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Oral history interview with Audrey Flack, 2009 Feb. 16

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally recorded interview with Audrey Flack on February 16, 2009. The interview took place at the offices of the Archives of American Art in New York, New York, and was conducted by Robert C. Morgan for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for this interview was provided by a grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Audrey Flack and Robert C. Morgan 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

ROBERT C. MORGAN: I'm going to ask you if we can begin from the beginning. And I'd like to know how you discovered yourself as an artist. And let me just qualify that by saying that, you know, it's sort of like [Christopher] Columbus discovering America. There were other people who came to America before Columbus. But the argument is that Columbus was the first one to effectively discover America; in other words, so it had political consequences. It suggests that there was a turning point. It was not just a discovery but something where you really knew it. And I'm wondering if you could talk about that moment where you really knew that this is what you were.

AUDREY FLACK: Well, there was a very defining moment, but I was so young. It's not like being an adult, having another career, and then you start painting. Is it recording?

Is it recording?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: And you say, "No, I'm not a bookkeeper, I'm an artist." This happened to me in kindergarten. Is it okay?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, everything's fine. Let me take care of this. You just speak.

MS. FLACK: Well, they would've had me on Ritalin because I was hyperactive, and always getting in trouble in school, I couldn't sit still. The teacher taught us how to make a diorama using a cardboard shoebox. I went around the corner, got a cardboard shoebox. And filled it with cutouts. I remember it really clearly - I made Hawaiian dancers with hula skirts. Because I loved Esther Williams.

MR. MORGAN: Hah! The great mermaid.

[They laugh.]

MS. FLACK: The great mermaid. She was in these great Cecil B. de Mille extravaganzas.

MR. MORGAN: Wasn't she also in Busby Berkeley? Or was that - ?

MS. FLACK: No, that's too early.

MR. MORGAN: I see.

MS. FLACK: She had a magnificent body. I didn't know why I loved her so much. I think part of it was because she was a really strong woman. She wasn't one of these little soppy, victims - She was a feminist in a way. She had a powerfully muscled body. I remember seeing her standing on her toes on top of a diving board, 50 feet in the air. And then the camera would zoom in, and you'd see this body with a bathing suit glued to her. And she'd dive off into the water. And I remember worrying, oh, when is she going to come up? Is she going to drown? And she always came up with an orchid behind her ear. Smiling! Doing the backstroke.

[They laugh.]

MR. MORGAN: Fabulous!

MS. FLACK: So she was my hero. So anyhow, I did a cutout of Esther Williams in a hula skirt and dancers and palm trees. I took my mother's blue-tinted compact mirror. You know, Art Deco style -

MR. MORGAN: Yes, I do.

MS. FLACK: I glued it to the bottom of the box, and that was the lake. Sand from the playground became the beach. I loved this diorama. I came out of school at three o'clock and waited for my mother.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: Little girls then had to wear panties and short skirts. The boys wore pants. Now, I was a real athlete, and my knees were always getting bruised. And I was very angry because I couldn't wear pants. Can you imagine, I played hockey, ice skated, and I ran. So I always had scabby knees. I wore a little short skirt, little socks and shoes and panties. And I came out of school carrying my diorama, which was so precious to me. I loved it. When I created, I became very calm. This hyperactivity left. I just was in another world. Transported. So I'm holding my diorama. We lived in Washington Heights [New York, New York] one block from the Hudson River. There was a park across the street. There were no buildings to break the violent winds in the winter. They could blow a child down the street. A storm was brewing, and all the mothers came to pick up their little kids except my mother who was probably at a high-stakes poker game. My mother was a big gambler.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, you mentioned this.

MS. FLACK: So I'm looking around. And in the meantime the sky is turning a mean shade of yellow. The winds are blowing up. And one by one all the other kids are going home, and I'm there clutching this diorama. And a gust of wind comes and dislodges one of the dancers. Oh, and it started to rain. I remember there were little pools of water around. Ester Williams got dislodged and floated up in the air, and it landed in a puddle of water. I bent over to try to pick her up, and the elastic on my panties broke. So I'm standing there, holding my diorama with both hands and my panties were falling down. So now I've got to clutch my panties because I'm going to be exposed. My little tushy is going to be out there. I will be humiliated. I'm holding the diorama with the one hand, my panties with the other. The box starts getting crushed because the wind is getting worse. And then another dancer got dislodged. The question was: Do I save my panties or my art?

MR. MORGAN: [Laughs] That's a great existential question, Audrey.

MS. FLACK: And I could not let go of either one of them. And I stood there holding both. If I let go of my panties they would've fallen around my knees. The wind would have blown my skirt up around my head and that would've been the end of my life, you know, as a five-year-old - God! But I couldn't let go of my diorama. And then I looked down the block. My mother was running towards me, panting, out of breath, after everybody else had gone home. It was a very major question. My panties or my art? So the thing is, I never dropped my panties for my art.

MR. MORGAN: That's a wonderful paradigm! Wonderful paradigm! I love this really.

MS. FLACK: But it continued for the rest of my life, because I never dropped my panties for my art.

MR. MORGAN: Good for you, good for you. This is important. So what year were you in school at that time?

MS. FLACK: Let's see. I was born in '31. So how old are you in kindergarten, four, five years old?

MR. MORGAN: Well, yes, so it would've been - Kindergarten is very young to have this realization. This is extraordinary.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Now so how did it go in terms of getting support for what you were doing as a very, very young artist? I mean it seems to me that a child in this society, which is a very Puritan society, needs support to do that kind of thing because it's not automatic. In other words, you don't find it easily. And who is the one who encouraged you along the way when you were in school?

MS. FLACK: No one. What actually happened was I was - different artists' brains are different. I think we absorb information differently. I think we're more global. We're not linear. And I was always in trouble. I was giggling; I was a big giggler. If somebody said let's put ink on the teacher's desk, Audrey, you do it, I did it. I tried very hard to be good. I wanted to be good. I just physically couldn't sit still, I couldn't do it. So they were always throwing me out of class. I also felt like I was pretty stupid. Because I would ask questions. Nobody would ask them, and I asked them. So I thought everybody else knew, and I didn't. And then also there were the A-, B-answers. I never could do that because I always thought C, D, and E. So I do not have a good image of myself. Anyhow, they put me out in the hallway, and I was always happy out in the hallway.

MR. MORGAN: You mean you would be isolated by yourself?

MS. FLACK: Isolated. They would give me a piece of oak tag, which was a kind of heavy drawing paper.

MR. MORGAN: I do know, yes.

MS. FLACK: And a pencil. And I began to draw, chickens, ducks, turkeys and whatever. Within a couple of months I was the class artist. I made the calendar for the class. I made the snowmen and the turkeys and Christmas trees and I was happy outside. I could breathe. So I think it happened so early. Did I know I was an artist? I knew I couldn't live without art. I could not live well without it.

MR. MORGAN: I think that there's a kind of impulse that you feel prior to expression. I'm leaning heavily on John Dewey here because he talks about this in his wonderful book, Art As Experience [New York, Penguin Group: 1934]. An impulse is you sense this, you sense art, you sense that you are an artist even though the language has not been formulated for you to conceptualize that or accommodate that even. I mean it's just something that you do and you need to do and you're driven to.

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

MR. MORGAN: And, you know, I think that the more intellectual reasons happen much later, and sometimes that can be incredibly destructive. Because I think that if you can ride that impulse until you arrive at this awakening of expression, then I think that's a great thing in terms of maturation and development as an artist. But let's talk about high school. Now, in high school - [Coughs.] I guess I should get some water.

MS. FLACK: Want me to get you some?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: I've got purified water. Do you want ice cubes?

MR. MORGAN: No ice cubes, please.

[Pause.]

MS. FLACK: [Inaudible] I always forget how to do this. You know what, Robert?

MR. MORGAN: This is a wonderful artist, in my opinion. I did a big piece on him in The Brooklyn Rail. Zhang Xiaogang.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Zhang Xiaogang, yes.

So we need somebody to do a film of us recording.

MS. FLACK: Yes. Wouldn't that be nice?

MR. MORGAN: Sure. Absolutely.

MS. FLACK: Hey, Bob! Can you do us a favor?

MR. MORGAN: Alright. Actually this thing is rolling very well. And I even know how to put it on hold now. So we can pause.

BOB: What's that?

MS. FLACK: Well, Robert Morgan, Robert C. Morgan, for Coolidge?

MR. MORGAN: That's right.

MS. FLACK: He's related to Coolidge, did you know that? Calvin Coolidge.

BOB: Certainly not.

MS. FLACK: He's doing an oral history for the Archives of American Art. [Coughs] I have a frog in my throat. And I thought we would just record. Do you want to say something, Robert?

MR. MORGAN: Well, the second part of what Audrey told you is true. My father grew up in a town in New Hampshire called Pittsford; this is right on the border of Vermont. And at the time he grew up there in the early 20th century, half the town was Morgans, which is a Welsh name. And half the town was Coolidges. And so I became Robert Coolidge Morgan. Okay? However, in all due respect, I am the first in my family line, that I'm aware of, to vote consistently Democrat. I'm very proud of that.

MS. FLACK: Oh.

BOB: And rightfully so.

MS. FLACK: They were all Republicans? How did that happen?

MR. MORGAN: How did it happen? You know it's certainly how does it happen in art? And we're going to wind this back to your years at high school. But you know you were talking about how artists think differently, their brain waves function differently in relation to information. And you mentioned the word global, which I agree with. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti used to call it the "theater of simultaneity," which I love. I think that, you know, artists have that kind of theater of simultaneity constantly going on in their brains. But the point is this: That you can't make a decision like that independent of life experience. It's not an intellectual decision. It's not like I studied manuals to figure out that maybe I should vote Democrat. Okay? This is something that you awaken to. And this is what I'm trying to move toward in terms of your career, Audrey. Where this kind of shift from the impulse to the expression begins to take hold.

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

MR. MORGAN: And I'm wondering if we can go back to that period in which you're talking about your high school years. Obviously by high school you probably weren't isolated in the hallway. Or were you?

MS. FLACK: No, no.

MR. MORGAN: What was happening? High school. You're no longer isolated in the hallway. Hopefully.

MS. FLACK: Oh, no. That was kindergarten.

MR. MORGAN: Okay.

MS. FLACK: Then there was junior high, which was terrible. No help there. And then I heard about Music and Art High School [New York, New York], which is a funny story, from a little girl who lived in the building, who was very spoiled. She said, "There's a school called Music and Art High School, but you have to take a test to get in, and you have to have a portfolio of drawings." So I prayed. Whether I believed in God or not, I prayed every night. "Oh, I want to go to Music and Art High School. I want to go to Music and Art." I knew I needed a portfolio. And I asked my mother where I could get one. Nobody ever heard of a portfolio, didn't know what it looked like. Nobody had been to an art supply store. So my mom says, "Go to the five & ten. They have everything." Woolworth's. So I walked to the five & ten with my allowance, and I say -

MR. MORGAN: I remember that term. It's so interesting to hear it again, the five & ten. I remember that.

MS. FLACK: Well, don't people say that anymore?

MR. MORGAN: I don't think so.

MS. FLACK: The five & ten was a Woolworth's.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, that's right. That's right. But there was another one. Anyway, go ahead with that.

MS. FLACK: Alright. Oh, I made my drawings first. But what did I know? I got typewriter paper from my mother's desk.

MS. FLACK: I had Mongol pencils, you know, those pencils?

MR. MORGAN: Sure. Absolutely.

MS. FLACK: And I had the typewriter paper. What am I going to draw? I looked all over the house, and found a bottle of Four Roses whiskey. So I drew the Four Roses. And then Old Granddad. I mean you'd think we were alcoholics, which we weren't.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, but it's an interesting choice. Not for that reason but because it really suggests sharp perception and detail and light and the kind of concerns that later would become important in your work.

MS. FLACK: You know it's true. Because the painting that's going into the Deutsche Guggenheim [Berlin, Germany] is Queen [1975-76] has a big rose in the middle.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: Oh, I wanted detail. And Old Granddad, I loved it because his face was craggy, and there were a lot

of lines. And I sharpened my pencil with my father's razorblade to get it very sharp. And I never heard of chiaroscuro, but I would smear and blend the graphite. I thought that was really cool.

MR. MORGAN: Modulation.

MS. FLACK: Modulation. [Michelangelo Merisi] Caravaggio. I was Caravaggio.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Now how did you discover Caravaggio?

MS. FLACK: I didn't. I didn't. No. I'm just making these drawings. I didn't know anything.

MR. MORGAN: So later you made that connection, but not then.

MS. FLACK: Yes. Well, I knew that I wanted to have the blending.

MR. MORGAN: Sure. You wanted the illusion.

MS. FLACK: I knew I wanted to have the hair on his beard, I wanted the illusion. I was already a photorealist, never having thought of it. And then I copied a drawing from the Kotex box of two girls walking, a kind of linear drawing. And I drew Mrs. Miniver [1942] from a movie about World War II, but this was around World War II. When did I go to high school, Bobby?

BOB: Hmmm. You graduated from high school in -

MS. FLACK: Forty-eight.

BOB: - Forty-eight. So you would've gone, four years -

MS. FLACK: From Forty-four to '48 during World War II.

BOB: Forty-four.

MS. FLACK: World War II.

MR. MORGAN: That's right.

MS. FLACK: Greer Garson was in the newspaper advertising a movie call Mrs Miniver. But that image, I remember was blurry. It was a cheap image in the Daily News, I drew her. Anyhow -

MR. MORGAN: Greer Garson.

MS. FLACK: Yes. When I had all my drawings ready, and I needed a portfolio.

MR. MORGAN: So you preceded [Andy] Warhol in terms of drawings from the newspaper, because that's what he used to do.

MS. FLACK: That's very interesting.

MR. MORGAN: You know when he was working at that ad agency in New York, to relax at night he would come home and, you know, he didn't want to get up from his chair because he was tired from working. So he'd draw pictures from the newspaper. Later that became, you know, his oeuvre, so to speak, you know.

MS. FLACK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yes. Later I used images from magazines and newspapers. Yes. I never thought of that, but I was drawing from the newspaper.

MR. MORGAN: Hmmm. Okay.

MS. FLACK: And ads. I mean obviously Four Roses and Old Granddad.

MR. MORGAN: That is so interesting, so interesting.

MS. FLACK: I never thought of it, Robert.

MR. MORGAN: It suggests two things to me: Not only the sharp perception and the proto photorealism, but also the kind of pop environment that you were involved in during the time of Abstract Expressionism. Obviously. I mean you were sensitive to the pop environment.

MS. FLACK: Yes, yes.

MR. MORGAN: Is that correct, or not?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, okay.

MS. FLACK: Had to be. Sure. I mean you're picking it up. I never thought of it.

Abstract Expressionism, of course, in 19 - when do I go to Cooper Union [New York, New York]? Forty-eight. I'm in Cooper Union already. And Abstract Expressionism was hot. But let's get back to the test for Music and Art High school. I needed a portfolio to submit my drawings. I go to the five & ten, and I say, "Do you know where I could get a portfolio?" Nobody never heard of portfolio, you know. So I finally get pointed over to the stationery department. And there were all these little paperclips and staples and staple guns and everything you found there. And I see something that says portfolio in gold letters, embossed on faux leather, diagonally. It's eight-by-ten. They've got a portfolio! And I pay for it, and I couldn't understand why when I opened it up there were envelopes and paper inside. It was a writing tablet.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, I see. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: It was a brown leatherette, gold embossed writing pad that said "Portfolio." Boy, am I lucky. My drawings fit and I put them in. And then I go to take the test. And my father drives me, and we get to the corner of 135th and Convent where the school is. And there are hundreds of kids walking with real black, big portfolios. I wanted to die. Suddenly everything became clear. I want to go home! My father pushed me out and said, "You're here. You're a Flack. Take the test." Honestly, I wanted to die. Music and art was the thing I wanted most. And there was the little girl from my house with a big portfolio. And she hadn't let on she had been taking lessons at the Art Students League [New York, New York]. She had pastels, watercolors, oil paintings. I had my little Mongol pencil. So I went into the room, and I hid my little portfolio in between the big professional ones - [phone rings] I think we should probably get it. [Phone conversation] It's Jerry, Jerry Flack.

BOB: Oh. Okay. It says five minutes, and then that came on.

MS. FLACK: No more film. Oh, 90 seconds, no more film. See you have to just put in more film. Well, we're not going to do the whole thing. Here, you just put it in, if we can remember how to do this.

MR. MORGAN: Audrey, you have a very interesting point. Okay. Continue, please.

MS. FLACK: You want to just use the five minutes then?

BOB: Okay.

MS. FLACK: Just use the five minutes, and then we won't do it.

BOB: Okay.

MS. FLACK: You know I'm always sorry when we don't - when I don't do it, no records.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. So you were intimidated because you didn't have the right kind of portfolio.

MS. FLACK: It was clear. You know mine was a pathetic thing.

MR. MORGAN: So how'd you deal with that?

MS. FLACK: Well, how I dealt with that was I sort of remember walking along the side of the room. Because by now I was late.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: My father had pushed me out, and he drove away. And I was like what am I going to do? And I walked along the sidewalk and tried to squeeze my portfolio in between the big ones so nobody would see it.

MR. MORGAN: Your father was Morris, right?

MS. FLACK: Morris.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. I remember the portrait. I was looking at it last night actually.

MS. FLACK: Morris the Lion. And anyhow, they had life drawing. They had - one senior student with leotards posed on a stool, and they put the chairs in a circle, and gave us newsprint paper and charcoal, both of which I

had never seen. And we had to draw. And I remember sitting up straight. I remember being very exhilarated at the idea of this. And I sketched the model. And as I sketched, I looked at the other people's work. You know I was looking around.

MR. MORGAN: Sure. Normal.

MS. FLACK: And I was good, I knew I was good. I just - I knew it. I knew it. I mean I could see so well. All I did was see. And I got in. I'm sure I got in on my drawings, not on my pathetic portfolio.

MR. MORGAN: Magnificent!

MS. FLACK: So I got in. It was great. It was my life.

MR. MORGAN: This is a kind of creative experience. You know I borrowed this wonderful Freudian term "sublimation." Because what you did is you took conflict. Audrey, my interpretation of what you just described is you took something that was conflicted, that suggested negativity, and transformed it into something utterly positive, and you had success. This is a great example of sublimation.

MS. FLACK: Sublimation. Freudian sublimation.

MR. MORGAN: Well, remember that old song, "It was inspiration, I know." You could say, "It was sublimation." Okay. Anyway, so you get in.

MS. FLACK: Is inspiration sublimation?

MR. MORGAN: It may be. Maybe it's - very possible. But let's talk about what happens when you get in.

MS. FLACK: Oh, what happens when I got in - because I had always felt different from the other kids in the neighborhood, you know, little girls with their little spoofy dresses, and I always wore jeans. And I was different. You know what was interesting in my neighborhood? There was a park across the street, J. Hood Wright Park. And there was one little girl that also didn't fit in. I spotted her and she spotted me. Now, mind you, we're five, six, seven, eight years old. And we played jacks together. We never talked about this, you know, but we giggled, and we played games. And we exchanged looks. I remember that very clearly. And I liked her, and she liked me. Margie Ponce [Margaret Ponce Israel], who became Margie Israel, who married Marvin Israel, who had the affair with Diane Arbus, who killed herself because Marvin wouldn't leave Margie.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, okay.

MS. FLACK: And Margie was a wonderful artist. She was a superb artist. But, see, we were already artists.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: Six, seven, eight. We already spotted. We were both - we thought we were crazy, you know.

MR. MORGAN: When did you meet, the two of you?

MS. FLACK: Five, six, seven years old.

MR. MORGAN: Oh. You were very young.

MS. FLACK: We were very young.

MR. MORGAN: So you grew up together.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: That's interesting. And you still have a connection?

MS. FLACK: She died.

MR. MORGAN: Oh.

MS. FLACK: She died.

MR. MORGAN: Sorry to hear it.

MS. FLACK: But it was interesting that I read in Arbus's book, that big book on her, that, you know, Marvin would never leave Margie. And she showed at Cordier Ekstrom [New York, New York]; she was a wonderful artist.

MR. MORGAN: That's a good gallery.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Very good gallery.

MS. FLACK: Is that it, honey? See if you can figure out how to put this in. Thank you. And maybe we'll just do a little more.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. So go ahead with your experience.

MS. FLACK: Well, Music and Art was great. You know I came into my own.

MR. MORGAN: Who did you meet there in terms of instructors or colleagues that had a major impact on you at that time? Because that's a very impressionable age.

MS. FLACK: Well, the feeling was one of professionality. I mean everybody was - there were artists, and there were musicians. That was it. And in my class - oh, Milton Glaser. Was he in my class? Harold Bruder. He went on to become an artist. Oh, Consuelo Reyes, who had an affair with the sculptor whom I'm sure you know. Ronnie Bladen, Abstract, big pieces of wood. He's dead.

MR. MORGAN: Uh! Bladen - yes, Ron [Ronald] Bladen. That's right.

MS. FLACK: Ron Bladen.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Yes, yes. A good artist, by the way.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: A painter as well as sculptor. Slowly his work is being revived, but it's taking time. His prices just haven't gotten up yet. But that whole thing is going to change. Anyway, let's go back. So who else?

BOB: One second. [Inaudible] [brief discussion with Audrey re video camera] Oh, now it is. There it is. Look at that. Look at that.

MR. MORGAN: Audrey, we're still on tape. Keep this in mind.

MS. FLACK: It goes like this?

BOB: Yes.

MS. FLACK: Okay.

MR. MORGAN: Let Bob do that. We need information from you. The Smithsonian -

MS. FLACK: Alright.

MR. MORGAN: - desperately needs information from you. Not only information -

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes [laughs].

MR. MORGAN: Not only information, Audrey, but knowledge. Okay?

MS. FLACK: Knowledge! I know.

MR. MORGAN: You know something? If I can just intervene here. I think that, you know, this project is really an amazing, wonderful project because in the age of information, knowledge still counts. Okay?

MS. FLACK: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] That is so - that's great.

MR. MORGAN: Now it -

MS. FLACK: Knowledge as opposed to information.

MR. MORGAN: That's right. Now in the old days, you know, Alfred, Lord Tennyson used to say: "Knowledge comes, wisdom lingers." I remember giving a talk at the House of Commons [London, England] a number of years ago for this Irish art thing when David Hume was given the Nobel Prize. And so I took that idea of Tennyson's, and I said, okay, knowledge comes, wisdom lingers. But today, information comes, knowledge

lingers, and wisdom, heaven help us.

MS. FLACK: What do you mean by that?

MR. MORGAN: Well, I don't think wisdom is so available today, let's put it this way. But here the opportunity for you to shine because wisdom is something that shines. It's brilliant.

MS. FLACK: Say the Tennyson thing again.

MR. MORGAN: Knowledge comes, wisdom lingers.

MS. FLACK: And then what came after that?

MR. MORGAN: In my transcription of that - or I changed it, I altered it: Information comes, knowledge lingers, and wisdom, heaven help us.

MS. FLACK: Why do you mean heaven help us?

MR. MORGAN: Well, in a sense that we can no longer assume wisdom to be the case. Not like it perhaps was assumed in the days of Tennyson.

MS. FLACK: Oh. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. MORGAN: Because information is taking control.

MS. FLACK: Very interesting. Very interesting. You know I love that you're saying this. Because I'm old enough now, you know, and I do have wisdom. I see things. I know so much.

MR. MORGAN: This is what we're moving toward.

MS. FLACK: You think so?

MR. MORGAN: Right now, yes.

MS. FLACK: I know so much. I just get the whole picture pretty quickly, you know. And I think about it all the time. Now I think about [Barack] Obama, and I think about this world, and I think about the art world. I've been through so many phases of it. And, you know, I keep thinking - you didn't get to see the [Gian Lorenzo] Bernini show at the Getty [J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California], did you?

MR. MORGAN: No.

MS. FLACK: It was magnificent.

MR. MORGAN: I'm sure.

MS. FLACK: And I think Bernini was - one of the greatest - artists that's ever lived. And, you know, in high school I probably would have laughed at him because I was -

MR. MORGAN: What were you looking at in high school?

MS. FLACK: [Pablo] Picasso, Juan Gris, and [Georges] Braque.

MR. MORGAN: Cubism.

MS. FLACK: Cubism and Picasso abstraction. I was also looking at - Baroness [sic] Hilla Rebay still had the Museum of Non-Objective Art [New York, New York].

MR. MORGAN: Baroness.

MS. FLACK: Still there.

MR. MORGAN: Baroness.

MS. FLACK: Yes, baroness.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Hilla Rebay. Yes. And that eventually became the Guggenheim Museum [New York, New York].

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

MR. MORGAN: She had a connection with Solomon [R. Guggenheim], as I recall.

[END OF DISC 1.]

MS. FLACK: But I have to tell you something that's very interesting that happened in high school, during high school. And I don't know if I ever told you this. My brother, who's six years older than I was, was drafted into the Army. He was in the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], and they needed bodies, and the double-crossed him. He was a brilliant guy. Big gambler, handsome, ladies' man, but really smart. Reading [Friedrich] Nietzsche when he was 15, you know. So he gets pulled out of school. He gets two weeks of basic training. He gets sent to Germany to fight in the Battle of the Bulge, where they knew - I mean it was a slaughter. They knew it before they sent these boys. And he was one of two left alive.

MR. MORGAN: Wow!

MS. FLACK: And he became a killer. You know he'd tell stories [inaudible]. I mean I'll shorten it. But he had to kill a lot of people to survive.

MR. MORGAN: I'm sure.

MS. FLACK: And he came back with posttraumatic stress. They didn't know what it was. He couldn't go back to school, but he always had his gun with him. If you came into a room at night while he was sleeping, Oh! Out came the gun.

MR. MORGAN: In those days they didn't know about this kind of stuff.

MS. FLACK: No, they didn't know. Then they sent him to Japan. They sent him to the Philippines. He got malaria. Anyway, he came home.

MR. MORGAN: In other words he was still in the service.

MS. FLACK: Yes, he was in the service 'til the end of the war.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, okay.

MS. FLACK: Until we dropped the bomb. I mean they were using these boys. And he came home - was it '45, Bobby?

BOB: Yes.

MS. FLACK: Nineteen forty-five. We had a homecoming party. You know you open the door to the apartment, my mother had cold cuts and Dr. Pepper, Dr. Brown's cream soda and Schlitz beer. Everybody. We were playing the Lindy Hop and, you know, all those songs of the fifties, Tommy Dorsey. And Milton came home. He was like thin, and he had these haunted eyes. But he's home. All his girlfriends came. And after the party - we had shared a bedroom because we were two bedrooms. Your mother and father slept in one, and the two kids shared another one. So he dumps on my bed his loot from the war. Now there's helmets with swastikas. And there's a -

MR. MORGAN: When you say loot, do you mean - ?

MS. FLACK: His war booty.

MR. MORGAN: I see. Okay.

MS. FLACK: Alright. Oh, back up. Milton was one of the first foot soldiers to enter Berchtesgaden [sic] [Berghof, Berchtesgaden, Germany], [Adolf] Hitler's summer home. He liberated. They knocked down the door. They were in. And everybody, all the soldiers, went crazy. And they were ripping up pillows and stuffing their pockets with whatever they could. And my brother, having the kind of mind that he had, looked around in other rooms. He felt the walls for secret panels. I mean this is my brother.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: You know I guess he studied gambling cheats, and he had - And he found - one windowsill was a little different than the others. And he pressed it, and there was a secret compartment in which - was a book of Hitler's watercolors, Hitler's personal copy of Mein Kampf [Marburg-Lahn : Blindenstudienanstalt, 1933] and his personal photograph album.

MR. MORGAN: A manuscript or a published edition?

MS. FLACK: A published edition, but it was Hitler's own. I hate to say it, but it was leather-bound, which might be the skin of a Jew. The photograph album had black paper with the white tips, you know, the little white corners that you slide photographs into.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: And a gold and ruby necklace. He dumped all of this on my bed. And a hand grenade. He throws me the hand grenade. He says, "Catch!" Then he said, "Now don't let go of that pin! It's going to blow!" After an hour. I said, "Milt, when can I let go of the pin?" Of course he was teasing me.

MR. MORGAN: Was it a live grenade?

MS. FLACK: He made believe it was a live grenade.

MR. MORGAN: I see.

MS. FLACK: I was his kid sister, you know. Terrified.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: So he had his Luger pistol and his - he was in the Black Hawk 69th, was it, Bob? I don't remember. The Black Hawk Division. He had insignias. He had Nazi things. You know all that. And he had the other stuff. He gave me this gold and ruby necklace. And he took his war booty, and he left the watercolor book. Did he take the Mein Kampf? I don't remember. But he left the watercolor book of Hitler's watercolors and the photograph album, and I had my necklace. And he goes away. I'm in high school. I'm studying Picasso. Forging Picasso actually. And I'm looking at Hitler's watercolors, and I like them.

MR. MORGAN: Go ahead. Go ahead.

MS. FLACK: So I like Hitler's watercolors. Now what am I going to do? I like it. So I come home from school after being an Abstract artist, and I'm looking at these [in German] street scenes that he did with charming buildings and little roads, that almost looked like Thomas Kinkade.

MR. MORGAN: Yeah! That's interesting.

MS. FLACK: It is, isn't it?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: So I tell nobody what I have. It's a shame, you know. In Yiddish you would say it's a shanda. My parents don't mention it. I don't mention it.

MR. MORGAN: The fact that you like the watercolors?

MS. FLACK: The fact that I'm in possession of Hitler's own stuff.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: And also the fact that I like them. I mean I stood up in class in Music and Art, and I said Rembrandt [van Rijn] is old hat, he's old-fashioned. I mean I was a rebel there. And here I am liking these watercolors a year later. And how could you like this fiend's watercolors? So this was my secret. I told no one - no one. And then I would look through this photograph album every night. I took the pictures out, and I'd look at the back, and there were hand inscriptions. "Hitler mitt blah blah blah." "Me unt Adolf." I found out later that it was Eva Braun who was the photographer. And she had obviously given him this. So there was Albert Speer with [Hermann] Goering. There were a lot of dogs - I had lived with this stuff. It was really crazy. And every night I remember looking at the photograph album and thinking, how could a man, petting these children and his dogs, how could he do these horrible things? How could he make these watercolors and be so evil? And then one day my brother comes with an empty valise - years later - and he packs up, and he takes his things. Milton takes everything. And then I saw on television a few months later the photograph album had gone up for auction, a couple of million dollars. And I ran to the phone. I said -

MR. MORGAN: What year was that again?

MS. FLACK: I don't remember.

MR. MORGAN: Late forties?

MS. FLACK: Late forties, yes.

MR. MORGAN: A couple of million at that time, huh?

MS. FLACK: Or whatever. Whatever - that seemed like an enormous amount of money.

MR. MORGAN: That was a lot of money at that time for sure.

MS. FLACK: Maybe it wasn't a couple of million. But it seemed like a couple of million to me. I mean it was a big flashing thing: Hitler's photograph album uncovered. Sold for blah blah blah.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: And I ran to the phone. I called Milton. And I said, "Is that ours?" And he said, "Yeah." You know. Here today, gone tomorrow. He was a gambler. He had to pay off a big gambling debt.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: I went to look for my necklace, and that was gone.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, my God!

MS. FLACK: I'm going to have to sketch that necklace.

MR. MORGAN: What about the watercolors?

MS. FLACK: Oh, it was all gone.

MR. MORGAN: So that also ended up at auction.

MS. FLACK: Oh, everything was gone.

MR. MORGAN: Oh. Do you know where they are today?

MS. FLACK: No.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. So where did you go from here?

MS. FLACK: So that was Music and Art. Then I heard about Cooper Union.

MR. MORGAN: That's an extraordinary story, by the way.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. How do you feel about that today, I mean in retrospect. Of course you're not seeing these watercolors, but -

MS. FLACK: I think it's kind of mystical almost, that - I mean I'm a Jew. I wind up with Hitler's work. And I'm very interested in academic art. And we think - Did you ever see the movie Max [2002]?

MR. MORGAN: No.

MS. FLACK: You should try to see it because Hitler failed the Vienna Academy twice.

MR. MORGAN: That was a film within the last ten years, isn't it?

MS. FLACK: Yes. A marvelous film.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, I hear it was interesting.

MS. FLACK: It's about a Jewish art dealer who was going to exhibit Hitler's work.

MR. MORGAN: I see.

MS. FLACK: What is it, make art not war? - we might not have had a Holocaust.

MR. MORGAN: That's very possible.

MS. FLACK: He was rejected. You know he used to sell his work on the street. He used to make these little [in

German] little landscapes, street scenes, and sell them. So he was pretty good. He wasn't great. But a lot of those 19th-century academics were good.

MR. MORGAN: Some of them. Anyway, so you finished Music and Art High School. And you went to Cooper Union.

MS. FLACK: I took the test for Cooper Union, got into Cooper Union.

MR. MORGAN: Now I recall in our conversations earlier, last year, Audrey, that there was a point - you said you were studying the Cubists. And you were looking at Picasso, not only the Cubist period, but Picasso I guess in the thirties also, for example?

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

MR. MORGAN: That great period of the women, Weeping Woman [1937] and the Guernica [1937], of course. And then Gris, of course. Did you read that famous book of [Daniel-Henry] Kahnweiler on Juan Gris?

MS. FLACK: No, I haven't.

MR. MORGAN: That had come out about that time. That was published in the fifties. And, of course, [Fernand] Leger, was that somebody who interested you or not?

MS. FLACK: I never liked Leger. I was interested in Leger, but I always found it so cold and mechanistic.

MR. MORGAN: Well, that was kind of his point. You know the reason I mention that is he was in New York, you know, for a period of time.

MS. FLACK: I didn't know that.

MR. MORGAN: In the forties, yes. Yes, yes. I mean not so long, but he was here. One of the ex-patriots during the occupation. But you also mentioned that you were close enough to 88 Tenth Street, which is where [Willem] de Kooning had his studio.

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

MR. MORGAN: And that you would make treks up there on occasion -

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: - while you were a student at Cooper Union.

MS. FLACK: I had a studio on Eighth Street and Third Avenue when the El was still running.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: So everything was around there.

MR. MORGAN: And so obviously you had this desire, this draw to see what this was about.

MS. FLACK: Oh, it was - it took over. It was instant. And my teacher Nick Marsicano, who just had a show - he's dead. He's another one, they will revive him. He was a founding member of The Artists' Club.

MR. MORGAN: I see. With [Philip]Pavia?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: But he was more important than Pavia. I mean Pavia ran it.

MR. MORGAN: This is where I know this name because I read that collection that just came out a few months ago, you know, the documents from The Club. I read the entire thing on a plane to Nice [France] actually.

MS. FLACK: Oh, I'd love to see that. Is it Pavia's then? Did Natalie [Edgar] do it?

MR. MORGAN: He - well, I think somebody else edited it. But Pavia - it's really his notes that he's taken during the meetings of The Club.

MS. FLACK: Pavia, he talked like that - [in a hoarse, low voice]

MR. MORGAN: I know. I met him once. Yes, he was quite old. But anyway, so tell me -

MS. FLACK: I'd like to see that. Is it a book?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes. I can't recall the publisher. I think Mid March Press, Mid March Press. But Noel Frackman is, I believe, the person who's connected with that. Noel Frackman. But anyway, tell me a little bit about the experiences you had at - yes?

MS. FLACK: What was the name of it?

MR. MORGAN: The name of it? What Was Said or something like that. Documents From The Club.

MS. FLACK: So I was immediately dunked into this bath of Abstract Expressionism. And I mean it was the whole downtown scene, and it was electrified, and it was exciting. And it was very I'd say pure. In a way - it wasn't pure because everybody drank and smoked, and a lot of them took drugs.

MR. MORGAN: Well, it was raw. It was direct.

MS. FLACK: It was raw. But it was pure love of art.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: And it was the love of the philosophy of art, of the ideas of art. It was as Grace Hartigan said: "When we were young, we asked what we could do for our masters, you know, for the great artists. Now my students ask what I can do for them."

MR. MORGAN: That's so interesting. So well stated, I should say.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Well, could you give me a couple of examples of meetings that you had or conversations with some of these people during that time period?

MS. FLACK: Well, remember, I was younger than most of the other women.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: I was still at Cooper.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: I didn't know it then, but Marsicano sort of had eyes on me. He was very handsome. We all had a crush on him. But to me he was an old man; he was 40. [Laughs.]

MR. MORGAN: That's getting up there.

MS. FLACK: He was so good-looking. And he waited 'til I graduated, but he started calling my house. I was still living home, and he started calling. My mother said, "Why is he calling you?" Well, anyway, we had a slight thing. I rented a studio and posed for him. But he was very tight with de Kooning and [Jackson] Pollock and [Franz] Kline. So he would bring me to The Club. You could not get into The Club if you were an outsider. You had to be a member or a member had to bring you. And it was scary, it was thrilling. It was scary because I was a woman, I was a young woman, and I was a nice kid. I mean I wasn't screwing around with the whole world. I was daring, and I was a really avant-garde painter. But I wasn't Grace. You know Grace would find herself - [inaudible] I won't tell some of the stories I know about what they did. It's too awful.

MR. MORGAN: Grace is about what, ten - ?

MS. FLACK: They're all about ten, 11 years older than I.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. That's what I was going to say, yes.

MS. FLACK: Grace? Yes. I miss her. I miss her.

MR. MORGAN: Is she still with us?

MS. FLACK: No, she just died.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, she did.

MS. FLACK: You know who else died I really feel - You know Grace was a terrific artist. Grace, I don't feel, was a great artist. But I think that Robert Graham -

MR. MORGAN: Oh, yes.

MS. FLACK: - touched greatness.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: And we traded work.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, really! Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Yes, I just noticed his obituary.

MS. FLACK: I feel very bad about that. Very bad about that.

MR. MORGAN: He lived in California, right?

MS. FLACK: Lived in California. Married to Anjelica Huston. You know when an artist dies, when a great artist dies, I think the planet loses something very important.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I guess I see it more from a kind of Buddhist saying. I think, you know, there's always kind of a transmigration going on. I think that there's always that spirit somewhere. And it's just we have to relocate it. And relocation really has to do with [inaudible] sensitivity, I think, that artists know about and they feel. It's not always so direct. Sometimes it's quite indirect. So anyway, you had conversations with Hartigan obviously.

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes. And later on more.

MR. MORGAN: And did she give you advice in terms of how to proceed?

MS. FLACK: Oh, later on she did. [Laughs]- I sent Grace an article I wrote called "The New Hero: Barack Obama and the State of Art."

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: I wrote about the hope of the new administration and the failure of the Whitney [Museum of American Art, NYC].

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: And I sent it to Grace. And she called me, and said, "Don't you publish it, Audrey." And I said, "Why, Grace?" Because I was thinking about sending it to Artnews magazine. She said, "Don't make any more enemies than you have to." She was giving me motherly advice. Interesting that Grace, who abandoned her son, took a very great interest in my autistic daughter.

MR. MORGAN: Hmmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: Her fourth husband was with the NIH [National Institutes of Health] and wanted him to research autism. So that was very touching.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, that's nice. De Kooning, what was your connection to him?

MS. FLACK: Those abstract painters were like gods to me - I was a young artist and to see them - to come across them was amazing. Kline was the least threatening. He was a gentleman. And I remember saying to him once, "How about using color?" Because I love his work. He was drunk and said, "Maybe yellow. Yeah, maybe I'll use yellow." There was an artist named Landis Lewiton. He never made it. But he was a fixture; and he was smart, an older guy. And he used to pontificate, and we'd sit in the Sagamore Cafeteria [New York, New York] Landis, Kline and me and talk art. Pollock, well, I wrote about him in my book, Art and Soul [Art and Soul: Notes on Creating. New York, Penguin Group: 1986]. Pollock, I'd see him at the Artists' Club. All the artists at the club would walk around with plastic tumblers filled with scotch. I met Pollack at the Cedar Bar. He spotted me and came to my table. And he liked Jewish women.

MR. MORGAN: He was married to Lee Krasner.

MS. FLACK: He was married Lee, but I think he had a proclivity for some reason.

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

MS. FLACK: Anyhow, I was this nice kid, and he was hitting on me. And I was - at that point, I think he was really

in bad shape.

MR. MORGAN: And what year would that have been about?

MS. FLACK: I was living in Chelsea. I was doing textile design with Joseph Raphael, Caroline Brady and Paul Thek. You know Paul Thek?

MR. MORGAN: I knew who he was.

MS. FLACK: I set in between Paul and Caroline.

MR. MORGAN: He's got a big show in Europe right now, by the way.

MS. FLACK: Yes. Really?

MR. MORGAN: I think it's in Spain somewhere, if I'm not mistaken.

MS. FLACK: He died very early of AIDS.

MR. MORGAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] One of the first casualties.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: At least in the art world.

MS. FLACK: He was beautiful.

MR. MORGAN: Was he? Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: He was beautiful. Nice. I liked him. Joseph Raphael was Joey Raphaeli at the time. We all designed textiles together in order to earn a living.

MR. MORGAN: I mentioned De Kooning. I know there was that photograph taken in that catalog of Abstract -

MS. FLACK: Yes, of the two of us. That was years later when I visited him in East Hampton.

MR. MORGAN: In the seventies?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Because he looks like that period. But did you have any conversation with him or any - ?

MS. FLACK: Yes, I believe I was the last artist to see him. Elaine was keeping everyone away in order to hide his rapidly advancing Alzheimers. But to finish our conversation about Pollack. I was just like a star-struck kid listening to every word, looking at their paintings respectfully. Pollock - Pollock really wanted to have a relationship with me, and that's when I introduced him to Ruth Klegman.

MR. MORGAN: Oh! Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: You know life is so interesting. Ruth was working in a small gallery, called - was it the Collectors' Gallery? Greer. David Greer was the owner.

MR. MORGAN: I'm not sure.

MS. FLACK: And they gave her the opportunity to curate a show. She just came in from New Jersey and didn't know very much. But she had a good eye. She had a very good eye. And she was very beautiful.

MR. MORGAN: I met Ruth. I went to her studio actually. She wanted me to look at her work. And it was actually [Franz] Kline's old studio, if I'm not mistaken.

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

MR. MORGAN: And I remember these, you know, pastel-colored abstract paintings. She obviously had a sense of what she was trying to do. And she wanted to take me back to the bedroom to show me her Pollock, which was on the mantelpiece. And so we go to - typical railroad apartment style - we go through the kitchen, and then there's a little hall with a bathroom, and then there's, you know, dead-on on the mantel is this Pollock, which was maybe about - no more than 20 inches square, something like that. And so I'm looking at it, and she says, "Well, what do you think?" And I said, "Well, it's okay." And she was so upset. She said, "Okay!?" And I said, "Yes, it's

not really one of the great Pollocks. I mean I'm not even sure it's a good one." And I kind of upset her. But, you know, I'm fairly sure that ended up in the Whitney or something. Because there was a show that David Anfam did at Haunch of Venison, a gallery in New York originally out of London. And I'm fairly sure that one of those three square paintings, which are all about the size I'm describing, was the one that I saw. I can't verify that.

MS. FLACK: What did it look like?

MR. MORGAN: Well, it was, you know, often he would use a dark background on those small ones. And so therefore the color would really sort of bounce off. And he could do almost anything with these swirling primaries. Yellow and red, I guess, largely. I don't remember a lot of blue, but yellow and red were certainly in there. I mean they were like little cosmologies in a way. But I have to say there was something insipid about it. Now, you know, obviously this is parenthetical to what we're talking about. But you know Pollock only did maybe 12 good paintings really, you know. He wasn't so consistent. On the other hand, Roy Lichtenstein probably every painting he did was good, some very good. But the thing is Lichtenstein, in my opinion, never did anything great comparable to Pollock's Autumn Rhythm [1950].

MS. FLACK: That's wonderful! See, this is why I think you're great.

MR. MORGAN: Thank you, Audrey. I think you're great, too.

MS. FLACK: You hit it right there.

MR. MORGAN: You understand my point?

MS. FLACK: Of course I understand your point.

MR. MORGAN: You know the thing about Pollock is maybe he didn't hit it a lot of the time, but at least he was trying to do something, okay?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: That was original.

MS. FLACK: Larger than himself.

MR. MORGAN: Well, it was always a risk. And a lot of it we can call trivial or sort of - flippant isn't the right word, but I don't believe that Pollock was flippant. But the point is I understand the energy. I understand - I mean the energy was there, but relative to his great work, it couldn't stand up, in my opinion.

MS. FLACK: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] This painting.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. And also I think he really needed the scale to make it work.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: He really needed the scale. But you know -

MS. FLACK: Very, very interesting.

MR. MORGAN: But, Audrey, you know, I was looking at that little catalog last night. That show preceded the one that you had last year by about two years, I think.

MS. FLACK: The one at Rider College ["Audrey Flack: Abstract Expressionist", Rider University Art Gallery, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, 2007].

MR. MORGAN: Two thousand six maybe? Does that sound right?

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

MR. MORGAN: Yes. But it was interesting looking at that work, and I remember seeing some of that. And one of the things that struck me is there was a period - You know you did your mother and your father with a lot of white, I remember, in terms of those portraits.

MS. FLACK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative]

MR. MORGAN: And there's an Abstract one - or almost Abstract. Maybe it was coming from subject matter that you were looking at. But the point is it also had a lot of white. Okay. What about this use of white at that time?

MS. FLACK: Was it white of the canvas?

MR. MORGAN: No, absolutely not. No, when I say white I'm talking about, you know, modulated with colors that were underneath and so forth. So what you ended up with was not what was given.

MS. FLACK: Huh!

MR. MORGAN: But I know - As a matter of fact, it struck me during that studio visit over a year ago.

MS. FLACK: Really!

MR. MORGAN: Yes. I thought it was interesting. And I assume that some of those were in the show out in New Mexico ["Audrey Flack: From Abstract Expressionism to Photorealism," LewAllen Contemporary, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2008].

MS. FLACK: Yes. And we'll have to - Let me just get back to the Pollock.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, sure.

MS. FLACK: Because I think the painting Ruth probably got from him was one of his works from that time. And at that time I think the guy was having a breakdown. So if you think the painting looked insipid, it did, he was kind of pathetic then. He was more than pathetic. I mean he really was bad. And Ruth was a very disturbed girl.

MR. MORGAN: I gathered this.

MS. FLACK: Very. So Ruth comes to my studio and selects work for her show. She's going to do a three-person show. And she really - She could talk art - She could talk what she saw. She could say, "Oh, that! You painted that color so beautifully against the background. You know she really was like a salesperson that way. I can imagine her dealing with Pollock in the same way. You know she could make you feel great, and she was so pretty. She looked a little like Elizabeth Taylor then. But there was something about her that I didn't like and I didn't trust. And she wanted me to give her art lessons. She wanted to be an artist. She didn't know anything. And I - I said, "You're not an artist, you know. Forget it." Which she didn't like. So she - I lived in a fifth-floor walkup in Chelsea.

The City Center theater [New York, New York] had an art gallery in the lobby. And they had juried shows. They were one of the few places a young artist could show. I submitted my work, and I got accepted. The following week, Emily Genauer gave me a rave review in the New York Herald Tribune. Ruth picked that same painting Emily Genauer wrote about and took a couple of other paintings for her show. As she was visiting me, she said, "Listen, who are the real artists?" She knew from nothing. She was just fresh from New Jersey, you know. And I said, "Well, the best artists are Pollock, Kline, and de Kooning." She said, "In what order?" I said, "Pollock, de Kooning, Kline." Guess who she had affairs with, in what order?

MR. MORGAN: [Laughs] Remarkable.

MS. FLACK: So then she said, "Where can I meet them?" And I had just had this incident with Pollock where he was coming on to me. He was drunk, and he was staggering over me and belching, and pinching my behind, zooming in and out. He had stubble on his cheeks, and his face was flushed. I was heartbroken to see him like that. I'm not going to kiss this derelict!

MR. MORGAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Sure.

MS. FLACK: You're going to kiss a bum on the street? I mean yuck! His breath was foul. He was sick!

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: We we're sitting at the Cedar Bar at a little table talking about art when he leaned over and said. "Let's fuck." You know.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: "Let me come home with you." [She slurs the words.] I said, "No, Jackson. I really - "And I felt empathy for him. The guy had had it. I mean he was on his way out. Which he was. Six months later he crashed.

MR. MORGAN: So this is '55 then roughly, right?

MS. FLACK: I don't know. I'm terrible with dates, Robert. I'm terrible with dates. When did he die?

MR. MORGAN: Fifty-six.

MS. FLACK: Yes. So it's '55, '56, whenever it is. I go home. Ruth comes to my studio the next day. She says, "Well, where? Where can I meet the artists you told me about?" I said, "The Cedar Bar." She says, "Come with me." I said, "I am never going back." That was a very big decision I made.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: Never! I will never go to the Cedar again. Actually I did go once long after Pollack died and after I was married to remind myself that I had a life. Ruth asked where the Cedar Bar was. And I drew a map, because I was on Twenty-third between Eighth and Ninth. And I drew a map of how she could walk there. She went there with her little piece of paper: Pollock, de Kooning, and Kline.

MR. MORGAN: She might forget the order?

MS. FLACK: Oh, she didn't forget the order. And that's when she met Pollock. But she thinks that Marty Lutz introduced her, but, you know, it doesn't matter who introduced her. She knew that that was the one to get.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: Now, any healthy person could not be in a car with a drunken person who's having a nervous breakdown. He was having a nervous breakdown. Could not make love, could not kiss such a person. See, that should be examined. And yet I thought her book [Love Affair: A Memoir of Jackson Pollock. New York, Morrow: 1974] was excellent. I thought it was a very good description of Pollack at that time. She describes my painting in the beginning.

MR. MORGAN: Oh!

MS. FLACK: She doesn't mention me. But she describes my painting.

MR. MORGAN: When was this book published?

MS. FLACK: Years ago.

MR. MORGAN: Hmmm. Interesting. Okay. So I saw after these white paintings - It's in the catalog. I mean and there are others that are not because that's a very small catalog. But I think some of them are probably in the New Mexico catalog for sure.

What is it, Glen Ellyn? Is that the name of the gallery?

MS. FLACK: LewAllen, LewAllen [LewAllen Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico].

MR. MORGAN: But anyway, the point is that eventually you evolve into color, I mean much more forcefully. And you seem to really be into this notion of the all-over surface.

MS. FLACK: Oh, this is the Rider catalog.

MR. MORGAN: That's the one I was looking at last night, yes. Well, for example, here we go. Audrey, let me show you what I'm talking about. Or maybe it was in another catalog.

MS. FLACK: Yes, maybe it was the LewAllen one.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, here it is right here.

MS. FLACK: Was it LewAllen. Yes, it's LewAllen.

MR. MORGAN: Audrey! Yes. This is the one I'm talking about [Still Life with Grapefruits, 1954].

MS. FLACK: Oh, my grapefruits.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes, yes. Alright. Well, I brought you a grapefruit today.

MS. FLACK: Yes!

MR. MORGAN: You're still eating grapefruit. But look at these in terms of surface, your mother and your father.

MS. FLACK: Yes, you're right.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. I was very struck by that.

MS. FLACK: Well, I think I'm looking at light.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Alright. But then, then you do something like this which you call Abstract Expressionist Autumn Sky [1953].

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

MR. MORGAN: Okay? Now, I was mentioning the all-over-it wasn't exactly a technique, but it was a formal kind of apparatus, I suppose, in terms of a way of structuring the painting. What I'm asking is, was that a conscious idea on your part, that you were striving for this all-over composition?

MS. FLACK: I'm an Abstract Expressionist. Abstract Expressionists tilted the picture plane up.

MR. MORGAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Okay.

MS. FLACK: The picture plane is flattened, and that's -

MR. MORGAN: Because I think that you would've had to go through Cubism to do this as articulately as you have.

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes.

MR. MORGAN: Just to make sure that this gets on the tape, we're talking about 1953, Abstract Expressionist Autumn Sky. And I think it's a remarkable painting. You know often - Clement Greenberg talks about this necessity of Cubism in order to arrive at this, particularly in relation to Pollock. But I think this is an absolutely clear example of what Greenberg was talking about, more than probably any other painting I've seen.

MS. FLACK: Now what is he saying? You have to go through Cubism?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. In other words, there's no access to, you know, Abstract Expressionism. He didn't like that term, by the way. He preferred Painterly Abstraction. But the point is that the foundation, to get to this kind of liberacion, was that if you knew the structure, the flat space of Cubism and the kind of multiplicity of the angle, so to speak, then you could open up and do something like this. Okay? I think that's one reason why he never embraced - I may have read this someplace - why he never embraced Sam Francis, for example, because he didn't feel that Francis had really gone through Cubism.

MS. FLACK: Very interesting!

MR. MORGAN: And for sure he didn't like [Wassily] Kandinsky's later work because he felt that he was trying to do a kind of constructivism without Cubism. Because the earlier work was Der Blaue Reiter. And so for Greenberg the presence, the historical presence of Cubism in High Modernism was essential. It was almost like the rite of passage. But anyway, the point is that I see it very clearly in this painting.

MS. FLACK: Very important.

MR. MORGAN: Very clearly. I mean, you know, if ever do something on Greenberg again on this issue, I'll have to borrow this painting because I think that - You know I did that book, his Late Writings [Robert C. Morgan, editor. Clement Greenberg: Late Writings. University of Minnesota Press: 2003]. I don't know if you ever saw that.

MS. FLACK: No.

MR. MORGAN: Well, anyway.

MS. FLACK: One of your books that I don't have.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: That is really interesting, and I think it says to me a lot about my work. Now it's giving me - You know Cubism had a structure. Yes, you had to - deconstruct, right?

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: It deconstructed, and it reconstructed within, I would say, how many inches of depth, four and a half?

MR. MORGAN: Something like that.

MS. FLACK: Within four and a half inches, maybe five inches of depth at the most.

MR. MORGAN: Let me put it this way, Audrey. I like what you just said very much, that it deconstructed and reconstructed in a - I think that that process is almost like a cyclical process in the sense that, you know, to leave something dangling in deconstruction is interesting from an intellectual point of view. But if we're talking about art, you can't leave it dangling too long. You have to somehow put it back in again.

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

MR. MORGAN: And I think that's where Postmodernism ended up in the wrong track, frankly. That the kind of suspension of deconstruction as a process or method in itself became almost a kind of fetish, you know rather than pulling it back around again. Even if the circularity is a spiral, which it probably is, and not necessarily a circle, I think like a caduceus or whatever. The fact is that you have to somehow - And this is why the synthetic Cubism of Juan Gris is so brilliant. And I believe this is what Kahnweiler really deeply understood about Gris. You know Kahnweiler really understood that Gris - it was a matter of sensitivity, intelligent sensitivity. I mean something that I have to say many American artists don't understood: That the kind of sensitivity you need in art is intelligence, and there's no separation. There's absolutely no separation. You know you were talking about your early experiences. And I remember a high school principal saying, "Well, Robert, do you want to be intelligent or creative?" In other words, you had to make a choice.

MS. FLACK: Yes, artists were dopes!

MR. MORGAN: [Laughs] You had to make a choice, right? And I empathize with your suffering. I empathize, Audrey, with standing isolated in the hallway. I mean I'm using that in a proverbial way. But I was also standing in the hallway.

MS. FLACK: Were you, too?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Well, I mean in a manner of speaking. You know what I'm saying?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Because, you know, I didn't want to choose between those because I didn't think it was about a choice, you know. And this is, I think, where I discovered this kind of Buddhist thing that, you know, I mean often what we see as oppositions in the West is really just different parts of the kind of turning cycles of energy. And anyway, I love that aspect about your thinking and about your work.

MS. FLACK: And Postmodernism -

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: - when you don't reconstruct, it's sort of floating there.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, this is my problem.

MS. FLACK: It just becomes almost brief and instant. And that's how long it lasts.

MR. MORGAN: See, this I think is where the conflict is between Postmodernism and art. This is why when people say Postmodern art.

MS. FLACK: That's interesting. Postmodernism and art? I never heard that one.

MR. MORGAN: But, Audrey, we'll come back to that, my dear.

MS. FLACK: I want to get my other glasses.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, God! Audrey, we're almost at the end of the tape. We've got to do the finale on this part.

MS. FLACK: Alright, alright, alright. When we get to the end of it, then I'll look for my glasses.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. We'll come back to that. But let's - Because I want to talk to you about -

MS. FLACK: Postmodernism and art, I love it.

MR. MORGAN: Well, see, this is - it's really a conflict in a way. Because, of course, theoreticians who have no sense of connoisseurship in terms of how to look at a painting, you know, they love to be suspended in this zone, you know.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Where everything is in chaos and deconstruction.

MS. FLACK: And it's just going to go off there.

MR. MORGAN: Because look at [Gilles] Deleuze and [Félix] Guattari. I mean they can go on and on and on and on and on because they love this aura of suspension. That's exactly what it is, an aura of suspension. Talk about an oxymoron. But in fact if you're going to talk about art, you've got to get back to the reconstruction.

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

MR. MORGAN: You've got to. Okay? You just can't leave it dangling forever.

MS. FLACK: Of course if it's dangling out there, who is responding to that? I mean we're talking - Is art for human beings? Is art for the soul? Is art for the mind? Is art for a human?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: And if it's for a human, it has to reach the human. And if it's out there in some philosophical thing, it's - By the way, I think this thing you're saying about Cubism is inherent, in the thesis I wrote at Yale - it was called The Change in Space From Giotto to Jackson Pollock.

MR. MORGAN: Wonderful! Great title.

MS. FLACK: And it goes through Cubism. But my photorealistic paintings are based on Abstract Expressionist/Cubist space. The only one. I'm the only photorealist that does that. Because I'm the only one that has that background.

MR. MORGAN: This is a remarkable statement. Now, let me just talk about where I want to go after we take our break. Okay? I think that we have sort of encapsulated the early period of your life in this tape.

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

MR. MORGAN: And what I want to move to now is what happens after Expressionism, the move into Photorealism. And I really want to get into that subject. And then third, I want to deal with the sculpture and where you are today. Okay? This is the way I see it.

MS. FLACK: Great.

MR. MORGAN: So I guess we will -

MS. FLACK: You know what I love about you? You've got this philosophical brain. I always learn things from you, Robert.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I feel the same about you.

MS. FLACK: I never thought that about the Cubism element in my Photorealist work. It's a very - The painting you are holding up, the Abstract painting -

MR. MORGAN: Right. *

MS. FLACK: You could also hold up my Royal Flush [1973] painting, and many of my Photorealist paintings like Marilyn Monroe and see cubist thought. There's something here, there's something here.

MR. MORGAN: It would be so interesting to see that. It would be so interesting. Yes.

MS. FLACK: And on this plane.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. But it's a perfect illustration of what Clem was talking about. You know because sometimes you edit - And, you know, like -

MS. FLACK: Can I give you some salad?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Let me just finish what I was - Because, you know, when Clem [Greenberg] or Harold [Rosenberg], you know, say these things, I mean I presume that they have very specific paintings in mind, you know, when they're talking about this. And if you're not looking at the paintings that they're looking at or thinking about, then you might not see it exactly. Like, for example, I kind of did it from Pollock's Number 32

[1950], the one that's in the Kunstsammlung in Dusseldorf [Germany], okay? That was one of the large paintings from 1950, along with Number One [1948] at the Museum of Modern Art [MoMA, New York, New York].

MS. FLACK: Did it have radiator paint?

MR. MORGAN: Huh?

MS. FLACK: Did it have radiator paint? Pollack painted with silver radiator paint.

MR. MORGAN: No, not really. No, no, no. If you wanted to [inaudible] me with photographs, I can show it to you here. If you have a book around. I'm sure it's in any book you might have on Pollock. But the point is that there were three large ones: Number One at the Museum of Modern Art, and Autumn Rhythm [1950] and Number 32.

MS. FLACK: Uh-huh. [Affirmative]

MR. MORGAN: And I mean you can kind of, you can kind of get it from those, you know, what Clem is talking about. But then it also helps you understand why Ocean Greyness, from '53, absolutely falls apart; it caves in. Absolutely caves in. And what about Portrait and a Dream [1953]? I mean what - you know, the same year. I mean there's no reconciliation, from my point of view, between those two paintings. They both cave in because they've lost, in my opinion, that clarity of Cubist structure, which was so evident in the great period, in 1950. Anyway, that's my word on it.

BOB: Well, you've got enough on video; you've got it all, obviously, on audio.

MS. FLACK: Yes, but it's nice. So we'll get both. Salad?

MR. MORGAN: The one thing I want to make sure, I have this on hold right now. But when we come back, I want to call Charlie just to make sure that I don't lose everything that we have. Okay. I want to know what button to press.

MS. FLACK: Call him now. [All three are speaking at once.]

[END OF DISC 2.]

MS. FLACK: I didn't do anything to it.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, here we go.

MS. FLACK: Put your ear things in and see if it's working.

MR. MORGAN: Okay.

MS. FLACK: Here we go. [Inaudible]

MR. MORGAN: Yes, it's working. You can tell. It has that working sound modality. Okay. We're going to do the second reel for Audrey Flack, and this is Robert C. Morgan.

MS. FLACK: And I'm asking Robert Morgan about his work because he's about to have two exhibitions.

MR. MORGAN: In New York.

MS. FLACK: In New York.

MR. MORGAN: And in Brooklyn.

[Pause.]

MR. MORGAN: Aristotle was interested in a kind of taxonomy of the sciences. And he said, Once we understand the physical sciences and the natural sciences, there's another category that we can't account for and that is beyond the physical, which he called metaphysics. This became the subject of most of the philosophy written up until the early 20th century when the ice was broken, so to speak, by [Ludwig] Wittgenstein in Austria with his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, which came out, I believe, in 1921. Also concurrently you find in London the Logical Positivists and so forth, who were also dealing with a certain kind of analytic philosophy. Anyway, the analytical philosophy wasn't exactly the same as the language philosophy of Wittgenstein. But the point is that it was moving away from the metaphysics. Now what I find interesting is that the Eastern component to metaphysics as a system of thought is in the Analecs of Confucius in the fifth century B.C. So roughly about the same time. And what we find is another point of view that is less relegated to the sciences but to the idea of moral law.

MS. FLACK: Moral law.

MR. MORGAN: Moral law. That's right. And for Confucius, he thought that what brings moral law into a lived reality is the sense of spirit. You have to feel the spirit. Otherwise the moral law cannot exist. And this was essentially his metaphysical idea, coming from a very different point of view. But nonetheless, it shows up definitively in the Northern Sung landscape painters of the tenth century, where they are getting these commissions to do essentially landscape paintings which capture this spirit, which is very important in terms of - perhaps Westerners would call it content. But it's not really the same because it has a much more specific meaning in the East.

But the point is that even today in China, the few artists that are doing what Westerners call Abstract painting, they call metaphysical painting because they see their idea of abstraction, what Westerners call abstraction, as a continuation of the space, the form, the spirit that was embedded in this earlier period of the Northern Sung, which is the tenth century. And so when you see Eastern abstraction - For example yesterday I had a nice conversation with Shen Chen, and he was from Beijing, and he is going to be having a show there and in Shanghai toward the end of this year. And he essentially agrees with my point: that from Mainland point of view, that is, the artist working in the area of Mainland China that was closed off for several decades during the 20th century because of the Cultural Revolution and the various events surrounding Mao Zedong, and the Communist state that in fact China still is, that the history of that painting is very different than what happened, for example, in Taiwan. Which during that time of the fifties, when China was closed off, Mainland China, the People's Republic of China was closed off, the Taiwanese were going to Paris and going to the West, to the United States and so forth, but I would say mainly Paris. And they were absorbing the Western idea of abstraction through [Paul] Cézanne, which is an access that the Mainland Chinese artists never had.

So when you talk about abstraction in Taiwan, that word connects with the infusion of early Modern Western painting into their style and their brushwork. Whereas if you're talking about abstraction in Mainland China, if it doesn't refer to Taiwan, it definitely refers to the West. And their concern is not so much the appropriation of French or American ideas of abstraction; their idea is to continue the idea of form, space, spirit, and time, by the way - but spirit is the essential ingredient - into the present. So Shen Chen, as well as Wiu Shi Hua who is an older painter about 68 now, they see this connection to the Northern Sung Dynasty very clearly, over ten centuries of time. And they believe that their images, even though they are reduced and abstracted in terms of form and color, that in fact it is the same spirit as you would find in this early period. This is what is supposed to transmit from the paintings. Now if you think of that in relation to Kandinsky's essay from 1911-1912 concerning the spiritual in art, there is a kind of interesting overlay there; not exactly the same, but an interesting overlay, because keep in mind that Western countries -

MS. FLACK: Robert, excuse me, I want to get to your work.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: We're talking about your show and your work.

MR. MORGAN: Okay, okay. Alright. Well, my work is called "Neo-Metaphysical Painting."

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: And I'm trying to - I love the idea of metaphysics. I think it's gotten a bad name because philosophically it was seen as inapplicable to the concerns, the new technologies and so forth and the application of those technologies to the 20th century. But I think it's a good way to deal with Abstract art because it's within its own system. And I love this idea that something can excel within its own system. In other words, excel to the point of really transmitting values that are embodied within abstract form.

MS. FLACK: Now what are you trying to do with this metaphysical work?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes. Well, I think that that's what metaphysics does, is it transmits values. Now those cannot be spelled out, otherwise I wouldn't be painting. But obviously there are decisions that are made within the painting. Because none of these paintings that I do are predetermined. It's not like, oh, here's a good idea. I'll do ten of these. That's not the way I work. Well, okay, maybe. But I make sure that there are enough, shall we say, parameters that extend outward rather than closing me in because I don't want to be closed in on this. I don't think that - if you're closing in, you can't transmit the kind of values I'm talking about through painting. You have to be projecting through the painting outward. Yet at the same time there's no contradiction in saying it's within a contained system.

MS. FLACK: Do you have very specific values?

MR. MORGAN: Well, as I say -

MS. FLACK: Or are these thoughts that you feel just come.

MR. MORGAN: - it's painting, you know.

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

MR. MORGAN: See, I believe that painting can do this not because they're illustrating values that I number one through five or one through ten. And it's not mystical in the sense of saying, well, you know, either you get it or you don't. That's absurd, you know. I think that's what happened in the fifties, and a lot of second generation abstract expressionist painters were doing that. In other words they were saying, well, you know, if you don't understand my work, it's your problem. And I don't feel that. I mean if people don't understand the work, then I ask them to come back and look again or whatever. But, you know, maybe they'll get them, maybe they don't. But it's something that - And when I say "get it," I mean - In other words, ultimately all ideas in art are contained within feeling. And no matter how rich or abundant the ideas might be, unless there's some kind of refinement that brings it down to the emotional content, they're not going to be as significant as art needs them to be.

MS. FLACK: I'm going to stop just for a minute.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. I want to get back on track now in terms of what we need to do with you.

MS. FLACK: Yes, but I was very curious. Do you think Abstract Expressionism is metaphysical?

MR. MORGAN: Abstract Expressionism, you know, could be seen as a kind of culmination of Modernism in a certain way. And I think that it was attempting to get at something very raw, very direct, and very basic. I think that the desire to refine and to work with parameters within a system was not so much of what it was about. I think that it was basically the rawness, the directness. I mean it was definitely about feeling and about myth. And you could talk about it in terms of myth. But I don't really see it as metaphysical. I see the metaphysical as a more European idea.

MS. FLACK: So let's say with painting, you put a mark down, you're not just putting a mark down in your metaphysical works.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I don't know what you mean by a mark. I mean I have my own idea of what that is. I think, for example, Joan Mitchell did marks in her early period. And then in her later period she did gestures. And I think there's a difference between something that's impulsive like a mark and something that is more, shall we say, refined in terms of a gesture.

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

MR. MORGAN: But I guess I don't know -

MS. FLACK: Well, what's the difference between that with a lot of feeling in it and a metaphysical mark?

MR. MORGAN: I think metaphysical has more of a containment. It's paradoxical because, you know, at the same time I'm looking outwards through the containment. And by that I mean, you know, I never want to repeat the same idea. In other words, I believe in a sense of completeness. And I'm not talking about a kind of formal process. I'm talking about the sense that the painting feels complete in terms of those parameters that I have chosen to use or to work with. And that I think there's a sort of predetermined aspect to metaphysical painting. But this does not preclude openness to explore the surface space in order to come up with something that is not predetermined. In other words, whatever your idea is may or may not be what you end up with, which is fine for me. And I suppose that was one of the limiting aspects of my early conceptual art, some of which is okay and some of which is good and some of which appears sophomoric in retrospect.

However, it's not that I'm against good conceptual art because good conceptual art is like good romantic art or good neoclassic art. There's always good art, and there's always stuff that is very mediocre. We don't talk about connoisseurship today the way we should. But in fact I think we have to get to the point, the contiguity, where we don't see contemporary art in terms of contradiction but as inexplicably tied to history. And I think the avant-garde has absolutely exhausted itself, and that's even happening in China. In other words, you can only recycle that game so many times. But unless there is a truly viable political position - and I'm talking about viability that exceeds market demand - then there can be no avant-garde. There can only be repetition.

MS. FLACK: Interesting.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. And over the last 25 years the avant-garde has been absolutely usurped by the marketplace.

MS. FLACK: It's going to be very interesting in terms of Obama to see what is going to emerge, what will be the avant-garde. Do we need an avant-garde? Do we need a resurrection of what is? But anyhow, we should

probably get on.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Well, you know -

MS. FLACK: What I'm going to ask you to do is move here so I can sit there, and you can do it. Just move the thing over here. So then if you want -

MR. MORGAN: The concern is the recording. This is the issue.

MS. FLACK: Hmm. Let's see.

MR. MORGAN: I can sit here, and it'll probably work.

MS. FLACK: Okay. Because I'm going to sit here so that you can video me.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. Let's make sure that the microphone's in the right place here. Audrey!

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Is there a way this can be moved a little closer? The problem is if we're stuck with that position -

MS. FLACK: Yes, sure.

MR. MORGAN: - then, yes.

MS. FLACK: This stupid thing is holding it.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: My pencil sharpener.

MR. MORGAN: Ah, okay. Move it another three feet if you can or as far as it will go. Or just make it easier for me to do what you want me to do. Ideally if I can move this up here then I have more freedom. Can that come a little farther, or no?

MS. FLACK: Don't know. Doesn't seem to be wanting to. Oh, yes!

MR. MORGAN: Okay. Alright. That should do it. We're in good shape. Okay, let's continue.

MS. FLACK: That okay?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: Alright. So then what we need to do - you know this is so easy.

MR. MORGAN: You know this is really going to interfere with -

MS. FLACK: Do it once and then -

MR. MORGAN: I'd rather focus on the conversation. It's going to be too much of a distraction.

MS. FLACK: Do it once and then we'll stop. Here it's on, right? You're going to see a picture.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: You're going to press this button, and it'll record.

MR. MORGAN: Okay.

MS. FLACK: And when you press this button, it'll stop.

MR. MORGAN: Alright. Okay. Well, I'm going to let you -

MS. FLACK: And then we'll stop because it does interfere no doubt.

MR. MORGAN: You know I was talking about the book I did on Clement Greenberg. And I would go there once a month and stay anywhere from three to ten hours. It was amazing. I never brought any recording device. And you know something? I heard things that probably would never have been spoken by Clem to anyone because there was no recording device. I mean I have all the notes from that.

MS. FLACK: Yes, I'm sure.

MR. MORGAN: It's in that introductory chapter to the book. But I'll tell you, you know, it allowed me access to one of the great minds of art critical thinking and writing. Not that, you know, everything was the last word. I mean it was a masterful kind of not only articulation, but a methodology of thought. And I think that's related somewhat.

MS. FLACK: I agree.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: So let's jump - Is it pressed on?

MR. MORGAN: I'm going to press it right now. Now, do I hold it? Okay, okay.

MS. FLACK: So now is the number moving inside?

MR. MORGAN: The number where? Thirty-three minutes, yes, it is.

MS. FLACK: Okay. So it means it's recording.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. So, listen -

MS. FLACK: Just do it for five minutes, and then throw it away.

MR. MORGAN: Well, let's see how it goes. So, Audrey, I'm talking to you through the television now. You look great, by the way, I have to say.

MS. FLACK: Oh, [inaudible]. I put my glamour glasses on.

MR. MORGAN: I think that the Smithsonian should probably have this wonderful tape as well. Maybe it'll want it. Anyway, let's go back to where we left off in terms of you moving through Abstract Expressionism. And there is this period where you are moving into something else. Can you talk about - ? And I'm not sure it was so sharp where it was suddenly one thing and suddenly another. My sense is that having looked at your work, that there was a kind of transition period. I'm talking about the late fifties, early sixties.

MS. FLACK: Yes. And I have to move my banjo out of the sun. So just stay right there.

MR. MORGAN: Okay.

MS. FLACK: My banjo can't get in the sun. Banjo wood is sensitive, it contracts or expands and affects the tuning pegs.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. Don't worry about that.

MS. FLACK: So you're asking me about Abstract Expressionism and transitional work -

MR. MORGAN: Well, I'm talking about late fifties, early sixties. I mean I've seen some of these paintings, and I remember, for example, you were doing some stills on your kitchen table. I mean in that early period.

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes. Well, that's already Photorealist. You're talking about Abstract Expressionism to realism?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. That's right.

MS. FLACK: Well, that's - 1951 I'm at Yale [Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut].

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: Josef Albers had given me a scholarship because I'm a wild, crazy rebel.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: And I had buckets of paint.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: And I was mixing buckets of paint, and I had this technique. I was going to be wilder than Pollock.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: And I had this technique where I'd get a whole lot of paint on a brush, and I would fling it across the room, and it would splat on the canvas. Because I had all kinds of drip techniques, too. You know you turn the canvas and let the paint drip in different directions. Slinging the paint was like shooting the canvas. Once, my brush went right through the canvas. The brush left my hand along with the paint, and that was an accident. I still have a hole in the painting.

MR. MORGAN: I've seen that hole.

MS. FLACK: You've seen it?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: So that was a pretty big -

MR. MORGAN: It sounds like the nail of Braque.

MS. FLACK: The nail of Braque?

MR. MORGAN: Well, you know, Violin & Palette [1909]; he painted the nail, a trompe l'oeil. Anyway, go ahead.

MS. FLACK: But I had the trompe l'oeil idea, from the time I was very young, I think it's some very innate human inborn desire to reproduce the self. And I don't mean just physically reproduce the self in terms of having babies. I mean reproducing the self in an image. I think it's just primitive, and I think primitive peoples always did it. And as a kid, I did it. And there's something magical in my looking at you, you know. I love your face.

MR. MORGAN: Thank you.

MS. FLACK: I always have. And actually while you were talking, I'm thinking, now how would I sculpt him? [Inaudible.] And to take that -

MR. MORGAN: That's because you're seeing the sculptures in the background.

MS. FLACK: No. I think you have a very sculptural face. You have a great face.

MR. MORGAN: I like that. Thank you.

MS. FLACK: So the brain - my eyes are taking in your physiognomy. My eyes are also seeing the light coming from the window and the dark there. And it goes here, and it goes down, registers through my hand. And then I have to transfer this three-dimensional person - the artist does - onto a two-dimensional surface. And that takes a lot of stuff going on in the brain, you know, to do this. And if I can do this and get it to look like I wanted Old Granddad to look like Old Granddad, you know, and Mrs. Miniver and whatever, it's magic. It's almost like you're a god creating life.

MR. MORGAN: Mmmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: So - You know I just had a thought. I'm thinking about Giotto [di Bondone]. When I drew Old Granddad, my work was more realistic than Giotto's. Now why is that? He was trying to be a realist. Was it because he was unable

MR. MORGAN: Well, you know, you were in a tradition that Giotti did not have access to. And it's often challenging and daunting, in fact, to try and arbitrarily put oneself in the position of [Cenni di Pepo] Cimabue or Giotto or Duccio [di Buoninsegna] and try and understand what their influences were and what the limitations were as they perceived their works.

MS. FLACK: That's very interesting because before that - I mean we're getting off track - but before that you had Greek and Roman sculpture that was so highly skilled and so sophisticated. And then centuries later you get Giotto and Duccio, and their work looks primitive in comparison.

MR. MORGAN: Well, you know, I think that we can say that, for example, we had Edward Hopper, and we had Jackson Pollock.

MS. FLACK: Oh, two different things and closer in time.

MR. MORGAN: But the point is this: That whereas I think in early European - well, Western history let's say - that there's a time span, there's a concept of duration, which retrospectively is very different than what we had in the 20th century and certainly what we have today. And that is now we have overlays and compressions. Whereas in those days it was about duration in relation to a period of time. We don't think in terms of periods of time now.

MS. FLACK: Well, also that was sculpture, not painting. When I think of Greek and Roman drawings, mosaics, they're more primitive. So it's amazing how advanced they could be in sculpture.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: And then - You only really start getting advanced painting it in the Renaissance and pre-Renaissance.

MR. MORGAN: True.True. Well, Masaccio [Tommaso Casser].

MS. FLACK: Giotto and his associates were striving towards realism.

MR. MORGAN: But they also had this great concept of architecture and formality.

MS. FLACK: Yes. They were also working to try to get perspective and spatial concepts in the background where figures were reduced in scale as they receded in the distance. When I was at Yale studying with Albers, the desire to draw like a master never left, right? It almost got beaten out of me at Music and Art High School when I was doing my Picassos. At Cooper Union I became a wild Abstract Expressionist. I went home with my little sketchbook, and I copied every Old Master: Tintoretto [Jacopo Comin], El Greco [Domenikos Theotocopoulos].

MR. MORGAN: This is at Yale now.

MS. FLACK: This is at - starting high school.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, okay.

MS. FLACK: It intensified when I was at Yale. Now, Albers did not believe in drawing from the model. So there was no model.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, really!

MS. FLACK: No.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, this is the first time I've heard that.

MS. FLACK: No model.

MR. MORGAN: Because he's certainly an advocate of drawing.

MS. FLACK: No model.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Interesting.

MS. FLACK: Albers got very excited because I drew a grid. But it was never meant to remain a series of squares. I had this theory which went back to Juan Gris and Cubism, which goes back to Cubism. What I wanted to do was place paint in front and in back, so that you could read its exact position in space. It was a five-and-a-half inch depth. It was the Cubist depth. Not Abstract Expressionist. I was dealing with the Cubists. What Pollock does when he's so incredible is he punches holes in it, and he goes out into the universe.

MR. MORGAN: That's right.

MS. FLACK: He has no doubts. He's out in outer space, which is why he's more of a shaman. I mean he almost sacrifices his life to break free. He's not even a painter anymore. Pollock is not a painter.

MR. MORGAN: What a great statement.

MS. FLACK: Not a painter. He's a shaman who is now floating in outer space. So he punctures the picture plane.

MR. MORGAN: That's interesting. I've often talked about Yves Klein in the ways that you're talking about Pollock.

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: I'd like to talk to you about him with that blue.

MR. MORGAN: Another time. But I'm interested in this transition period.

MS. FLACK: So anyhow, Albers came to my studio and saw this grid, and he got very excited because he thought I was going to paint a square. Because, see, as great as Albers was, he was a teacher who wanted to clone and control his students.

MR. MORGAN: Well, he seemed to create quite a diversity of students.

MS. FLACK: But you had to fight with him to maintain your individuality.

MR. MORGAN: You know these are what I was citing earlier when I said early sixties. Because I remember these distinctly. We saw a couple of these. I believe it was the one called Matzo Meal [1962].

MS. FLACK: [Inaudible]. The Jewish Museum just bought that.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, they did? Oh, congratulations! I'm delighted. Okay.

MS. FLACK: I painted the Matzo Meal still life long before Larry Rivers did the History of Matzo.

MR. MORGAN: I'm sure. Okay. So this is 1960 - both of these are 1962. And then I'm looking -

Well, here it is. This is what I'm referring to in terms of these images of still lifes, which have this Pop connection. I think these are so important in terms of the history of Pop really. These are you know - I should get images of these, Audrey, really, because I want to include these in my lectures on Pop.

MS. FLACK: Do you know who else did a Pop image? [Philip] Pearlstein did Superman [1952].

MR. MORGAN: That's true. That was around '62, wasn't it?

MS. FLACK: I don't know.

MR. MORGAN: Sixty-one maybe. But, you know, he and [Andy] Warhol were living together - not living together.

MS. FLACK: Yes, they were at school.

MR. MORGAN: They were sharing a studio. Yes, sharing a studio together, on Broadway.

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

MR. MORGAN: When they first came from Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania], they shared a studio.

MS. FLACK: But until I got to that, I was secretly drawing. I was a secret realist or whatever.

MR. MORGAN: But, Audrey, I think that probably your life at the time has something to do with this. For example, I'm looking at a work called Allegory of War (after Rubens) [1955]. Okay? This is '55. And then another - here it is right here. Let's see if I can get this thing here. This is Allegory of War. And then looking at Cézanne-influenced work, which is called Still Life with Apples and Teapot, also from 1955. They're kind of different from one another. You can make an argument in terms of the color. But in terms of subject matter and composition, they're quite different. And then it kind of skips up to '62. What happened in that period, in the late fifties up until shall we say '62?

MS. FLACK: In my life?

MR. MORGAN: Well, if it's relevant to your art, yes. It probably is.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: As I recall our conversation.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: If you feel comfortable talking about it.

MS. FLACK: Well, and you're missing a lot of paintings because it's interesting. I gave a whole section of paintings that I did then to the Miami University Art Museum in Oxford, Ohio.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: I did it because there was an art historian that I liked there.

MR. MORGAN: So you're saying this is before the show in New Mexico.

MS. FLACK: Oh, I gave those works away years ago.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. Because I was wondering -

MS. FLACK: Plus all of the major works from then.

MR. MORGAN: I understand. But, you know, there wasn't a lot of work from the period that I'm talking about.

MS. FLACK: In that show. Because it's all in that museum.

MR. MORGAN: That's okay. That answers the question.

Was there a catalog for that?

MS. FLACK: Somewhere, and I don't have it. I should get it. But there were a lot of self-portraits. And 1959 my daughter was born autistic. So by 1960, or shortly after, I knew something was wrong. And I kept telling doctors that something's wrong. And they kept telling me I was imaging it. And, you know, have a drink of wine. Calm down. I'm saying, "You know, there's something wrong here." Anyhow, without going into that, I used to have to paint holding her. I think there's one - no, I don't know if that painting's in the show. And I -

MR. MORGAN: I know that painting, Audrey.

MS. FLACK: You know that one.

MR. MORGAN: I know that.

MS. FLACK: And then there's the one that I think is the penultimate painting of what autism looks like, and it was a portrait of her when she was five.

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

MS. FLACK: But my life was a nightmare. I mean it kills, it really kills. It has killed many friends of mine. I did a whole lot of self-portraits, probably trying to understand what was happening to me, what was happening to my daughter, what was happening to my marriage, to my other daughter who was born two years later. And I was trying to sell - I sold a lot of still lifes and drawings. So it was between the still lifes and watercolors that I was paying the rent and surviving. So it was very interesting. But by '63 Melissa's four, Hannah is - Hannah was born in '61, so she's two. I have a two-year-old and a four-year-old. I have a crazy husband, and I have no money and no help. Hannah's got asthma. I was always frightened because she would be wheezing and gasping and I'd be up with her all night, sometimes for three days. And then Melissa didn't sleep at all. It was beyond what you can imagine. And [John F.] Kennedy gets assassinated. And I had to paint Kennedy [Kennedy Motorcade, 1964] - I'm kind of amazed that I was able to do such good painting at that time in my life.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: I think all the energy, all my sanity, all my pain, all my thought went there to keep me alive and human and sane; the thing that kept me sane was the art.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: But then you know, Robert, I did death paintings, they were all death, and some of the self portraits, are incredibly morose. One is so fractured there are three of me. And it was like being schizophrenic because I had this life as an artist, and I'm exhibiting, trying to sell to pay the rent. I'm married to this crazy guy who's - ah! And I'm dealing with the medical establishment who at that time was blaming mothers for their autistic kids. Yet I'm at Fischbach [New York, New York] having a show. Remember the Fischbach Gallery?

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: The curator selected my Kennedy painting and several others to be in that show. I remember getting a babysitter for the opening. I got myself out the door and arrived at the gallery late. It was pouring. I was drenched. It was a storefront with glass doors, fronting on Madison Avenue. Marilyn Fischbach was very sexy. She had black eyelashes and blue eyes. She wore a Chanel suit and high heels. When I entered the gallery, I felt like I was in another world. There were the artists, I knew. My painting looked strong, and it got a lot of attention. Nobody knew this other side. Then, if you were a woman with children, you were not taken seriously. And so I came home to the nightmare again and painted Davey Moore who died after a championship fight.

MR. MORGAN: Sure, the boxer.

MS. FLACK: I did the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse [1962].

MR. MORGAN: Yes. That was in your show out at New Mexico.

MS. FLACK: It all changes when I marry Bob.

MR. MORGAN: Which was when?

MS. FLACK: I wish he was here. I'm so bad with dates.

MR. MORGAN: Sixties?

MS. FLACK: Sixty-nine, '70?

MR. MORGAN: Oh, okay.

MS. FLACK: Then I paint David [1971]. David is Bob, the hero who slays Goliath.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, okay. Yes.

MS. FLACK: Bob's coming into my life really saved us all, saved us all. Hannah's asthma got better. He would sit up with us all night long. And he invented an asthma symphony. He would make sounds and make this poor eight-year-old who couldn't breathe laugh. It was so sweet.

MR. MORGAN: The tape has ended, it says.

MS. FLACK: Oh.

MR. MORGAN: Okay?

MS. FLACK: Finished. Let's put it away.

MR. MORGAN: But there is some good stuff there. Okay, go ahead.

MS. FLACK: We don't want to - let's shut the camera off. Okay. Okay. Anyhow, where are we?

MR. MORGAN: Okay. You were talking about -

MS. FLACK: Well, we were getting to the art.

MR. MORGAN: Well, you were talking about, you know, the late sixties when you married Bob and how that changes -

MS. FLACK: Well the significant painting of the early 60s was that Kennedy.

MR. MORGAN: That was the same year -

MS. FLACK: Sixty-three.

MR. MORGAN: The same year as the assassination.

MS. FLACK: I never worked from life again.

MR. MORGAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That was from a photograph, right?

MS. FLACK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That did it. Never worked from life again.

MR. MORGAN: So that's a very important demarcation in terms of the pre-realist stuff that you were doing and what you were embarking on in terms of Photorealism.

MS. FLACK: After that, straight photorealism.

MR. MORGAN: Now, I remember these Mexican paintings that you were doing in the sixties, late sixties.

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

MR. MORGAN: Those are also taken from newspapers or magazines?

MS. FLACK: No, no, no. Those are my shots.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, they were your photos.

MS. FLACK: It was towards the end of my marriage, I was trying to make the marriage work. I sold a painting. Got a few dollars and we went to Mexico, my ex-husband and myself.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: I took my camera and shot all of those things. They were all black and white. And I came home, and I painted them.

MR. MORGAN: But the color is really rich. It's terrific. It's hard to believe they were taken in black and white.

MS. FLACK: Actually I should give Charles Duncan the black-and-white shots that I worked from - because I have them - for the Archives.

MR. MORGAN: That's a good idea. It's a good idea. Somehow, you know, formally I think that adds terrific strength to the work, the fact that you're kind of inventing or reinventing the color in relation to the black-and-white tone.

MS. FLACK: You know what I used to do as a kid? I used to tint photographs.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, really!

MS. FLACK: Did you know about that?

MR. MORGAN: I didn't, no.

MS. FLACK: There were little kits that you could get.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: Photographs were only in black and white. You got this kit. And you could stain a photograph.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: Which is what I did.

MR. MORGAN: Wonderful.

MS. FLACK: For the family. I mean I was a photograph painter.

MR. MORGAN: So before that you were doing the Marilyn Monroes and the Carroll Bakers and so forth -

MS. FLACK: Which is all the Pop stuff.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, that's right. It is. But it's also -

MS. FLACK: I think I did Marilyn Monroe before Andy Warhol.

MR. MORGAN: Probably not because this is '64, and his was done in '62, if I'm not mistaken. But certainly she was the icon of the time. When she died in '62. That famous one at the Museum of Modern Art was a kind of homage to her, the gold one.

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

MR. MORGAN: But I'm fairly sure that I just saw the date as '64. Now let me just double check to be certain. Yes, Marilyn Monroe was '64, and Carroll Baker the same year. But those are interesting in terms of the time period. And I think that your relationship to Pop is something that isn't discussed enough in terms of your work. I mean that was a very real passage in terms of your experience as an artist and the work you did at that time.

MS. FLACK: But I didn't have the Pop philosophy.

MR. MORGAN: No, you didn't.

MS. FLACK: At all.

MR. MORGAN: No. I can see it in the work. Well, in that sense you're like George Segal, in that one sense,

although not completely. George, I think, had a kind of romantic existentialism that I really don't associate with your work. Even these self-portraits, I would not refer to them as existential. But Segal definitely had that. That was part of it. And that's one of the things I admire about his work actually, was putting Pop and existentialism together. Who could do that other than George? But when I look at your work, you know, I see a real interest in - those portraits of Marilyn and Carroll Baker - a real interest in a woman's image. And I don't think that they're about titillation. I think they're a really sincere investigation in terms of what is this media image and what is the woman behind this media image?

MS. FLACK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Absolutely.

MR. MORGAN: You feel that. Okay.

MS. FLACK: Absolutely. There's no doubt.

MR. MORGAN: Alright. So those were also photographs, you were working from those?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: And were they black and white or color?

MS. FLACK: By that time I don't know. I mean by Kennedy it was color photographs.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: So if it's after '63, I'm probably using color. After that, by the way, Farb Family Portrait [1969-70] is from a color slide.

MR. MORGAN: Oriole Farb, yes. Oriole and Peter Farb.

MS. FLACK: Yes, you knew them?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, I did. We talked about this.

FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Well, it was my ex-wife's contact. I think I mentioned her.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: At the time she was Janice Mason. Then she became Janice Gabrielle. And then she became Rebecca Gabrielle. So she's gone through a number of name changes, although she's - Well, we were married about eight years. And then she and her husband were married, and they had two boys. And now the boys are grown up. I think one of them is maybe married, and another's working in a foreign country.

MS. FLACK: Now you were married how many times?

MR. MORGAN: Well, that's not for this tape, okay?

MS. FLACK: Alright. Anyhow, yes. Farb Family Portrait is the first work that was ever done from a slide. Of anyone, I think I was the first photorealist that would project the slide.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. I know you mentioned that, and you were working at night, and you were very excited about this.

MS. FLACK: Yes, very excited. I had sketched the whole painting. This was a commission. It was going to pay my rent. It was at that time that I was still married to my first husband.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: And I had a very good eye, a very sharp eye that could visually measure things.

MR. MORGAN: This is evident.

MS. FLACK: I took photographs of the family. I had also taken slides of them, but I only worked from photographs. I sketched the entire set up in charcoal, the whole thing, all the figures, eyes, noses, and mouths. And then I thought I'm only going to cover it up with paint. And there is really no line in nature; we're all form. And then I - I called a friend. It was late, ten o'clock. I said, "Could you please lend me your projector?" And the friend came over, with his projector, and I began to paint.

MR. MORGAN: And the year again was '68 by this time?

MS. FLACK: I don't remember when I did it. I don't remember - '69, '68? I projected my slide over the charcoal sketch and saw that I had been pretty accurate.

MR. MORGAN: I see. Okay.

MS. FLACK: That's in the Rose Art Museum [Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts].

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Well, we're concerned about this de-acquisition thing that's going on.

MS. FLACK: Yes, yes.

MR. MORGAN: Not a good decision, in my opinion. Anyway.

MS. FLACK: In that painting, Oriole looks like a Georges de La Tour.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: You know this oval face. And all these men, her husband and her two sons. And here is this kind of serene woman really balancing all of the others.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: So I think even then I was really interested in a woman - in the way the woman looked and the way the woman felt.

MR. MORGAN: But this is more personal.

MS. FLACK: Yes. I was never a raving feminist. I was not going to paint rape scenes or show a woman victimized.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, you painted the Rape of the Sabine Women.

MS. FLACK: Well, yes. Well, I did paint that. You mean in the Four Horsemen?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: That was different. It was men that were being trampled.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: That was different.

MR. MORGAN: I agree with you. In other words, you were doing that, if I can put it, for the sake of painting rather than to make a case.

MS. FLACK: Well, I had very strong - you know I was a strong feminist. I had been a feminist long before I realized it.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, there's no contradiction. I mean, you know, your work has always convinced me you're a feminist.

MS. FLACK: But I wasn't -

MR. MORGAN: But you're not imposing this kind of - how to put it? - this kind of politics. I mean there's an implicit politics. But that's different than imposing politics. You know it's - I mean your work, you know, I'm looking at Catherine [2000] in front of me right here, and, you know, this is an invitation to lighten up, so to speak. Using its form to strive, its demeanor, its elegance. You know it's a kind of wake-up call, you know, from a kind of neoclassic point of view.

MS. FLACK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, also to look at the woman. I mean I'm very specific about the kind of woman, what the image is of the woman. It's interesting when I think about it. I really was in my way for many years a victim first of the medical establishment, then my ex-husband. You know as a woman I couldn't get good hours teaching at Pratt [Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York] and NYU [New York University, New York, New York]. I had to teach an early morning class at NYU, and then run to Pratt in the afternoon, and then run back to NYU. Women were getting paid less. I'm not criticizing people who use that as a means for their art, but my feminism took a different turn.

MR. MORGAN: Well, again, I think that that experience is what matters in terms of this period, this sculptural period of yours, which is, you know, there's still - I mean I wrote one essay on this. You know I've reread that essay, and I think it could be better, by the way. But I mean - how to put it? [Constantin] Brancusi's bird or fish would not be the same if it was done with a pneumatic tool.

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

MR. MORGAN: Okay? That what gives those forms spirit, to use this Chinese term from Confucius, is that he rests them symmetrically, perfectly in relation to his intensity and focus and concentration. And I think that it's kind of like what you're talking about. I mean this experience is not lost in terms of your art. It's sublimated, getting back to that idea. In other words, you know, the conflict that you felt, the anger that you felt, the frustration you felt. It seems to me largely what makes you an artist, in addition to your indigenous talent and profound intelligence and feeling, is that you can somehow take those conflicts and channel them in a way that is going to uplift you. And by uplifting you, it's going to project to the viewer. There's going to be this transmission.

MS. FLACK: I hope so.

MR. MORGAN: Well, yes.

MS. FLACK: That's my intent.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes. I know that.

MS. FLACK: That's my intent.

MR. MORGAN: I know that, I know that. But, Audrey, also you have to understand that you're very much on your own in the history of art. But you always have been.

MS. FLACK: Always have been. Look, here's Medea [1990], right? Medea! Everybody hates Medea, a child murderer! Murderer! There's nobody worse. Even Medusa [1991] even she's not worse. Medea! What kind of woman kills her own children? Well, I have a file on Medea and on autistic murders. Mothers and fathers, by the way, murdering their autistic children. And I want to do, actually - You know I've got to live a long time. I want to do a documentary on these people who are in jail.

MR. MORGAN: You mentioned it the last time we spoke.

MS. FLACK: Okay.

MR. MORGAN: But that's interesting.

MS. FLACK: I've been asked by friends who are analysts who said, "Well, didn't you wish Melissa was dead?" And I said, "You know I never did." Never! I wished I was dead because I couldn't stand the pain. But I never wished my child dead. Now did I ever talk to you about Medea?

MR. MORGAN: Go ahead.

MS. FLACK: Medea - I researched the myth, right? And there she is pointing to her statue of Medea. She's looking pained. She's anguished. And I find out that Medea did NOT kill her children. Surprised?

MR. MORGAN: Go ahead.

MS. FLACK: She did not kill her children. I think in my sculpture, I am attempting to redeem all of these women and I probably was redeeming myself and the other women that were blamed. Medea was a powerful sorceress.

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

MS. FLACK: And she saw Jason come sailing in. He's blond, you know. And this is also a very politically - loaded figure - because Jason is a blond, Greek, and upper-class. She's considered lower class - even though she's the daughter of the king, she's kind of primitive, from a primitive area. However, she can stop the skies from spinning. She can stop the ocean. And she's powerful. And she's dark. So she must have had black hair. So you're getting a blond against a dark. Medea takes one look at him and falls in love. He's with his Argonauts and the boat is in trouble. It's about to crash and all will be drowned. And she saves Jason and his soldiers. I'm not going to go into the details of the whole story.

MR. MORGAN: This is the Scylla and Charybdis?

MS. FLACK: No, this would be where he's looking for the Golden Fleece.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, but he runs into that -

MS. FLACK: Oh, that's later.

MR. MORGAN: That's later. I see.

MS. FLACK: The Golden Fleece is a solid piece of gold. He is interested in money, power.

MR. MORGAN: The old story.

MS. FLACK: The old story. She's so smitten - She does incredible things - it's a very long story. She helps him plow the fields with dragon's teeth to get to the Golden Fleece. And she helps him get the Golden Fleece which belongs to her father. So she goes against her own father, kills her own brother in order to help him. He promises that he will marry her.

MR. MORGAN: Why'd he kill her brother - she kills her brother?

MS. FLACK: Her brother was chasing her. See, she's going away with Jason and the Golden Fleece, and they're escaping. The brother is chasing her. She finds a way to destroy him. She's a sorceress and uses her magic to save Jason. And she feels bad about many of her deeds. But she is so smitten with this man. And he promises he will marry her, and he will stay with her. Now she goes with him, and I think they go back to Corinth. You know have to reread the story. And she has quite a few children with him.

MR. MORGAN: With him.

MS. FLACK: And is faithful to him. And he decides that she's not good enough, and that he wants to marry the daughter of King Creon. And he just goes over, and he says, "Bye! You're out of here. I want you out of here tomorrow." Her soliloquy that Ovid writes in Metamorphosis is heart-wrenching. She pleads with him, she begs him. She said, "You promised before the Gods!" He doesn't care. He dismisses her. Now he's going upscale, right? He's interested in money and power. He owns the Golden Fleece and has a chance to become king. She says, "Give me one more day. I've got to get things ready." Don't cast me out yet." And he gives her one more day. She spins a magnificent dress of gold, and in it she puts poison. She tells her two little boys, "This is for the royal wedding. Take this to the king and the princess, and say it is a gift from me, and wish them happiness." Then she tells her children: Then immediately go hide in the temple. She thinks they will be safe. But she knows she has to clear town. So the kids bring the dress to the princess, who tries it on, and immediately gets burnt. Now maybe she gets a skin rash. I don't know. [Laughs.] But the story is the princess tries on the dress and is set on fire. And King Creon - [Side conversation with Bob.]

MR. MORGAN: Yes, you need little stickers or something.

MS. FLACK: You want a little piece of that danish?

MR. MORGAN: No, go ahead.

MS. FLACK: Alright. So now this princess is set fire, right? And the king is so distraught he jumps on his daughter, to try to put the fire out, and he gets burned to death.

MR. MORGAN: On his daughter?

MS. FLACK: Yes. He tries to put the fire out.

MR. MORGAN: I see.

MS. FLACK: By laying on his daughter. And he gets set on fire.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: So now all the courtiers and the people of Corinth are watching in horror. They've lost their king, they've lost their princess. Jason's standing there basically impotent. And this is the story: The little boys run away to Athena's temple.

MR. MORGAN: Corinth, yes.

[END OF DISC 3.]

MS. FLACK: Medea's two little boys are hiding in Athena's temple. And the Corinthians are so enraged that they run after the boys and stone them to death. Medea runs away. Medea marries several times after that and winds

up marrying the king of China and having other children. She does not die. Jason is bereft. He's a broken man. He wanders the earth the rest of his life. But Corinth suffers because people don't want to go to a city that kills children. That's a very cruel thing to do. Corinthians become known as child-killers. Their trade fails. Tourism fails. People stop going to Corinth. They ask Euripides to write a play that makes Medea the culprit.

MR. MORGAN: Interesting.

MS. FLACK: And we believe that play.

MR. MORGAN: Well, it's a great play.

MS. FLACK: It's a great play.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: But I never believed she would kill her children.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. But the point is that just bringing back the myth in terms of the sculpture is - You know I think that history's reevaluation more than revision maybe. And as we get new information from new sources in relation to old ideas and old facts, or what are presumably facts, that things change, things evolve over time. Maybe, you know, your position on Medea will become the new position on Medea.

MS. FLACK: I think my position on Medusa has become the new position. Because I've written about Medusa in terms of [Sigmund] Freud and, you know, the writhing penises.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: That is because she was raped, she was an innocent victim. But I want to ask you a question, Robert. I was working on a piece in East Hampton [New York] called Receiver of the Sun [1990]. I made a new one of an old piece, and it's of an American Indian. And she's standing there, and she's like this [takes the pose]. And I'm attaching Indian beads. I used to make Indian beads as a kid.

MR. MORGAN: What is the original you're referring to?

MS. FLACK: It's a Forton sculpture.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Is it well known?

MS. FLACK: It's in one of my books.

MR. MORGAN: Okay.

MS. FLACK: It's an early piece -

MR. MORGAN: But your sculpture is based on -

MS. FLACK: No, this was based on nothing.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, okay.

MS. FLACK: And I'm now I'm painting body designs and tattoos on it. And I realize it looks modern. And all of a sudden I look at my other sculpture like Recording Angel [2006]. It was in the studio in East Hampton, which I hope you come to.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Of course. Yes.

MS. FLACK: And I thought, my sculpture is American but has European overtones. I want my work to be universal.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes, yes. But in terms of the influence, yes. Yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: And I want to ask you about that. Maybe it's not right for the Archives.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I, you know -

MS. FLACK: Well, Robert Graham, whom I love, he's almost strictly American.

MR. MORGAN: I understand what you mean by that.

MS. FLACK: You know what I'm saying?

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: Here's this American Indian, but there's something European about it.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: Now is it because my parents were immigrants?

MR. MORGAN: I wouldn't make that connection. I don't think -

MS. FLACK: I studied art history. I love the Renaissance, I love Mannerism.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I think that's more the issue.

MS. FLACK: Well, what happened to the other Americans, don't they feel the same way?

MR. MORGAN: Well, Audrey, everyone's different. I mean you feel it from the inside, not from the outside. And therefore, again, you know, what you feel -

MS. FLACK: I love [Andrea] Mantegna, I love Carlo Crivelli, Rubens, Tinoretto, Bernini.

MR. MORGAN: There you go. There you go. I mean this is something you cannot deny. And as I was trying to argue in terms of, you know, the reason Brancusi's fish and bird are Brancusi's fish and bird is, you know, because the commitment is ineffable in a way. I mean it's just - it's 110 percent. Okay? And what can you say about that? I mean there are a lot of people that are manufacturing forms today that don't get their hands dirty, so to speak. And I'm not making a moral or an aesthetic argument against that. I mean Tony Smith, I think, was a great sculptor in his own way. But on the other hand, you see it differently. And I think that you have to accept the fact that this is how you see it.

MS. FLACK: I know. You like a work of art because it speaks to you.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I think it's more specific than that. Because I can see, you know, the consistency in terms of these works. And, you know, I think asking whether they're more European or not is almost not the issue. The fact is that what this kind of form is about is something that you love.

MS. FLACK: Yes, I love it. I love the form, the color, the style, the mastery.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. That's the point. I mean I think that - First of all, an American Indian made in Europe would be quite unusual, at least with this kind of gesture. But I'll be plain. You have a certain breadth that you're willing to explore that a lot of people won't touch. And I think that this puts you in a somewhat isolated position.

MS. FLACK: Yes, and -

MR. MORGAN: And I think that sometimes it's very frustrating to be in that isolated position.

MS. FLACK: Stop it for one minute because I want to get some tea. Can we stop it?

MR. MORGAN: We can. It's stopped.

MS. FLACK: I have some [inaudible]. But I also think there's a way that Bob can - Bobby! Oh, well. There is some way to plug that in. You know if they'd like to have this, I'll give them the tape. [She speaks to Bobby out of earshot.]

[SIDE CONVERSATION.]

MR. MORGAN: Okay? Because I'd like to really get into some specific paintings in terms of the discussion. I think this is the kind of thing that will be important.

[SIDE CONVERSATION.]

MR. MORGAN: Okay, anyway, we're on. So let's continue. Alright. So - well, it's interesting we've discussed your sculpture because these are very current concerns. And I think that not only are they current, but they're concerns that you've dealt with in your work for some time.

MS. FLACK: Robert, can I - what about that review I showed you of, we think, Vivien Raynor? Why was the reaction so violent to my work?

MR. MORGAN: I can't answer that question. But let me put it this way. I remember a number of years ago teaching a course on contemporary literature and contemporary American art, where I was comparing certain painters with certain writers. And one of the writers -

MS. FLACK: You might want this book, too.

MR. MORGAN: Audrey, let me just finish this point, and then we can move ahead.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: One of the writers, who was Anaïs Nin, who wrote a series of journals. And sometimes they're quite - they're quite controversial because she had multiple affairs going on, including an incestuous affair with her father.

MS. FLACK: Oh, really!

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Anyway, there was a review such as I have never read in the New Yorker by some writer living on Long Island [New York], an 18-page book review, that just went on and on with the greatest vitriol and hatred. I mean I'm thoroughly convinced that she had never met the writer, you know. But she was absolutely offended by this writing of Anaïs Nin. And I personally think, Anaïs Nin is one of the great women writers of the 20th century. I think that her concept of the journal, you know, is so intimate and so carefully constructed to communicate to the reader. And she was willing to explore aspects of her life that frankly a lot of women, a lot of people would not dare explore. She really saw herself as an artist in that she was outside of, shall we say, a normative structure of expectations in terms of how one's supposed to live one's life.

Now, I thought to myself, "You know, why is this reviewer so upset?" Well, I think that if you do something that doesn't conform, you're going to threaten people who identify with the values you're attacking. And knowing what I know about your work or how I see your work, I think that there are probably issues that you touched on which make it very difficult for her to accept your position because you're threatening her. It's almost like she's taking it personally. I mean she's couching it in language that seems like it's very, you know, glitzy and all that kind of thing. But, you know, the bottom line is that you were reaching her in a way that she feels uncomfortable. This is my feeling.

MS. FLACK: Thanks - you are right. Well, if you don't mind, I'm going to read this review for the Archives.

MR. MORGAN: Sure. Of course.

MS. FLACK: I want to read this.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. I probably should have said what I said after you read it.

MS. FLACK: No, it's okay.

MR. MORGAN: We'll reverse it.

MS. FLACK: This is from the New York Times Review ["Art: David Levine's Bouguet of Noses", Friday, April 15 [sic] [14], 1978. And I think it's one of the worst reviews I've ever gotten. It was amazing - it's about a painting that I felt passionately about. It's about my World War II (Vanitas) [1976-77] painting. "Audrey Flack, Meisel Gallery [New York, New York] -" Blah blah blah "Grossness is also a feature - the feature - of Audrey Flack's work, and it has earned her a lot of critical admiration. Formerly a realist painter who made use of photographs, she became a photorealist during the sixties with emphasis on media events and feminist imagery. The three major works in this show are each eight feet square and consist of photomontage compositions - "I hate that word, photomontage, which it wasn't photomontage" - executed by airbrush in hideous colors. A cross between the billboard smeariness after James Rosenquist and the thrift shop eccentricity of a Texan Donald Roller Wilson, the canvases are packed with objects: skulls, lipsticks, jewelry, watches, hourglasses, and so forth, all cornily redolent of symbolic meaning. The most horrendous of them is World War II, in which a glistening array of giant petit-fours on a silver dish, pearls, a rose, a butterfly, a cup and saucer are stacked in front of a grotesquely retouched blow-up of Buchenwald inmates behind barbed wire." And by the way, it's not a photograph, a blow-up. I painted every single drop of that! "One critic has called Audrey Flack an ardent humanist. Another has seen has work as a nondestructive enlargement that celebrates the pleasures of survival by the integrity of objects. This viewer can only recoil from the vulgarity of her literal-mindedness." I hate that review! And it's funny, because it was laying here when you came. So I am glad we spoke of that. So obviously it touched something, right?

MR. MORGAN: Right. I will stand by what I said about that. But my advice is to put it behind you.

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes, it's behind me. I'd just smack her in the face if I met her.

[They laugh.]

MR. MORGAN: It's not necessary to carry the load, okay? At this point in your career. You know you can relax and read the [inaudible] other critics. Okay. Listen, I'm going to - I want you to talk about three paintings. When I first became aware of your work - Oh, by the way, the Farb Family was '69-'70. When I first became aware of your work, you had painted the Macarena [Macarena of Miracles]," [1971]. I heard you give a lecture, and you spoke very eloquently about this painting and the meaning of this and the excess which at that time was very intriguing to me because I'd heard no one else speak about excess as a source in painting. And you did several versions of it. I mean it is a sculpture. And later it's interesting that you started doing sculpture and often celebrating that excess. Can you speak a little bit about the meaning of excess? I've often maintained that what distinguishes our time from previous periods in the history of art are two things: speed and excess.

MS. FLACK: Interesting.

MR. MORGAN: Things come to us faster than ever before. So much so that we, even if we have the power of judgment, we rarely have the effectiveness of judgment because we're already on to the next thing. And therefore clear decision-making is often bypassed. But in terms of excess, it seems as though there's a kind of historical displacement where you're trying to show the condition of our time through historical displacement. In other words, it would seem that Catherine is irrelevant to our time. But if you think of it in these terms, it's perfectly on time.

MS. FLACK: Interesting. And you're talking about my statue of Catherine of Braganza.

MR. MORGAN: That's right. Exactly yes. Or even Macarena.

MS. FLACK: Why do you see that it's relevant to our time?

MR. MORGAN: Well, because of this issue of excess. And I think your paintings are generally interested in these conflicts that are irreconcilable. As a matter of fact, that painting that was just - where you read the review - I mean I know this painting. I've studied it a number of times. And there are contradictory signs in that painting.

MS. FLACK: In World War II, yes.

MR. MORGAN: Of course. And you know they say that in NYU Law School, that the majority of dropouts are those men and women who cannot deal with the contradiction. And that law is still a contradiction. I mean jurisprudence - As we know, rarely is there a situation where it's 100 percent black or 100 percent white. That almost never occurs. We're always dealing with gray elements of one form or another. Now, anyway, not to stretch too far here. But I think this commitment to excess is a very interesting statement in terms of our times because it shows us the possibility of a kind of celebration rather than a pruning out. Because I think that too much information - or too much contradiction within information - often the psychological capability of sorting it will, before it's absorbed, will reject it at least on a conscious level. Maybe even repress it. But I think that to reveal excess to art is in a sense doing a service for the present tense, because this is where we are.

MS. FLACK: Very interesting. You know I just do it. I do it. And thinking about it now, there's no way I'm a minimalist. There's no way.

MR. MORGAN: And also you were doing that painting during a period when minimalism was still very much in -

MS. FLACK: Yes, minimalism was hot.

MR. MORGAN: You were doing that right after the Farb painting, you started doing the Macarena.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Can you just review that a little bit? Because I think that series is such an important period in your work. I mean in a way, the Macarena begins, I think, everything that has happened since. Well, also in a stylistic way. In terms of the issue of excess.

MS. FLACK: I think you're right. I really do. Well, on an emotional level. I didn't realize it then but I was identifying with the Macarena. As for stylistic issues, Spanish sculpture of the 17th century is all about passion and extreme feelings, in other words excess. The artists of the time didn't think Michelangelo was emotional enough. The 17th century marble sculptor Berruguete as well as all the wood carvers like Martinez Montanez and Luisa Roldán intensified expression, added content, color, symbolism, gold, pearls, jewels. Art history considered them lesser and left them out. I think they were great artists.

MR. MORGAN: Okay.

MS. FLACK: It starts with the Macarena, I think. First, at an emotional level - I'm making a painting of Mary, the mother of the Christian God, and I'm identifying with Mary, who's crying for her child. And I'm crying for mine - She was the vehicle for me. I didn't realize it at the time that that's why I was so attracted. Lusia Roldán, a woman, was the sculptor. I think it's a masterpiece, and you know the Getty just bought, a major Lusia Roldán.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, really!

MS. FLACK: Major, life-size, great masterpiece.

MR. MORGAN: No kidding!

MS. FLACK: So I'm so thrilled about that.

The Macarena Esperanza is the patron saint of Seville [Spain].

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: They take her out of church once a year - we went to see her - and they parade her around the streets. Now, she is so loaded, not only with a solid gold crown with spears of light that go out, solid gold, but pearls and rubies and emeralds, frills of lace and velvet and draped satin. She's put on a float that Cecil de Mille couldn't have done better and surrounded by thousands of candles, all of which are burning, and lilies and flowers. And ten men lift her on their shoulders, lift this float, and there's a whole band marching in back of her as she gets paraded around the streets of Seville. Not only that, she's got beads hanging from her neck and arms that swing as she moves very slowly to the music. You could die from the passion of this - what I wanted to capture was not only all of that, but every ounce of love and feeling that the people have towards this statue. They have loved and adorned this statue for centuries. All of their feelings have attached themselves to the statue. It's not one thing; it's millions of feelings. You get a bit of that in The Village when they have the festival of the saint.

MR. MORGAN: I know what you mean, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: San Something.

BOB: San Gennaro?

MR. MORGAN: San Gennaro, yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: San Gennaro, right. They even pin money onto the costume.

MR. MORGAN: Right. That's right. Do they do that in Seville as well?

MS. FLACK: No.

MR. MORGAN: No.

MS. FLACK: Sometimes they pin milagros - you know if you have a broken leg, they pin a leg; If you have trouble with your eyes, they'll put an eye. They are made out of silver and come in all sizes.

MR. MORGAN: That's more of a South American -

MS. FLACK: In Mexico.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: But we're talking about human feelings that get attached to an object, and you, the viewer, feel it. And that's the power.

I rarely wear skirts, but if I do, I look much better in a skirt that's pleated than in a straight skirt simply because I think a straight skirt shows my belly. But anyhow, I love that detail. I love seeing all the folds and drapery. And if you can get enough of that, it can become one. There's a solid idea around which all of this excess revolves.

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

MS. FLACK: That's all. It's not a confusion of ideas. There's one very powerful idea.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I wasn't trying to imply there was a confusion; I said conflict. *

MS. FLACK: Oh, conflict and contrast is consistently presented in World War II, and that was intentional. I went to

Lichtman's Bakery [New York, New York] to get the finest petit fours I could find to contrast them with the starving prisoners, for which I got criticized. How could she paint the starving people next to these rich petit fours? How could she do that? Well, I was eventually redeemed. By the way, I went to Lichtman's Bakery on Eighty-sixth Street and spent an inordinate amount of time selecting the pastries. "I want that one," I said, but there's a little dent in the chocolate. So finally I was so fussy, Mr. Lichtman came out and said, "What do you want?" I said, "I'm making a painting about World War II. And I really need perfect petit fours." He rolled up his sleeves and showed me his tattoo.

MR. MORGAN: Amazing!

MS. FLACK: He went in the back and got me the most perfect petit fours that ever came out.

MR. MORGAN: And those are the ones that showed up in the picture.

MS. FLACK: Those are the ones.

MR. MORGAN: It's a marvelous story, really marvelous story.

MS. FLACK: But those petit fours, exposed a tremendous conflict.

MR. MORGAN: Absolutely.

MS. FLACK: I have a demitasse cup, a silver demitasse cup. A burning red candle, cello music, and a beautiful quote from Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: So every review is saying greedy. How unfeeling I am. How could I do this? Right? - the pain of a horrible review is cutting. Ten years - and I'm miserable because I thought that was one of my best paintings. I think it's a great painting. I think that's a masterpiece.

MR. MORGAN: I do, too. You know two nights ago I watched for the third time Louis Malle's Damage [1992], which I think is - I mean talk about Greek mythology, I think it's really a kind of masterpiece. And it got very poor reviews. And I remember running into Andre Gregory, who had starred in a previous film of Louis Malle's called My Dinner with Andre [1981]. I don't know if you saw it or not. And we're sitting at Sarah Greenberg's Gallery [Greenberg and Black, New York, New York], Sarah, the son of - sorry, the daughter of - Clement Greenberg. And Andre was telling me that Louis Malle was so depressed by the reception he got for Damage because he thought that it was his most brilliant film.

MS. FLACK: It gets you, Robert. It really gets you.

MR. MORGAN: And that he was - he was in complete despair as a result of this. But you know something? Anything that is - Well, I can't make a generalization. But the point is that often what is most ahead of its time, or what is most outside its time, eventually comes around.

MS. FLACK: It did. Let me tell you -

MR. MORGAN: I mean, you know, you can't depend on that. But I'm just saying that so often -

MS. FLACK: Yes!

MR. MORGAN: I mean look at this guy Madrardo Rossa. Okay?

MS. FLACK: Madrardo! Oh! I love him.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. Alright. But I mean, you know, what was he during his lifetime? Who understood this stuff? You know? Who understood this? It took years for people to even accept it, let alone to see it as brilliant, you know.

MS. FLACK: Well, they're reevaluating Photorealism now. But let me tell you my about redemption. It was ten years later. Nobody would touch the painting. It didn't sell. The Jewish Museum [New York, New York] didn't want it. Nobody! Then ten years later the Jewish Museum was doing some group show on the subject. And they asked -

MR. MORGAN: The subject?

MS. FLACK: Of the Holocaust, I guess. It was a group show and they asked to borrow a World War II.

MR. MORGAN: Okay.

MS. FLACK: I felt so strongly about this painting. I didn't want to die until it was placed somewhere. So they borrowed the painting. A week after the exhibition opened, I got a call from the museum saying The Tel CHai Hadassah, a Jewish women's group, had voted my painting the one that they felt best, and they wanted to give me an award.

MR. MORGAN: Hmmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: I felt great! Well, they were having a luncheon at the museum and invited me. Well, what am I going to wear? I only wear jeans. But I have nice jeans and not so nice jeans.

MR. MORGAN: Audrey, you can wear a pleated skirt.

[They laugh.]

MS. FLACK: I think I wore white jeans. I got ushered into a room where there were about 350 women. I remember peach-colored tablecloths. These women were elegant. Adolfo suits. Their hair was coiffed in French knots. Their nails were done. But there was something weird in the atmosphere. Nobody paid attention to me. I was ushered to a table where I sat all alone.

MR. MORGAN: You mean after you ate?

MS. FLACK: No, before. I sat there while they were all milling around talking to each other, and nobody paid any attention to me.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: Then everybody sat down, and talked to each other. And they had accents. Somebody from the museum sat down next to me, and I said, "Who are these people?" The reply was that they were all Holocaust survivors. I suddenly understood. Never again would they be in the rags that they had to wear. They were really coiffed and obviously well to do. They had survived. The outside world meant nothing to them. Even me, who they had selected to award. There was a woman who kept getting up and down and up and down. I found out she'd been shot in the leg. Her father said she was a prostitute just to get her imprisoned so they wouldn't kill her. She couldn't sit still - Anyhow, they start the festivities during the lunch. There were speeches. Well, I figured they were going to ask me to talk. Yeta, the woman who had been shot got up, and said, "Well, we have Audrey Flack here. But first, I want to talk to you about Israel Bonds. "Never again!" - Everybody started buying Israel Bonds. I bought one - Then I figured she was going to ask me. No, she said, "We'll talk to you later. We want to talk to you in front of your painting." After the luncheon, 350 women, that means 600, 700 high-heeled shoes clumped down the stairs, and gathered in front of my painting.

MR. MORGAN: This is at the Jewish Museum?

MS. FLACK: Yes. What am I going to say?

MR. MORGAN: Oh, you're talking about that big banquet hall upstairs. Is that what they used?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: I know that place, yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: And I mean they were in the Holocaust. And now I'm scared because of all the reviews that I got with how could you do these petit fours in front of these starving people?

MR. MORGAN: Right, right.

MS. FLACK: And I'm really worried. I'm humbled. I was not in the Holocaust.. They were. So I was about to open my mouth, when Yeta or another woman who raised her hand - And I said, "Yes?" And she said, "I want to talk about those pastries." And I thought, oh, God! Here it comes. She said, "How did you know? How did you know to paint sweet pastries? I was starving. I had a crumb of bread and a glass of water. And the only thing that kept me alive was to imagine eating those pastries." And since then, Robert, anytime I've lectured, anyone who had been in the Holocaust had the same reaction. Apparently I touched on a basic human reaction. Then another woman, said, "Yes! Yes! Me too. How did you know to put the silver demitasse cup and tray?" I didn't, you know. I just needed silver, I needed a blue, and then I needed the red for the candle. She said, "What kept me alive was my silver tray that I polished every Friday night for the Sabbath to put my challah on. And that's what kept me alive. How did you know to put that in the painting?" Well then, another woman said, "What about the candle? You know Sabbath candles are white. Why is this candle red?" So I explained to them that white would

have receded, and the red came forward, and red is symbolic of blood especially when the three drops of wax spilled. They thought about it and talked among themselves. But the woman that got me, asked, "Where are the women? You only painted men." And I suddenly realized that. The only pictures, journalistic pictures that I saw of women were of emaciated, distorted, naked bodies with shriveled breasts that had been thrown into, into ravines and pits. And I would not paint that.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: And I said, "Had I done the painting now, I would portray a woman. I would have many women." But I was totally redeemed. Totally redeemed! They understood the contrast.

MR. MORGAN: Congratulations!

MS. FLACK: Yes. Ten years later I was redeemed. And then a very good collector bought the painting. I'm having a show in Berlin at the Deutsche Guggenheim, you know, Photorealism ["Picturing America: Photorealism in the 1970s," 2009].

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: I was hoping they would take World War II. They didn't want it.

MR. MORGAN: What did they say?

MS. FLACK: They could've gotten that painting. The collector would've lent it. But I guess they didn't want it for other reasons. They got a self-portrait. It'll be interesting showing that next to Chuck [Close].

MR. MORGAN: From what period?

MS. FLACK: From the seventies.

MR. MORGAN: I know that self-portrait, yes.

MS. FLACK: Yes. And they got Queen [1975-76].

MR. MORGAN: Oh, okay.

MS. FLACK: I think they wanted to show the vulgarity of America, the materialism, cars. You know many countries think we're only interested in cars and pastry and food and things like that.

MR. MORGAN: You may be right about that. That's interesting. Let's move along. I'd like you to say a few words about Madame Jolie [sic] [Jolie Madame (1973)] because I know that that was a very important painting in your career.

MS. FLACK: Yes. Boy that got a bad review, too. That was called the ugliest painting of the year.

MR. MORGAN: Can you talk about the painting? I mean there's a lot of glass and reflection in terms of surface and space, air space, surface space.

MS. FLACK: Well, all of us were interested in glass and reflection. Every photorealist was. Richard was interested in storefront windows.

MR. MORGAN: Richard Estes?

MS. FLACK: Yes, Richard Estes. So he's painting storefront windows, right? Subway windows. And the car painters are painting the glass on the headlights and the reflections on metal. And I am painting glass vases and perfume bottles and gold and silver bracelets.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: This was a time when I thought there was no difference between me and the men. It was the beginning of feminism, when Marcia Tucker had the first consciousness-raising meeting at her loft I was there.

MR. MORGAN: And was that for a specific - what was the purpose of the meeting?

MS. FLACK: She organized women.

MR. MORGAN: In terms of an exhibition you mean?

MS. FLACK: No, no. This was to raise awareness, speak the unspoken. Maybe there were 28 of us. And she separated us into three groups. We would then discuss what the role of being a woman was in this society. I'll tell you something now that I wouldn't have told then. It's about Al Held and his wife, Sylvia Stone -

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: We're sworn to confidentiality. Maybe I shouldn't even say it. I'm just so mad at him for what he did.

MR. MORGAN: Al?

MS. FLACK: Yes. It was terrible.

MR. MORGAN: Well, what did he do?

MS. FLACK: He brutalized her physically. The whole group was saying: You've got to expose this. You've got to say what he did. She did not want to hurt his career, which was very hot at the time. I don't know whatever happened to her. She sort of disappeared. He beat her with a stick. It was horrible. The rest of the women were posing for their husbands. They were making dinners, bringing lunches to their studios. Boy, did I get an awakening, you know. I had none of that. How did we get there?

MR. MORGAN: Well, I asked about, you know - I wasn't sure whether there was an exhibition or if it was just a meeting to raise consciousness.

MS. FLACK: No, the meetings that then took over - and then other [inaudible] took over. That was the start of -

MR. MORGAN: And that was around 1970, something like that?

MS. FLACK: Yes, very early.

MR. MORGAN: But can we get back to Madame Jolie?

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes! Around that time, I did not see one difference between myself and the men, which is kind of crazy, right? Richard and I were good friends. See, we were all interested in the same reflection of light -

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: They were interested in cars and motorcycles, I was interested in glass, perfume bottles and glass.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. I think this painting has been reviewed, from what I can tell, in a rather positive way in terms of being a kind of breakthrough maybe in relation to indirectly revealing a kind of feminist consciousness?

MS. FLACK: Not at first. At first it was brutalized.

MR. MORGAN: No, I'm talking about retrospectively by historians, not by critics.

MS. FLACK: Well, I hope so. You know I don't read that stuff too much, Robert. I do know that when you first make a painting and then the New York Times says it's the ugliest painting of the year, you feel a stake through your heart. I couldn't believe it. It just -

MR. MORGAN: It's hard to get distance on that. I understand.

MS. FLACK: It's a beautiful painting.

MR. MORGAN: It is a beautiful painting.

MS. FLACK: What I did was break the rules - I broke tradition. I was not painting what I was supposed to paint.

MR. MORGAN: Which was?

MS. FLACK: Old shoes, [Vincent] Van Gogh. You can paint your old shoes. You could paint your old car. It was all masculine. This was probably one of the first real feminist painting.

MR. MORGAN: That's what I'm getting to.

MS. FLACK: Yes. Without my knowing it.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: I'm thinking here's this bottle of perfume. Here's glass, faceted and shining. How do I paint those reflections? How do I paint the liquid inside which is kind of amber color and the orange wall in back of it? And how do I paint silver salt-and-pepper shaker, little souvenirs worth ten cents. How do I paint an apple? How do I paint porcelain? I was interested in texture and light being absorbed and bouncing off of something. And all of a sudden it's the ugliest painting of the year. Then Artnews says - say, no, it's not the ugliest painting of the year. It's the ugliest painting of the decade. So it was in its way a feminist value point. It was a major, major break.

MR. MORGAN: Absolutely.

MS. FLACK: But it didn't fit into strict feminist - what can I say - ideology?

MR. MORGAN: Stereotype.

MS. FLACK: Yes stereotype. So it really didn't get defended, the same way Catherine didn't get defended.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. That's interesting. I think it's often been the case for you, certainly with the sculpture. What about Leonardo's Lady [1975]?

MS. FLACK: That is in the Modern [MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York], and I wish they'd take it out of the rack and show it. It's time to take it out of the racks. Call Ann Temkin, "Please take it out of the racks."

MR. MORGAN: Could you talk a little bit about your intention of using this reproduction of the Leonardo [da Vinci] painting in relation to the objects? This is, by the way, you know, our earlier discussion in our first tape, we were talking about Cubism and structure. You know really has that aspect. I mean the way - I mean that table is a Cubist table. Absolutely.

MS. FLACK: I've got to see it. Let's see.

MR. MORGAN: It doesn't have your typical perspective that, for example, we see here. This has perspective. This is a very different space. And look at this. And look at this, the way these kind of float, and this. It's not the same space.

MS. FLACK: Do you know that I still don't know what the words mean? This was in Italian. I painted all that and I still don't know.

MR. MORGAN: Can you talk about your idea in terms of Leonardo? Why this image?

MS. FLACK: Just 'cause I loved it.

MR. MORGAN: You loved the painting.

MS. FLACK: I loved the image. It's a very gentle painting. It's maybe one of the most gentle of all of my paintings. This is very gentle. And very female, isn't it?

MR. MORGAN: I think so.

MS. FLACK: I was doing textile design at the time.

MR. MORGAN: You know also I have to say, Audrey, the color is quite different.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Than both Madame Jolie and World War II.

MS. FLACK: Yes. And Wheel of Fortune [1977-1978].

MR. MORGAN: There are no direct reds. They are, you know -

MS. FLACK: It's a more subdued.

MR. MORGAN: That's right. You know it kind of gets back to what we were talking about in those early fifties paintings, you know, the portrait of your father and mother and that grapefruit which verges on a kind of all-over Expressionist painting. But I think that you are clearly moved into this other level where your investigation of women, which - I mentioned that relation in the Marilyn. And then, of course, you do another Marilyn or Norma Jean in 1978.

MS. FLACK: Golden Girl is different than the big Marilyn.

MR. MORGAN: What year's the big Marilyn? Is that the earlier one?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, that's '64. Yes.

MS. FLACK: Let's look at that one. That's a major painting.

MR. MORGAN: Okay. Well, I'm sure I've seen it. Let me just review. Tarts, Strawberry Tarts [Strawberry Tarts Supreme, 1974] with these glazed strawberries. Amazing! Just phenomenal!

MS. FLACK: That was my little tour de force. Let's see Marilyn.

MR. MORGAN: Well, you've got - now this is Macarena. Maybe it's near Macarena. Okay. The one - why am I not seeing it?

MS. FLACK: There it is.

MR. MORGAN: Here it is. Oh, right! Yes. This is the [inaudible]. Okay, '77. This is the year before, right? Marilyn(Vanitas). So you reinvestigate. You rethink and repaint obviously your concept of Marilyn. Why? Why the revisitation?

MS. FLACK: Why?

MR. MORGAN: What does Marilyn represent to you? I guess is what I'm asking you.

MS. FLACK: Well, she's an American icon. You know I'm dealing with icons all the time.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: Symbols. And she's a symbol for - Venus or Aphrodite - she's a symbol for love, the need for love, and the pain of never having enough love. The Norman Mailer quote in the painting is very touching. And she touched everybody's heart. She touched men and women, too. She touched my heart. I must have identified with her somehow. She never really got enough love from her mother or father. And so she wanted love - she was willing to do anything for it.

MR. MORGAN: Why do you think she became such an American icon? For that reason?

MS. FLACK: I think she touched the heart in a very innocent way, and she was very American. Europe is filled with intrigue, kings and queens, plots and schemes. And Queen Catherine, by the way, was an innocent; she was an innocent virgin sold into marriage. But there was intrigue behind it. You know there's no intrigue behind Marilyn. She's just a little country girl who had a really horrible childhood. And fell for the American Dream, and did everything she could to get it, and got it. She's the same as these rap singers. She came up from nothing. I mean she's completely American. I'm American. I wanted to look like Esther Williams. These are our heroes. We didn't have queens or kings to look at. We had Eleanor Roosevelt. Well, I love Eleanor Roosevelt, but I didn't want to look like her. [Mr. Morgan laughs.]

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: - when you're an American kid. You have your movie stars.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: I liked Barbara Stanwyck. She was tough. But I hated Joan Crawford before I knew, even, that she was mean. Marilyn was so sweet. I don't know if you know that after I painted that, I get a letter from the photographer. At first he was angry. He wanted me to paint his name right on my painting. Then he wanted to date me. He was obsessed with Marilyn - She was now dead. Maybe he saw me as her connection.

The big one has been on tour.

MR. MORGAN: Marilyn (Vanitas)?

MS. FLACK: Yes, the Vanitas one. And she's going back to the University of Arizona Museum of Art [Tucson, Arizona], and they're having a party for her. They're having a Vanitas Party. So I'm going out there.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, they are?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And this painting will be celebrated?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, very good. Very good.

MS. FLACK: People love that painting. And you know the Mexicans come over and set up shrines in front of that painting. Isn't that interesting?

MR. MORGAN: Why is that?

MS. FLACK: I think they feel something. They feel. And they like shrines, and my paintings with all their objects, all the wretched excess, must feel comfortable to them.

MR. MORGAN: Audrey, you seem very close to Latino culture.

MS. FLACK: Yes, I am.

MR. MORGAN: Why?

MS. FLACK: I don't know. I grew up near a Hispanic neighborhood. I know that our family - my father had a book of the Flack Family - it was on parchment, and he lost it in moving. But he said that we went through the Spanish Inquisition. So I must have some Spanish blood. I have very deep feeling for Spanish Passion sculpture.

MR. MORGAN: Do you have Sephardic ancestry at all?

MS. FLACK: I don't know.

MR. MORGAN: It would be interesting to find out.

MS. FLACK: You know. I feel very at home in Spain.

MR. MORGAN: I sense that.

[END OF DISC 4.]

MR. MORGAN: Mike recording, okay. We know that. And we're on.

MS. FLACK: Okay. What were we talking about?

MR. MORGAN: Okay. Alright. I want to go back - I was mentioning this artist in Spain who was very close to - well, she's Spanish, in fact. And she has a passion that I feel resembles yours, okay? In terms of your feeling about this culture and so forth, which we were talking about. Because I'm interested in that. And I don't exactly know what the connection was, but it was an interesting point. We were talking about fear when you were growing up of Irish kids coming into Jewish neighborhoods or confronting Jewish boys and girls or whatever.

MS. FLACK: Well -

MR. MORGAN: And, you know, I feel that this is something we should talk about.

MS. FLACK: I think it's important.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, it is. Yes.

MS. FLACK: So it has to do with being Jewish in a society that Jews have - well, in a world - where Jews have been persecuted. And uh -

MR. MORGAN: Go ahead.

MS. FLACK: You know it's an important and vast thing, and it's coming up now for me. I never thought of myself as a Jewish artist or a woman artist - never. I was an artist. The first time I thought of myself as a woman artist was when the reviews came out of Jolie Madame. That was the very first time - 1970. Then when the Museum of Modern Art bought Leonardo's Lady, Hilton Kramer took two full pages in the New York Times called "Backlash in the Arts." And there was a full picture of Leonardo's Lady. And said something about the Museum of Modern Art woke up long enough to buy this painting. He called me the Barbra Streisand of the art world.

MR. MORGAN: And when was this, what year?

MS. FLACK: This was probably 1970. Now, I didn't think anything of it. But Pat Hills called me. Pat Hills had been at the Whitney.

MR. MORGAN: Patricia Hills?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: She said, "Audrey, you know that's an anti-feminist and an anti-Semitic remark." I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Well - he didn't call you Grace Kelly and he certainly would never refer to Jasper Johns or any male artists as an actor."

MR. MORGAN: The remark again please?

MS. FLACK: Hilton called me the Barbra Streisand of the art world.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, I see. Okay. Yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: So the image was that I was loud and vulgar and, you know, when you think of the other reviews, it's very interesting.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: They're not going to say that about a Hispanic. The stereotype is that Hispanics are loud and vulgar and like bright colors. Pat Hills said, "That's an anti-semitic remark." And I said, "Well, why?" And then she said it was anti-feminist, too. She said, "Well, he would never talk about Rauschenberg or Lichtenstein that way."

MR. MORGAN: Well, they're two very different characters.

MS. FLACK: Well, it doesn't matter. Hilton would never give them the name of a Hollywood person.

MR. MORGAN: True.

MS. FLACK: They were men. I was a woman, and I was being compared to Barbra Streisand. But I also wasn't being compared to Grace Kelly.

MR. MORGAN: Interesting.

MS. FLACK: So that stuck in my head. I started to think about the review I read. How horrified this person was at my colors: vulgarity. Art history's very interesting. The subject of being a Jewish artist is now being researched. The Smithsonian Art Journal next month is going to have an article on my work. And it's called "Everybody Thought I Was Catholic: The Jewish Identity of Audrey Flack." Interesting.

MR. MORGAN: And that's going to be in the Smithsonian?

MS. FLACK: Yes. In that - what is it called? Their Art Journal?

MR. MORGAN: I think it's called the Smithsonian.

MS. FLACK: I think it's a very major issue. Bernard Berenson, great art historian converts. He's Jewish. He converts.

MR. MORGAN: To Catholicism?

MS. FLACK: No, he didn't become a Catholic. I think he became a Presbyterian? I'm not sure. Catholic's are too close to Jews, you know, with all their sturm und drang and their statues - the Church of England is much more conservative. He converts. And starts advising his wealthy collectors to buy more conservative work. He tends towards Raphael -

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: - Classicism, you know, nice blue sky, very calm.

MR. MORGAN: True, true. It was his idea of connoisseurship.

MS. FLACK: Yes. But he's not going towards the breast-beating Baroque.

MR. MORGAN: I see.

MS. FLACK: And I compare that to his denial of Judaism.

MR. MORGAN: His self-denial.

MS. FLACK: Self-denial. He's going to be an elegant WASP. Elegant WASP ends up minimalist. There's no Hispanic that's a minimalist. For the most part, Jews, Semites, Italians, and Hispanics are not minimalist by nature.

MR. MORGAN: Are you saying - You're not talking about art. You're talking about -

MS. FLACK: I'm talking about art - yes. Of course you get Jewish artists that are doing minimalist work.

MR. MORGAN: Of course. I can name a few.

MS. FLACK: But what I'm saying is there's a desire - an understandable one - to assimilate because you can get killed as a Jew. Blacks can't assimilate because they can't change their color. But Jews can shorten their noses, flatten their breasts, lose weight, and try to look like what the culture wants you to look like.

MR. MORGAN: Sounds like Koreans.

MS. FLACK: Hmm?

MR. MORGAN: Sounds like Koreans. There's so much cosmetic surgery being done in Korea right now.

MS. FLACK: Really!

MR. MORGAN: Oh, it's incredible. Particularly on young women.

MS. FLACK: Young women.

MR. MORGAN: Very young women, yes.

MS. FLACK: Well, young Jewish girls, when they were growing up, all had to have their noses fixed.

MR. MORGAN: The part that - Let me -

MS. FLACK: Well, let me continue.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Sure. Go ahead.

MS. FLACK: I really think the kind of passion and color and intensity that goes along with Catholicism also goes along with Hispanic art.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: With a Jewish soul, with a Jewish style. You pile food on. You don't serve one slice of roast beef on white bread with one green pea. And what is minimalist, what is color field, that it's so highly revered? Why does the Holocaust Museum put up a minimalist work? What does this have to do with their culture? At the end of his life, by the way, Berenson says, "I am tired of this pretense. I want to be with my people." And he goes back to who he is. But not after he has effected what's acceptable in art history. Berenson advised collectors to buy art that he considered elegant and refined - cool colors and classical in nature like Raphael and Franica [sp]. He advocated what we consider white Anglo Saxon Protestant or WASP taste. You can, as a WASP, pick up a lowly Hispanic artists who's playing around with bright colors. I am being sarcastic. Or you can buy a black artist like Basquiat and be noblesse oblige. But, I'm going to get those blasting reviews because my colors are bright, my subject matter passionate and humanist, the opposite of cool and restrained, the opposite of the other Photo Realists. I'm not supposed to do that. It is considered vulgar in this society - I'm talking about this now because I really think it's affected the way we see art and what's been produced and by whom. I painted World War II in 1978. The war was over in 1945. Few if any artists dealt with it. Barnett's [Newman] is doing his Seven Stations of the Cross [1958-66]. Picasso does Guernica [1937]. That was about the Spanish Civil War -

MR. MORGAN: Let's see. Newman did in that in the sixties. That was 1966 when he finished that.

MS. FLACK: Yes. Well, the war was over in '45.

MR. MORGAN: No, but the point is that he had done a lot of paintings with Jewish names. I mean -

MS. FLACK: He did?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Oh, yes. Many, many.

MS. FLACK: Did he!

MR. MORGAN: Abraham [1949] for one, I know for a fact. And he talked - you now he was very involved with [Baruch] Spinoza. And he believed that there were two alternative ways that you could understand his work: One was through Jewish history because he felt that what the Americans were calling the Zip - Zipper, for him was the intervention of God in history, and there the relative sublimist is supposed to - the reason some come out and some go in and some are almost faded away is because these are traces of the intervention of divine light, essentially, in history.

MS. FLACK: Hmmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. MORGAN: But that explanation is almost never - I give it some, you know.

MS. FLACK: Very interesting. I've never heard it before.

MR. MORGAN: But it's always talked about as the framing edge brought into the painting, you know, which is a formal idea. No problem. And Newman accepted that. But he said, "But in addition, there is this other idea that is very close to what I'm trying to do."

MS. FLACK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Interesting. I have to -

MR. MORGAN: Onement is from 1948, which was just shown at the Haunch of Venison Gallery, is a magnificent statement on -

MS. FLACK: Onement?

MR. MORGAN: Onement, yes. From 1948. And, you know, I looked at that so closely. It's such a magnificent painting. And it's really - I mean it's so much about the Jewish God, in my opinion. This idea that Onement - well, of course, you know, is the monotheism of God, Yahweh, right? But Newman's point is that when you divide space, the space becomes whole.

MS. FLACK: When you divide it?

MR. MORGAN: When you divide the space, the space becomes whole. I mean it's impossible for me not to see that now when I look at that painting.

MS. FLACK: What does the painting look like?

MR. MORGAN: It's got a kind of earth-red field, you know, very heavily painted. I mean when I say that, many layers. And then this kind of orange mark that goes down the center. Beautiful! It's really rich, rich painting.

MS. FLACK: Well, I think all of that has to be explored. Really.

MR. MORGAN: It's just not what gets into the press, my dear, you know.

MS. FLACK: Yes. It has to get in. Let it get in.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes. But I can tell you, you know, I struggle with this stuff because the important thing about the Brooklyn Rail that Charles just mentioned - he knows me from Brooklyn Rail by the way - is that I can talk about this stuff there easily because, most of the time, they're not going to censor me.

MS. FLACK: Well, I hope you do.

MR. MORGAN: I do. I do.

MS. FLACK: I mean somebody's got to deal with this. Look, you get the rest of the Abstract Expressionists, they all changed their names. So the women change their nose, but the men change their name, right? What was Larry Rivers? Irving Glitzburg, I think.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, yes?

MS. FLACK: Yes. And Philip Guston something like -

MR. MORGAN: Oh, he was Goldstein.

MS. FLACK: Goldstein and Goldberg, you know.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. No, Goldstein, Goldstein.

MS. FLACK: Why did they change their names?

MR. MORGAN: I think - I suppose we can talk about a historical reason, and we can talk about other reasons as well. But you know what I think was truly magnificent, if I must say - ?

MS. FLACK: What's that?

MR. MORGAN: Emmanuel Radnitzky

MS. FLACK: Who's Emmanuel Radnitzky?

MR. MORGAN: There you go. Who would have known Emmanuel Radnitzky? Who would have known him? A guy from New Jersey comes to New York as a painter. He has moderate success with his paintings. Then he becomes a photographer and a filmmaker. And then, you know, finds that his paintings are suddenly in demand. Because he understood that nobody is going to remember Emmanuel Radnitzky. However, Man Ray they will remember.

MS. FLACK: Oh, no kidding! [Laughs.]

MR. MORGAN: Well, listen to this. But it goes on, it goes on. He called his cameraless photographs, rayograms.

MS. FLACK: Yes, I remember that.

MR. MORGAN: There was a German artist from the Expressionist group, Christian Schad, S-C-H-A-D, who had almost a parallel relationship with Man Ray in terms of chronology. So Chris Schad decided, well, if Man Ray is doing rayograms, I will do Schadograms. You get the pun? Rayograms, Schadograms?

MS. FLACK: Oh, yes, yes.

MR. MORGAN: Interesting, huh?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: And he was also a painter who also became a photographer. It's so interesting.

MS. FLACK: Very interesting. Well, look, you could change your name because you think a name is easier to remember, you know. John Denver or whatever.

MR. MORGAN: He was Polish, by the way.

MS. FLACK: Who?

MR. MORGAN: Denver.

MS. FLACK: Denver?

MR. MORGAN: He was Polish. He changed his name.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: Well, people change their names for various reasons. But we do know that when you're Jewish, if you change your name to a name that sounds Christian, you have a better chance of getting a job. You can -

MR. MORGAN: Oh, yes. I think that's more or less at this point historical.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: And this is reality. What can we say about that?

MS. FLACK: Yes. It's reality. It's understandable. It's very understandable.

MR. MORGAN: What can we say about that?

MS. FLACK: But did Barnett Newman deal with World War II?

MR. MORGAN: You mean as a subject?

MS. FLACK: As a painter. Who did?

MR. MORGAN: Well, he was always an abstract painter.

MS. FLACK: Well, he could still deal with it.

MR. MORGAN: Well, but I don't think - deal with it in what way?

MS. FLACK: Well, the same way he dealt with the Seven Stations of the Cross, he could deal with the seven layers of smoke in the crematorium. I don't know. I think it's very significant.

MR. MORGAN: I don't think you can judge. He was a deeply -

MS. FLACK: I'm not judging him. I'm not judging him.

MR. MORGAN: You have to remember he was an orthodox Jew.

MS. FLACK: Then why didn't he paint his painting for his people?

MR. MORGAN: Why should he? Well, he did. He did. He painted a number of Jewish paintings. I mean with Jewish titles and that have Jewish mythology in them. He's very clear about that, Audrey. Very clear about that.

MS. FLACK: - This is something that has to be exposed.

MR. MORGAN: Well, anyway, you mean specifically do a Holocaust painting.

MS. FLACK: You get the major event of the 20th century, nobody's dealing with it?

MR. MORGAN: Nobody? No.

MS. FLACK: Chaim Gross, Käthe Kollwitz, later. Just a couple of artists.

MR. MORGAN: What about Kiefer, Anselm Kiefer?

MS. FLACK: That's later!

MR. MORGAN: True.

MS. FLACK: That's later.

MR. MORGAN: That's another generation, too.

MS. FLACK: But I want to tell you one thing that's important to know. When I painted World War II - so I'm going around collecting my props, right? And I'm using this Margaret Burke-White photograph, which I get sued for, by the way, from Time magazine.

MR. MORGAN: You didn't get the clearance or something?

MS. FLACK: I never thought of getting clearance. And the Time magazine lawyer's name was Eichmann.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, yes.

MS. FLACK: Isn't that funny? We settled for a dollar to get it cleared.

MR. MORGAN: By the way, who is Peter Z. Malkin?

MS. FLACK: Who is he?

MR. MORGAN: He is the-what is the Israeli CIA?

BOB: Mossad?

MR. MORGAN: Mossad. Mossad, yes. He was the Mossad guy who caught [Adolf] Eichmann in Argentina. I knew Peter Z. Malkin. I did a monograph on his work.

MS. FLACK: You're kidding.

MR. MORGAN: No. I remember it was so interesting.

MS. FLACK: I don't know how you've done what you did. You're too young to have done everything you did.

MR. MORGAN: It was pretty amazing because we have a mutual friend by the name of Israel Perry who was originally Polish; he lives in Israel. Came to New York, and he ran a gallery for a short period of time. And then he began independent dealing. And he was always calling me about these artists that he was interested in. He said, "Robert, I want you to do something on Peter Z. Malkin. Now you're the one to do it. And I'm going to set up a meeting. And I said, "How will I recognize him?" And he said, "Robert, either he will recognize you, or you'll recognize one another, I'm convinced."

MS. FLACK: Was he an artist, too?

MR. MORGAN: It's a long story. Peter had to spend a lot of times in train stations waiting for connections in order to, you know, stay on the track of Eichmann, right? So he had to look like he was sort of a fixture rather than somebody who didn't belong.

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

MR. MORGAN: And he would take these great cheap hotels where he would never sleep in pajamas. But, you know, also he's spending a lot of time waiting. He said the difficult part of the job was waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting.

BOB: This is the end of the tape.

MS. FLACK: Oh! That's all, all we have!

MR. MORGAN: Well, I can finish the story. So he started reading. And there was this book like this where-and he would do watercolors and so forth and inks. And he would do these paintings as he was waiting.

MS. FLACK: Oh, wow!

MR. MORGAN: And Israel said: Robert-Eichmann-the Jewish Museum, really should have some of these books. And I said, I agree. So he wanted the monograph because people didn't know about - First of all, they didn't know about Nazism, and they didn't know about his work. So I did this, this book. Well, for one thing we had to meet. So there was this restaurant somewhere in SoHo where there was this bar.

Well, it's just - Anyway, the point is that as soon as I walked in, I saw this guy, and he saw me. And we knew immediately.

MS. FLACK: You knew immediately.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes. And, you know, it was a great meeting. But what was interesting to me was how he trained himself to remember things, which we talked about. I was very interested in this because I have a very good memory, and I was interested in how he did it. And also this issue of waiting to me was such an interesting point in terms of, well, the human condition in the 20th century, you know.

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

MR. MORGAN: The fact is that a lot of smart people have spent a lot of time waiting in order to get what they want. And anyway, it was fascinating, absolutely fascinating. I have one copy of this book, and I had two, and mistakenly gave the second one to someone else. But, you know, there are a couple of books I need to get more copies of. One is my book called Wild Dogs in Bali. And the other one is this. That's right. We're still [inaudible]. Go ahead. We can talk about this some other time.

MS. FLACK: I just think that it's very important. Look, when I painted World War II, and I had petit fours. I had the candle, I had the Margaret Burke White photograph. I had the cup of sorrows.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: And I had a little key chain with a Star of David.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: I put it into the painting. And I've got to tell you, Robert, when I painted it, I felt I was doing something wrong.

MR. MORGAN: Really?

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FLACK: That was my feeling, and it was very scary. It was frightening. Now you tell me, have you ever seen a painting with a Jewish star in the Met [The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York], in the Prado [Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain], in the Louvre [Paris, France]?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, I have.

MS. FLACK: Where? Which one?

MR. MORGAN: I don't know.

MS. FLACK: Not contemporary, right now.

MR. MORGAN: Oh, no, no. I'm talking about contemporary.

MS. FLACK: When I did this painting to my knowledge, there were none. Zero! In all of art history. I was doing something very radical. I felt like I was doing something wrong. And I remember saying I'm going to do this. And I called a former student of mine who's now a private dealer in Impressionism and, modern masters. And I called him. I said, "I want to show you something." The painting just completed. He came to the studio, looked at the painting for a long time, pointed to the small star of David and said, "Are you going to leave that in?" And he's Jewish. It's not paranoia; I guess it's a historical given, exposure -

MR. MORGAN: No paranoia is not the right word.

MS. FLACK: It's not the right word. But it's there. And I think it should be examined. Young art historians are now questioning is there a Jewish art? Are there Jewish artists? But I think they're going to find out that artists will deal with their background, as women artists are dealing with their gender -

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: - then you're going to get new art with other kinds of feeling.

MR. MORGAN: Well, you know, I think different artists feel differently about this issue because I've had conversations about it. I think that - You know I've often said that when an artist goes deeply enough within themselves, they become universal.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: But to go deeply within yourself is also, I think, to avoid stereotypes about yourself. So that you can really get to a point that you know who you are, you know.

MS. FLACK: Agreed. Agreed. But who you are has to do with what your values are -

MR. MORGAN: Who you are without the stereotypes. In other words, it really is - it's a matter of the vertical cut, you know, in terms of how deep you're willing to go, I suppose. And this is very subtle, as well, because it - I mean it's difficult to know exactly where you are on this path of self-realization. And you need other people, I think, to help you measure that.

MS. FLACK: Yes. I am Jewish. Still, I identify with Catholic saints, with Mary, with Buddhist and Hindu religious philosophy, with Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav. I have no problem. You know it's who I am.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: I do who I am, the way I produce the way I am.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, I agree with you. Well, originality is always a matter of syntax. It's never the thing itself. In other words, it's how you reform it, how you put it together, how you restate it. That's what's original.

MS. FLACK: I hope you write something about - What happened in art between 1945 and 1978? Over 30 years.

MR. MORGAN: You mean in your work?

MS. FLACK: No, not my work. What happens with the Holocaust? Why wasn't it dealt with? It was so horrible. It

was such an enormous event. A lot of art was produced and a lot of great art. And nothing or hardly anything deals with the Holocaust. Why? Was it because it was so overwhelming that it took that much time?

MR. MORGAN: Well, you know, I think that -

MS. FLACK: When does Picasso do the Guernica?

MR. MORGAN: Nineteen thirty-seven.

MS. FLACK: Thirty-seven he does it, right after it happens.

MR. MORGAN: That's right.

MS. FLACK: So between 1941 and 1945, you get the worst, horrible event happening, nobody's dealing with it? The artists that were over there, who maybe made sketches in the concentration camps, Kathe Kollwitz and Chaim Gross. Who else? How many movements do you have from '45?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. In that Shock Of The New [McGraw Hill, Columbus, Ohio: 1980] series that Robert Hughes did a number of years ago, 30 years ago, I think, there's a very interesting statement about - He's going to one of the camps, and he's expressing that after seeing this, there was nothing more to express except the silence. And this would refer to Ad Reinhardt's Black paintings [1958-1967].

MS. FLACK: That's interesting.

MR. MORGAN: That's a very great statement, I thought.

MS. FLACK: Nothing more to express except the silence.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. You know I have to tell you, you know, that silence can be very real. For example, one of my trips to Poland in 2000 was in a north central area called Bydgoszcz [Poland], which is near Toru? [Poland], which is the birthplace of [Nicolaus] Copernicus. Toru? is like a tourist place. But Bydgoszcz is - tourists generally don't go there. There's nothing to go there for. But there's a lot of country around that. And I remember driving with an Israeli friend of mine and a couple of other people through those roads in the country, and, you know, going to this town. And you realize that - or she realized - that there was probably no Jewish person alive now in that town or in that countryside.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: And it was almost like a haunted area, in a way. You know in the sense of the vacancy, in the sense of the profound absence - the profound absence! - that it was something like eerie. Something, you know - it just had been kind of inverted in history in a certain way. I was so struck by that.

MS. FLACK: Should that be kept silent? I mean you know you're talking about silence.

MR. MORGAN: Well, this is - No, let me tell you about 2000.

MS. FLACK: Well -

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes. No, it shouldn't be kept silent. But -

[Simultaneous conversation.]

MS. FLACK: There are all these people who are still alive who are now able to talk about it and say this must never be forgotten. But we're talking about very powerful visual imagery. It took 40 years for me to begin to paint World War II. Why did I wait so long and why was it one of the first, if not the first painting on the subject? And why was it severely criticized and rejected for another ten years? What's going on? Where are the Jewish painters? What are they doing? I just think it's important to note.

MR. MORGAN: I agree with you.

MS. FLACK: And maybe compare it to the Blacks when you get - what's his name who taught with me who had white skin.

MR. MORGAN: Benny Andrews?

MS. FLACK: No, not Benny. The other Black artist who really could have passed for white.

MR. MORGAN: Romare Bearden.

MS. FLACK: Romie. Romie - I mean those guys were all dealing with being Black, making Black paintings. They were dealing with their oppression or whatever had happened to them. They were dealing straight with it. There are issues here that I think are only surfacing now.

MR. MORGAN: Well, I remember this interesting panel with David Salle a number of years ago. And he was talking about, you know, the problem of transforming the Holocaust into a cliché.

MS. FLACK: Salle?

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

MS. FLACK: Is he Jewish?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. And it's interesting because he and his family - I know his family because I taught in Kansas for three years. They're from Kansas. And there's a Jewish community out there, but it's not New York, I can tell you. Because when I went out there with my wife, who is Jewish, you know, she was frightened to leave the apartment.

MS. FLACK: Really?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. But, you know, on some level, I mean you have people - As she became more comfortable, because, you know, she found that people liked her, and she liked them, it was okay. In terms of the kind of vapidness, you know, of a place like this central United States, the absence of culture, I should say, at least 30 years ago -

MS. FLACK: Well, let's go back to a place where there is culture.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: In the 1950s, you have Abstract Expressionism. What comes up after that?

MR. MORGAN: Color Field painting.

MS. FLACK: Color Field. Also very minimal, you know: [Helen] Frankenthaler, Morris Louis - is Morris Louis Jewish?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: Frankenthaler's Jewish. Okay?

MR. MORGAN: That's right.

MS. FLACK: So you're getting this kind of minimal -

MR. MORGAN: And Greenberg.

MS. FLACK: And Greenberg. And [Harold] Rosenberg.

MR. MORGAN: And [Jules] Olitski.

MS. FLACK: And Olitski.

MR. MORGAN: No, no. Rosenberg didn't care about Color Field painting at all.

MS. FLACK: I'm saying, who's dealing with this? Okay, now you get Color Field. What do you get after Color Field?

MR. MORGAN: Well, Color Field is more or less synonymous with

MS. FLACK: Does it lead into - ?

MR. MORGAN: - Pop Art. They both sort of are rearing their heads at the same time.

MS. FLACK: Pop doesn't - You know Pop could have used certain imagery. Well, they couldn't use Nazi imagery in Pop Art unless they were really getting very serious.

MR. MORGAN: Well, you know what is interesting, Audrey, is you used Pop imagery in terms of some of the issues.

MS. FLACK: In a way.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: But that was in '78. Pop is just before I do it.

MR. MORGAN: No, no. I'm talking about these paintings, you know, with the matzoh.

MS. FLACK: Manischewitz. Right. Matzoh Meal.

MR. MORGAN: Right, in 1962. I mean this is what I was trying to say earlier. I think this is a very important painting, you know, in terms of that history.

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

MR. MORGAN: Because, no, I think that the - certainly Roy Lichtenstein was not dealing with that.

MS. FLACK: Are any of the Pop artists Jewish.

MR. MORGAN: Roy.

MS. FLACK: Is he Jewish?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: Are you sure?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. I'm positive.

MS. FLACK: That's very interesting.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: Okay. Then you go through Pop. Then what comes after that? Photorealism.

MR. MORGAN: Well, Minimal, you know. You have -

MS. FLACK: Minimal. So who do you get? Sol LeWitt. Is he Jewish?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: You know I hate to sound like this now I'm 77 years old. I never thought like this. Never ever. But I'm thinking like this now. And I'm saying. Something has not been dealt with.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. By the way, actually LeWitt did a couple Holocaust monuments in Europe, using black cubes.

MS. FLACK: When?

MR. MORGAN: Well, much later.

MS. FLACK: Much later. We're talking about an artist in his studio expressing himself.

MR. MORGAN: Well, Sol was always an artist in his studio. People don't realize that. He was always drawing.

MS. FLACK: Yes, but he's an artist in his studio expressing himself. After the Holocaust does he deal with it? It would be very curious to see.

MR. MORGAN: I know this - I can't remember the city it's in. It's in Germany. And it's a Holocaust memorial.

MS. FLACK: That's years later.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: Okay. Then you get -

MR. MORGAN: What's your point? I'm not sure what your point is.

MS. FLACK: I'm trying to see what art is produced during that period.

MR. MORGAN: During that period. Between '45 and '78.

MS. FLACK: Yes. Then you get Photorealists. Then I think I'm probably - the only

woman in the original founding group, and I'm probably the only Jew, and so my work looks very different. It's not removed. It's not cool. It's not distant. Is that just because I'm a woman? If I was a High Anglican woman, maybe my work would look very different.

MR. MORGAN: I'm certain it would. I can't imagine you, Audrey, as a High Anglican lady.

MS. FLACK: Well, wait a minute. A little nose job. I'm blond, after all.

MR. MORGAN: I can't imagine you with a nose job either. It just wouldn't be you.

MS. FLACK: So after Photorealism?

MR. MORGAN: Well, very ironically, Photorealism and Conceptual art run parallel in terms of, you know, their evolution, so to speak. I mean exactly parallel. I mean it's interesting. And then you have Post-Minimalism. But, see, my point about, you know, these movements during this period is that between '45 and '74, that's 29 years, that this was the great period in American art. However, I would challenge anyone to name a movement after 1974 that was generated out of New York, that had any of the energy that happened during that 29-year period.

MS. FLACK: Do you think Photorealism was the last?

MR. MORGAN: Well, Photorealism - I think the Post-Minimalism actually came - Well, the chronological overlay is very close. But certainly Photorealism is a major movement at that time. But I mean I can name things that were burgeoning and then kind of fell apart for one reason or another. They just - For example, Neo-Expressionism, I mean we cannot claim that as an American idea. That's a German-Italian idea, you know -

MS. FLACK: Interesting.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Before it's American I mean even feminism in art, which isn't really an art movement, but it's - Well, in a way it is an art movement. I have to take that back. I mean it's not an art style, but it's an art movement. But certainly a lot of energy was coming out of Scandinavia and Europe.

MS. FLACK: I'm just going to interrupt you for a minute. Do you think we've completed our archival thing?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, I think so.

MS. FLACK: Nothing else you think we should cover? Just think about it.

MR. MORGAN: I was kind of winding it down. And then you introduced this very important subject that I wanted to bring in because I think there's some great stuff in this last tape.

MS. FLACK: I do, too.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, yes.

MS. FLACK: But I'm just saying is there anything that you had in mind or you feel - ?

MR. MORGAN: No, I was thinking - The reason I'm more open now in the conversation -

MS. FLACK: Any of the sculpture or anything?

MR. MORGAN: Well, we kind of dealt with that issue kind of - not in the chronology, but it was dealt with, you know.

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

MR. MORGAN: And I think some good things were said about that. Anyway, how do you feel?

MS. FLACK: You know I love talking to you.

MR. MORGAN: Yes?

MS. FLACK: I think we start conceptualizing, and ideas start coming out.

MR. MORGAN: That's right, yes. But I think this last section is really great. Anyway, so why don't we, if you don't mind, let's conclude it there. Is that okay?

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

MR. MORGAN: We have 38 minutes on this one. Wow!

MS. FLACK: Then let me say one more thing.

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MS. FLACK: What's happening now is a reevaluation of Photorealism. They thought it was dumb photographic work. It brings an interest in color photography and a resurgence in photography in general. Also, young artists are returning to Realism. There are second- and third-generation Photorealists. Unfortunately, I think they're getting a little too technical.

MR. MORGAN: I agree with you. [Inaudible] big intervention, yes.

MS. FLACK: It has yet to match the originality and intensity of ideas of the original group of Photorealists.

MR. MORGAN: It's a very important point you're raising, and I concur with this. And if I can just again go back to our friend Brancusi. That, you know, today you can do - what do they call it? - rapid prototypes as well as [inaudible] space, you know, in a few hours. But why wouldn't it have the same power?

MS. FLACK: Good question. And it wouldn't.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. And going back to the Mexican pictures in '66 - I think it was '66, 66, '67, something like that - when you told me that you were painting color from black and white -

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

MR. MORGAN: - see, to me this is something that is a tactical phenomenon within the studio. It's a way of thinking about art. That today that would be handled very differently in terms of digital processes. And then what is called Color Shop, Adobe, and all these programs and so forth.

MS. FLACK: Yes.

MR. MORGAN: But one of my concerns, that I've written about over and over, is that we have to maintain a sensibility that is gravitated toward tactile reality. Because if the artists don't do it, who's going to do it?

MS. FLACK: I could not agree with you more.

MR. MORGAN: And that means a lot in terms of how we feel, for example.

MS. FLACK: Sure.

MR. MORGAN: Not in terms of only, you know, body feeling, but how we feel.

MS. FLACK: How we feel in life. How we sense anything.

MR. MORGAN: For example, if somebody is touched, if you touch me, Audrey, I mean this is a reality. You see what I'm saying? But if you don't know that reality, what does this say about the human condition?

MS. FLACK: Yes. What I said about the Macarena. They touch, and people just touch her clothing.

MR. MORGAN: Yes, this is one reason -

MS. FLACK: Let me tell you, when I did the Recording Angel [2006] for Nashville, the big statue that's outside the Symphony Hall and opposite the Country Music Hall of Fame. I first did my maquette.

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MS. FLACK: And my maquette was about - there it is - about 36 inches.

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Sure.

MS. FLACK: I had to enlarge it. I had to go to ten feet, which is pretty big. I did not want to use digital enlarging. I had done it once before, in the early days of digital and I didn't like it.

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

MS. FLACK: Digital enlarging means I wouldn't have to do a damned thing. I give them my maquette. It goes on a machine. The machine takes 360 degree photographs of it. It goes on another machine that spins a huge fiberglass over which you put clay. Done for you! No. I have some engineer make me an incredible armature out of wood and steel. He blocks it out for me so I get chunks of clay. I move this huge thing. I rent an empty warehouse somewhere in New Jersey. And with my assistant, we proceed to carve and model a ten-foot winged creature, right?

MR. MORGAN: Magnificent! Magnificent!

MS. FLACK: And it was work like you could not believe. I cut my finger. I had to work with half gloves. We worked and worked. My hands are in it. Now at one point the deadline was getting close and I had three assistants, my main assistant, and two others, a young sculptor that had worked for me on Catherine and another one. So we were all working. We took the head off of the statute so I could work on the head separately and not have to be on top of the scaffold all day.

MR. MORGAN: Sure.

MS. FLACK: And we had, systems where I could hoist it off and put it back on. One was on a ladder working on the wings. One assistant was working on the body. And I had Brian work on the toes because he's a very good finger and toe man. And we were playing a Bach Cantata. Something. And it was silent. And the four of us were working in silence with this incredible music on. And I said, "I think it's time to put the head back on and take a look." We hoisted it up, put the head on her, and all of a sudden the statue came alive. And we all knew it, and we were all part of it. And Bach was just blasting through this empty warehouse. You cannot have that any other way. And we'd all done great work, you know. We were all working to our peak. And all of that energy is in the statue.

MR. MORGAN: Great!

MS. FLACK: That's what you're talking about, right?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, absolutely.

MS. FLACK: Are you going to write about that? Have you already?

MR. MORGAN: Well, you know, I pursue my own path, and we'll see what comes next. But I love what I'm doing. And this is a real treat, I have to say.

MS. FLACK: You're a treat.

MR. MORGAN: Great.

[END OF DISC 5.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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