. And that was good for me growing up.

In the years of Catholic and parochial school, because I was always—I don't know why I was seen as a troublemaker—maybe because I talked too much or I couldn't focus or I couldn't read or I couldn't spell or—all the kinds of things that you're supposed to be getting I wasn't getting. But I knew that my work was progressing because I could see that. I could see that I was—I had ideas about things that were mine. And I would follow that clue and I had always been like that.

Even when I was applying to college, going to an art school, and my guidance counselors were telling me that I wasn't talented enough, or that I wasn't smart enough, or that my parents weren't wealthy enough or – there was always some sort of reason. But I knew in the deepest part of my soul that that was what I was and at that point nothing was going to stop it. And that's how come I was able to just ship original artwork, even though it was only one portfolio, to the Cleveland Institute of Art and was accepted there. From that moment forward that was powerful.

MR. FLEMING: Okay, let's leave it at that. Shall we?

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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