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Oral history interview with Marek Cecula, 2009 May 19-20

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Marek Cecula on May 19 and 20, 2009. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Marek Cecula had the opportunity to review the transcript and made no corrections or emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel for the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, interviewing Marek Cecula at the artist's home in New York on May 19, 2009. This is disc number one.

So, good morning. It's a pleasure to be here. We thought we'd start just running through the beginning. You're here in New York. You're going back and forth now between New York and Poland — Kielce, correct?

MAREK CECULA: Yep.

MS. RIEDEL: — which is where you were born.

MR. CECULA: Yep.

MS. RIEDEL: In 1944?

MR. CECULA: 1944.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the date?

MR. CECULA: Twenty-three April. April 23, 1944.

MS. RIEDEL: And your parents' names?

MR. CECULA: My parents' names — Jadwiga, my mother, Jadwiga. And my father Stanislav.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you have siblings?

MR. CECULA: I have brother and sisters. My brother Adam and my sister Jwona. Four years apart, each one of us.

MS. RIEDEL: And were you all born in Kielce?

MR. CECULA: In Kielce. I was born in Częstochowa but it was because my parents was hiding in the — during occupation, so I was in different city when I was born, but, yes, I'm living in Kielce most of my life.

MS. RIEDEL: And was that — I know that time in Poland and especially in that area — Poland was extremely turbulent. Would you describe your childhood?

MR. CECULA: Right. Yes, you know, it's [laughs], it was, of course, the wartime. And my father was hiding most of the time of the war. He was in ghetto and he was released from the ghetto, got the paper, alien paper, which is Cecula name is on it. That's the name which is we got it during the war because authentic name of my family is gone. And they're gone.

And this paper was given to our family by some other Polish people and that's the way my father could escape from the ghetto. And then they moved quick to in different city where there was hiding till '44 somewhere, somebody told about my father and Germans took him. They found him and they took him to Gross-Rosen and Dachau and then he survived because it was the end of the war, so he survived the concentration camp and returned to Kielce. And that's where we stay from then, now on.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. So you grew up in Kielce from the time you were two or three?

MR. CECULA: Yes, from very early.

MS. RIEDEL: And was your mother with your father in the ghetto?

MR. CECULA: No, my mother was with us and my father was in the camp.

MS. RIEDEL: And so did you manage to stay hidden or you just all were not taken?

MR. CECULA: No, there was no way. We was out because my mother didn't have her alien papers and she looked like Pole and she didn't have a problem to become like a Polish people, so she was not — she was safe. And we were safe, too. My father was in the camp.

MS. RIEDEL: And do you remember when he was released and he came home?

MR. CECULA: Yes. I mean, I don't remember that. I would just remember the stories of it. We wasn't told much about the wartime in home. Parents wants to kind of hiding these things from us, so not to let us know the whole truth or whole story. But the things was that my father survived the camp because he did some wound to himself and he didn't go to work and actually survived because he stayed in hospital. And then German — and then the alliance [Allies] already bombard the camps and liberated it. And then he returned to Kielce.

And then he survived the pogrom in Kielce, which is 1947, there was a pogrom in Kielce where they killed 40 Jews which is [inaudible] survivors of the camps. So the very sad story for the city and very traumatic things for the Jewish people from there. And my father survived this also because he was in Warsaw in the time, not in Kielce.

And he actually — my mother ,when the pogrom was going on, she took us to station before Kielce waiting for the train. And train came, so she jump into the train and telling — found my father — not to get out in Kielce. We continue to Częstochowa again to this place where we'd been before, for a month till everything calm down.

And then we'd come to Kielce and my parents stayed there for the rest of the time. We have a plan to migrate to Israel around '56 and my mother go to Israel, organize all the things, when she come back my father's already died. Was sick and died. So all the plans of immigrating was dissolved. But I guess I have it some kind of focus already on that time that I should be somewhere else. And I, at the age of 16, two years after my father died, decided to leave Poland. I left like a tourist and never came back since then.

MS. RIEDEL: By yourself you left.

MR. CECULA: By myself, 16 years old. Traveling with $5 in pocket [laughs] to Europe and arriving in Israel where I have uncle and stay there. And that's my story now from Israel, starting to deal with ceramics.

MS. RIEDEL: That's extraordinary. Did you have any exposure to art classes or study when you were young in Poland, still?

MR. CECULA: Yes. Yes. I did always. I always draw, I always have some kind of contact with art or text — we used to make comics, we used to draw ink, I used to paint. But I entered the ceramic, plastics in high school, which is having its art programs. But it was only first year and then I left to Israel, so I didn't really have any type of education [that] is professional education. I learned my ceramic skills in Israel by being apprenticed, as I told you, [to] two different important ceramists in Israel with whom I work and learn and maintain their studio and being part of the production. And that's my education in ceramic.

MS. RIEDEL: So before you even arrived in Israel, did you have classes? You just had classes for one year in high school.

MR. CECULA: Yes, I'd been involved in this high school where actually was very short time. But, yes, that was already some contact with the education.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you involved in music or any other art form?

MR. CECULA: No, there's the plastic arts, which is ceramic, sculpting. That was my —

MS. RIEDEL: So you were sculpting even in high school.

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And figurative, functional, sculptural?

MR. CECULA: Yeah. Kind of, it was just the beginning of it, you know, so we just make things, copy things, and then have to use the clay and things like that. But really, ceramic as a medium start in Israel with Gdula Ogen, which was my first teacher. Gdula Ogen.

MS. RIEDEL: And you said that you had two teachers and they both worked in completely different styles and

different ways of working the material. Would you describe that?

MR. CECULA: Yeah. Gdula Ogen was an Israeli ceramist who actually studied with the first people who came from Germany, from Bauhaus school format. So she has this education of good ceramic processes. And she make work mostly architectural, which is actually wall units for exterior — banks, interior elements. Inside of the architecture, actually ceramic in architecture, so the —

MS. RIEDEL: So murals, along those lines? Tiles — that sort of thing?

MR. CECULA: Murals among them. Yeah. And ceramics is very popular in Israel, so this was part of many of architectural projects and she have a lot of commissions and I work with her on that kind of work. She developed certain techniques of her own and was very known in that area.

MS. RIEDEL: And what sort of work was it? Was it very geometric, abstract, minimal?

MR. CECULA: No, it was a, kind of, stylistic, I would say, because she made it — Israeli scenes — let's say early pioneers of Israel but in very abstracted way, just suggestively — figures and elements and fruits and things — that are mixed into the combination of kind of memorabilia — memorial of the past — of the early Israeli settlement.

And then also she did a lot of abstracted work, which is murals, which was like actually feeling of the desert, of the land, which is where Israel have the element in nature which was printed into that. So she have a kind of mix of nature and flora of Israel mixed together into the kind of abstracted positions which was more that. But it was a different commission for different things, so it was various work.

MS. RIEDEL: And the other teacher?

MR. CECULA: The other teacher, Jean Mayer. She was British. And she came from England and study and learn from her classic Bernard Leach kind of pottery sources. She was a great potter. She actually really did a lot of glazings and gas firing and good stoneware, high-fire stoneware, which has introduced me to this higher quality of materials than ceramic. Also the more throwing on the wheel and making figures and different by section throwing on the wheel and putting them together, so this was kind of the first more object-orientated work I was involved with.

MS. RIEDEL: So she did figurative sculpture as well as functional work?

MR. CECULA: And pottery. And very good pottery.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. CECULA: Very good pottery. Cups, mugs, bowls. Really good pottery, functional for that, and then decorative, figurative sculptural work.

MS. RIEDEL: And gas-fired, you said?

MR. CECULA: Yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And so she — high-fire, cone 10 —

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes. Right, right.

MS. RIEDEL: — and she formulated her own —

MR. CECULA: That was a new for me, you know, that actually this was the good high-fire stoneware. I have introduction to this type of material and also exposed to the more Oriental links to ceramic, like from Japan and Korea —

MS. RIEDEL: Through her and —

MR. CECULA: Yeah, through her experience in England and —

MS. RIEDEL: — and Bernard Leach and —

MR. CECULA: — Bernard Leach —

MS. RIEDEL: — Shoji Hamada —

MR. CECULA: Yes, all that — was starting to be more part of my young orientation. And my work also — I start to

look also in the Far East, in the Japanese ceramic and pottery, as inspiration in that time. I like the glazes, this ash glazes and that fire and all these things. And I make some work in that spirit as well.

MS. RIEDEL: Was there anybody in Japan in particular whose work you were interested in?

MR. CECULA: This was various, but you know, the most of it, it was this — based on this area of Toshiko [ph] mountain potteries — Hamada was living there. And the other potters — kind of folk potters, which at that time was a very interesting production coming from them. They'd been not the contemporary artists, they'd been potters in traditional way, but their work was very new for us in the West. And we was very much attracted to this spirit, this philosophy, the simplicity, this kind of decoration, principles of very short strokes of some element nature and sparking glazes and brown colors and all that *tenmoku* and *shino*.

And all this things was really a strong effect and influence. And we tried to be like that for a while [laughs] till we starting to discover that we have something else to say as well.

MS. RIEDEL: And was that your first experience, also, with a reverence and appreciation for the imperfection that comes with Japanese ceramics? Was that novel in any way?

MR. CECULA: You say, infrastructions?

MS. RIEDEL: Imperfections?

MR. CECULA: Imperfection. Yes, well, of course, yes — you know that then you are starting to understand this natural expression and that idea of not-so-refined being refined. It's a way of seeing how Japanese saw the aesthetics from nature and how they actually applied that into their work.

And that was very attractive to us, to see not the refinement but actually the emotional transformation of feelings from nature to the object to the decoration to this handstroke of this calligraphy of Japanese brushes and things like that. It just was very, very attractive for us in that time.

MS. RIEDEL: Was that very different than what you were doing with your other teacher?

MR. CECULA: Yes, of course it was different. Also this period was early '60s, where these things was starting penetrating to the West, that idea of how Japanese aesthetics work and how this folk art has effect becoming more contemporary in the way — not to changes, but to application of, into the modern world of this kind of elements of nature and simplicity of pottery into the modern environment, for example — that was new.

And that was very attractive. That was for me the sign of early globalization, I could say. [They laugh.] Actually, we look already in the world which is becoming one and we saw the influence and the inspirations and the total transformation of East to the Western culture is imminent and very strong and we all was the kind of missionary of that idea.

MS. RIEDEL: You were 16 when you moved to Israel — it seems your world was global and international at a very young age, from going to Poland to Israel and then having this experience with Japanese and Eastern ceramics. Did you have a sense of that or did it just seem completely normal?

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes, very much so because, you know, this is the situation. I lived in Israel in kibbutz. After army, I moved to the kibbutz HaSolelim.

MS. RIEDEL: How old were you?

MR. CECULA: Well, you go to army when you are around 18 years old, so around 20 I was already in the kibbutz. And in the kibbutz —

MS. RIEDEL: Where was that one?

MR. CECULA: HaSolelim.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CECULA: HaSolelim. And by Nazareth on Galilee. And this was young kibbutz, mostly from Western countries — England, Belgium, France, Argentina — this was people from that area of the world. And this is the situation: In the kibbutz in this time — kibbutz been in this — in around '60s, '70s — it was a bus stop [laughs] for people traveling to the world. And with so tremendous amount of people moving from West to East to Kathmandu [Nepal], and from Kathmandu to Canada, and from back to forth, from different things to this big turmoil in France and student rebellions and things like that.

We in kibbutz sense all that very, very, very close because people was passing by the kibbutz. Kibbutz was a stop for people to stay for a month to come to work between traveling and rest. And, of course, we was getting all the information. We was sharing with this people. We was listening and people would just come with experience from different traveling experiences and we was unloading that in the kibbutz.

And it was very much inspired. We sensed the world in motion. Yes, this is '60s. This is time where people traveled and everybody was "on the road," what's so-called. And we was simply a stop in this place. So we not — we, by ourselves, didn't travel so much maybe at that time, but we actually was very plugged into this whole dynamic of that.

MS. RIEDEL: The world was coming to you.

MR. CECULA: Yes. Yes, that's right. And kibbutz was one of those kind of places. Many kibbutz have this kind of situation. And in our kibbutz particularly because it was a kibbutz — it was Western, English-speaking people, so it was all full of volunteers from all different part of the world, playing, bringing their own tradition and culture. And we was kind of blending to that and observing this early globalization feeling, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: How did you end up in this kibbutz? Did you choose to be there or how did you — ?

MR. CECULA: Yes, usually it's like that. Usually when you're in the army and you have this kind of decision. You can go to the division which can be partially service in the army but also service in the society. So it's a kind of group of — which I decided to be there because I didn't like the military service so much. So I decided to be in the kind of condition that I'm actually civilian, but half-civilian, half-army. And you stay in this kibbutz as an army person but you are work for the kibbutz and eventually become a member of the kibbutz if you want to.

And I did become a member of the kibbutz. I loved the kibbutz. I loved the life in the kibbutz. I was very close to the social life anyway. I came from Poland — not that it was the copy of that, but it was — anyway, it was kind of communal thinking, which was very close to me, and I loved this. I'd been alone in Israel, and for me it was a home and a place and a family in a way.

And I contribute to kibbutz right away from the beginning. I open a ceramics studio right away. Kibbutz give me opportunity to teach, open the studio, bought equipment, and we could actually — I make courses. I teach ceramic in the kibbutz. And I was learning also at the same time, also [with] Jean Mayer at that time. I would continue to study my ceramic, but I already had a studio in my own kibbutz, where actually I give lessons to the other people, teach them to draw and ceramics.

So the kibbutz was very positive in that and supported the creative work, and very soon I got the opportunity to work mostly in ceramic. Of course, I have to generate some money through it, so I have to make some commercial work. But I stopped — before I work in different fields, and with the chicken, with the tree, with the fruits, all that. But then I become only working in ceramic. I got my studio. And I became full time artist in the kibbutz, that's so-called.

And for that reason also, I was in charge of the culture of the kibbutz. So I provide kibbutz with my own orientation of culture by bringing movie, theater, performance, making events, holidays, and things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: How many people lived in the kibbutz?

MR. CECULA: Around 100.

MS. RIEDEL: Around 100. And in terms of the sequence — you arrived in Israel. Did you study first for a few years with —

MR. CECULA: Gdula Ogen in Jerusalem.

MS. RIEDEL: — with Gdula Ogen. And she was in Jerusalem.

MR. CECULA: In Jerusalem, in Katamon [district]. Yes. Jerusalem. I moved to Jerusalem after my uncle — I'd been with my uncle and then I decided I have to go do something, so I go there. I did something in Jerusalem, in Katamon. It was the place like young kids from abroad without parents could be there, study, learn Hebrew, learn in the school, actually study, and also — and learn the profession.

MS. RIEDEL: Was it a school then, like a high school?

MR. CECULA: It was a school in the environment, you know. It's not just a school; it's a really nice environment. Where there's the studios, the schools, playgrounds and lot of different things. And youths in that time was brought to Israel, first to learn the Hebrew, to learn the Bible, to learn the education, Israeli history, and education in general — and then learn profession. And there was a different studios of different kind.

When I saw ceramic studio, I knew it right away — that's what I want to do. And I become part of the ceramic studio where Gdula Ogen was teaching. And I become responsible for the studio after a very short time and running the studio and continued to study with her in her own studio. So I was actually involved in this place and also in her studio.

MS. RIEDEL: And were these primarily electric kilns at this point?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: This was all electric.

MR. CECULA: Yes, this was already army [ph] kilns — we have it in the army deposit [ph]. Yes. Electric kilns, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And so how long were you there in this part in Jerusalem studying with Gdula?

MR. CECULA: It was a couple of years. It was, I think, three years. I was 16 till I go to army — until 18. Two years, for sure, I was there. And then service in the army, you know, I was in the service. I'd been for two and a-half years in the army, but my last year in the army was spent in the kibbutz HaSolelim, where I went during that process of being soldiers and civilian condition.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And when you were in Jerusalem, were you studying with Jean Mayer there as well — or did that come later?

MR. CECULA: No, no, no. Later, later. When I came back to kibbutz HaSolelim, from there — because she live also in the area there. So I start to study with Jean Mayer.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's when you start to study with Jean.

MR. CECULA: She lived in another kibbutz, Ein HaShofet, which is a very beautiful kibbutz and not far away. And there she has a very wonderful studio and gas kilns and all that, and that's where I study.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And the make-up of your kibbutz — it seems that it was very international.

MR. CECULA: Yes. Very progressive, very international, very, kind of, liberal in many different ways. Yes, and it was very progressive place to be, actually.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was your work like at this time? Were you making functional work? Were you making sculptural work? Were you doing architectural?

MR. CECULA: Both. Both. I was experimenting that time. With my own work, with my own creativity. I was doing a lot of functional things because I was selling some of it. I had to provide some money to kibbutz. I made some figurines, some for tourists — kind of funny little elements. [Laughs.] But basically I was also very much exploring my own ability as a sculptor, art projects in clay and in — I think it was early '70 or '68, I had my first exhibition in Tel Aviv.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: In 19 —

MR. CECULA: I think it was '68, '69. I don't remember. I don't have an — I have some records, but it was first exhibition in Tel Aviv. I made full exhibition full of ceramics and it was my first solo show.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And what did you exhibit?

MR. CECULA: I exhibit all different expression in clay. And this was many work which was trying to be sculpture.

MS. RIEDEL: Figurative or abstract?

MR. CECULA: Abstract mostly. Yes, of course. My work was always abstracted [laughs] for some reason. Yes, and it was expression of the material, like in that period we was firing heavy, good kiln, also I fired high-fire stoneware and glazes. But mainly it was objects, scale of 60 centimeter or 40 centimeter size, fire and gas kiln. Expressions in their abstracted forms, a type of —

Of course, that time you already have Peter Voulkos, and Mason was around and the influence of the East Coast was already penetrating. We all kind of was influenced of the freedom of expression of that time, and abstract expressionism, which was parallel with that and give us kind of frame in which we actually — we, I say, because

there was probably more than I — tried to explore in the ceramic in that way.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were the surfaces of the pieces? Were you exploring with glazes and different textures?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Were they all very clean and minimal?

MR. CECULA: No, it was — then it was a red texture and brown and different texture and expression that was very much about the material. My clay was really drawn, torn, and then expressive and evident of material was very strong. Until I start to searching for porcelain, which was my early interest in a different material, which I remember from Poland, of course, seeing this kind of traditional porcelain.

But it was never like a studio process, and for me in some period start to be attractive to go and look for the white and neutral material, which actually don't have so much physical surface like clay, but it's more neutral. And then the form which will be the things which is count — not the material and the presentation, but actually the form in white and pure form material.

That was very much also influence of that time of Kurt and Gerda Spurey which is Austrian ceramicists — Kurt and Gerda Spurey — pioneering the industrial porcelain to the ceramic studios. They've been two people which is in Europe actually work with this industrial material in their own studio.

MS. RIEDEL: And by industrial material —

MR. CECULA: It's porcelain. Porcelain was not available for the studios. It was industrial material. Maybe Japan potters have it, but not in New York and in West. We didn't have porcelain. It was difficult to get it. Nobody know really how to work with that so much at that time. And Rudolf Staffel in the United States was also experimenting with porcelain in different way.

But what they did in Austria — they use slip-casting method. So they took industrial material in the form of slip from the factories and they constructed wonderful abstracted work in that time. It was '68 — around something like that. And this was very impressive and very influential to see suddenly in white, wonderful, noble material like porcelain being part of the expression of the studio — studio ceramic.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you set up to do casting or were you learning to do it?

MR. CECULA: And then I start to learn about casting in porcelain and plaster by myself, kind of by experimenting, and it was hard because I don't know much information. There was not much books about it. I have some book of industrial ceramic from Poland which is I [laughs] look into those industrial processes all the time.

But I want to exploring — I'm an experimentalist. I always look for, to see what's happening if I put this with that or if I try that or if I try this. So I constantly was exploring and kind of developing processes and new method, which is I didn't know but I was interested to learn about it. And through the results, I was progressing — slowly, but I was progressing.

MS. RIEDEL: Was anyone throwing porcelain at the time, or did you experiment with that?

MR. CECULA: Very few, and it was not in Israel. And I don't remember seeing anybody also from the States. Of course, we know thrown porcelain from Japan and China, but we never saw that in the West in that time. This was really early time, early beginning of porcelain in the way of studio. And, yes, it was really the beginning of it, so I really was in the early stage of that entry of porcelain to the ceramic studios. And I fall in love with this material right away and I become working porcelain since then forward.

But most concrete contact with porcelain and the processes of porcelain happened in Brazil, when I arrived in the Schmidt porcelain factory in Curitiba. And I have access to the industry, and so the whole process of porcelain — manufacture of porcelain — could use this material, could use this industrial processes and this was my big, big entry into that new section of ceramic, where actually industry or industrial material or industrial aesthetics are becoming part of my work.

MS. RIEDEL: And up until that time, you'd really just been experimenting on your own. And it was strictly through casting? Did you do any slab building or anything like that?

MR. CECULA: No, I did slab building of course. I did slab building, I did press mold first, and then slowly moved to slip-casting. It took time. It was really difficult to understand it — how to make a slip and we didn't have any formulas and didn't have any information.

And we was experimenting, through industrial information which is almost hard to adapt it into studio. But

somehow we made progress and I starting to make some of early pottery already in Israel. But my really contact with this material and the result, which is becoming really more final and more refined — happened in Brazil.

MS. RIEDEL: And when you were in Israel still, at that first exhibition at Tel Aviv — you were exhibiting both functional and sculptural work?

MR. CECULA: Yes. No, not really — there was not much functional work. The whole exhibition was about sculptures.

[Telephone rings.]

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: But from the beginning, it seems like you were interested in both functional work, be it functional pottery, ceramics, and sculptural, architectural pieces. There was always a back-and-forth, or is that not true?

MR. CECULA: Yes, back and forth. You know, I think what attracts me the most to ceramic is the ability of this material to serve in both ways — to serve as a material for functional, utilitarian, good forms to use at home in life, and serve as a material for expression — which became the creative art, or became sculpture, or whatever you want to call it. But it was this material which is diverse, and the profession allowed to work in both sections of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CECULA: Not like in painting, or artist's sculpture, or whatever. We could make functional, and become designer, if you sign under it, a potter — you sign up to do work — and then next to it you could actually create object which will be on the wall, or architectural element, or sculpture. So that diversity of that medium, and this material in that medium, was probably the most attractive element, which is why I took ceramic.

MS. RIEDEL: You didn't move to Brazil till you were 30 or 32. You moved in 1970.

MR. CECULA: No, it was — I moved to Brazil in 1973, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: In '73.

MR. CECULA: So it makes —

MS. RIEDEL: So you were almost 30 — 29, or something like that?

MR. CECULA: Twenty-nine, 28, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So did you live in the kibbutz the rest of the time that you were in Israel?

MR. CECULA: No. There was a time in the late '70s — I mean, '70-something, '71 or '70 — we left the kibbutz. I left the kibbutz with a group of friends, and we decided to make it our own organization. We didn't like it how the kibbutz functioned at the time.

We was in this period of hippies-type of revolution, and we was thinking different ways about the country, the lifestyle, and all that. And we thought that we need to organize our own life according to our feeling, not to pick up some formula of existing from a different time. We thought, times are changing, and it's important to be contemporary in that time.

We created a group, which is based on creativity, and we want to continue our life to creative process. We moved from kibbutz — first, to Tel Aviv to start to organize ourselves. And then in Binyamina, we opened a commune, which is creative commune — first commune in Israel, which was actually established in Binyamina in 1971.

We, there, had a ceramic studio, jewelry studio, two people was painters, there was a friend who was living with the theater and children's theater, was doing education through the theater, filmmaking. So it was a group of people which has decided to combine their creative resources and life through that, and make money and organize — support ourselves through that, and live this lifestyle and stand out as we really wished.

We have a wonderful house in Binyamina, growing vegetables, and having ducks and chickens, and — it was wonderful, and it was attractive, and everybody was coming to visit us. It was our first commune in Israel, and everybody was going to see the hippies in Binyamina at that time.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. CECULA: It was an attractive period, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And you were able to set up a studio?

MR. CECULA: Yes, of course. I have a wonderful studio — gas kiln, and we have a production of ceramic — and then, actually, we were the core of the commune, because we have the most practical profession. [Laughs.] We made production, and it would sell, actually, and we had money. We was having distribution, and we have little figurines — like, for tourists, and nice little stoneware things, you know. So we do produce and work every day, even if it was —

MS. RIEDEL: And you're making cups, and bowls, and plates, and high-fire stoneware.

MR. CECULA: And lots of that functional work as well. But mostly we would be, kind of, tourist-orientated Israeli characters: Arabs, Jews, Hasids, you know. But in a very abstracted way, kind of nice stylized way. I may have a picture of that, of course, so I will support this with some images.

But it was that kind of period. I could generate a lot of other friends who would serve other things, but for four hours in the morning, we all made it press mold, and create the production. And after that, we did other things. We were structured that we actually work and had products made in this place to support ourselves, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And it seems like it was a very fluid back-and-forth between painters and potters and people in theater, that everyone worked together in the studio to produce functional work, and so —

MR. CECULA: There was that, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: — there was a back-and-forth in terms of creative work, too. Nobody was exclusively doing one thing or another.

MR. CECULA: But you know, it is an environment, and if you can imagine — wonderful, warm days where we were just starting — and one's going to make jewelry, and one goes to studio, and one goes to feed the chickens. It was harmony of that kind of life at that time. And we loved it that way and we just — we didn't have a nine-to-five or something like that. We would work, live and enjoy this process. And cook and eat and have parties, and all that. You know, make wine in the —

MS. RIEDEL: Sounds wonderful. [Laughs.]

MR. CECULA: It was in the wine area, so we made wonderful wine, you know. We made our own wine and got in trouble with the government, and things like that. It was very colorful lifestyle. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds marvelous. How long did that go on for?

MR. CECULA: It was going for a couple of years, and this was interesting to notice — this was the period where everybody — let's say, from that village Binyamina, which is very old village made by one of the Rothschilds a long time ago, established. Most of the young people from that village were moving to the city, going to the city. And here there was a group of young people from the city, moving back to that old village. People were puzzled with this thing. What's going on? What are you doing?

Anyhow, but slowly we reached a kind of relationship with the rest of the town, the village. You know, we were contributing to the plays, and people loved that, so it was okay.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did you market your ware? Did people come to the commune to buy it?

MR. CECULA: No, we had a distribution. We had a group from Tel Aviv which was buying our product and distributing it to the gift stores, and Maskit and other stores, which was at the time a kind of venue for the craft.

MS. RIEDEL: How did you come to move to Brazil?

MR. CECULA: In our commune, there had been a group from Brazil. There was three people from Brazil in our commune, one couple and one person — Gilberto and Basha, and Motcha [ph]. They were Brazilians. Gilberto Rosenman came from Brazil to study in Israel. And Basha, she was Moroccan but lived in Brazil, and they met in Israel. Anyway, the family of Gilberto Rosenman was very rich in Brazil. They have jewelry stores and production of jewelry, so they have a lot of money. And they owned a lot of land in Brazil.

And there was a time in our commune that we decided that things and times in Israel are not so good. There was a lot of military problems with the conflict of Middle East. We all have to serve in the army; we have to go to the army for the reserve every year. You were just taken away from normal life and put into the army. And we didn't like the military process of that, even if it was justified for whatever Israel had to stand for. We was

pacifists at that time, very much, and we wanted the world to look differently. And we want to do what we believe.

So we decided that we would look for another place to transplant the commune to another place. Of course, at that time, we were involved with some meditation and guru, and we have all that part as well — spiritual umbrella for us — and it was a wonderful, unifying condition.

We decided to try and make it in Brazil. We could get land for free and build a commune there. For that reason, my friends moved early to Brazil — the Brazilians — to start to organize it. And we moved after them to really put together, already, the infrastructure for the studio, for open ceramics studio, and things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: And where was this in Brazil?

MR. CECULA: Curitiba. Paraná is the state, southern part of Brazil, and the city called Curitiba. One of the most beautiful cities in the world — not beautiful, but livable. By UNESCO it was declared one of the most livable, well-organized cities as an example for the world.

MS. RIEDEL: What part of Brazil is it in?

MR. CECULA: It is south of Brazil — Paraná. It was a really important experience, because when we came to Brazil, and started to organize this commune, this infrastructure, it turned out that some friends don't want to come — they cannot come from Israel, they have to go somewhere else. It was '70s — early, late '70s already. In '74, I think.

In that period between '72 and '75, things changed quite a lot. A lot of friends of ours from the commune decided to make different ways, and go different — people start to look for their own life more, people started to have children. It was family-orientated already, conditions.

And the thing didn't really work out to build up another commune in that kind of format like it was in Israel. So each one of us started to deal with his own things. We were, of course, involved with ceramics in the studio, and that's why we got contact — we started to work with industry of Schmidt Porcelain.

MS. RIEDEL: Had you worked with industry at all before?

MR. CECULA: No. Yes, I worked in Israel on some competitions and some projects for the Israeli ceramic industry, but this [was] minor.

MS. RIEDEL: Designing objects?

MR. CECULA: Yes, ceramic design objects. Industry in Israel tried to reach for the designers and ceramists and work with them, and some of that was happening there. But the real contact was in Brazil, where the owner of the factory, Mr. Schmidt himself, loved ceramics very, very much, and saw my work, and said, "Listen, come to my factory. I'll give you a studio. Do whatever you want. Play with whatever you want, and if you have something to design for us, we'd be glad to take it."

MS. RIEDEL: He was Brazilian?

MR. CECULA: He was German, born in Brazil. But it was a German family who establishes this factory in the early '20s — and yes, he was descent of German.

MS. RIEDEL: And he was making fine porcelain, functional?

MR. CECULA: Very fine porcelain, yes, beautiful white pots, and good material. And they have good techniques. And the German-manufactured type, of course, it was there. So the process was really good, and good quality of porcelain.

I was so pleased to be able to sit there, and have a little studio and a little house next to the factory, and just go to the factory, take a cast object, and bring it to my little studio — manipulating them, play with them, make abstracted sculpture out of the cast elements — and then starting to compose my own work, which is actually working with plaster, model-making in forms and slip-casting. And that's where I acquired my knowledge about industrial processes and industrial ceramics and that whole flavor of mass production through this material.

MS. RIEDEL: So it seems like two different things happened there. One was, you began to design for the ceramic factory — is that correct? — functional pieces.

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And then the other is that you really began to experiment with the material and mass production.

MR. CECULA: Yes. I experiment and explored, but I also, from time to time, sit down and design a nice little teapot or cup or something for the factory. Some things got into production, some not, but it was not relevant. I was experimenting for myself and I wanted to be a good designer, so I learned how the things look like.

I understand how, in the factory the process is made, what is required. And I learned a lot about how to produce model, an object for industry — which also serves for me. My process was industrial, but on a small scale, and that was why I became more and more efficient in that, knowing more and more the processes, and became more professional in that way.

MS. RIEDEL: Was it more of an apprenticeship or more of a residency? How would you describe —

MR. CECULA: Residency, yes. It was just simply given to me. This is somewhere in Brazil, nobody coming there. So when I was there as a designer, as artist, it was very pleasant for the owner of the factory. I was visiting his home. It was a relationship like that because he respected the ceramic art very much and has a collection of great ceramic and porcelain. And he was very happy to just give me this opportunity.

MS. RIEDEL: How extraordinary.

MR. CECULA: So then I made a group of works, and I made an exhibition in Brazil. I made a very interesting exhibition of my porcelain work in Brazil.

MS. RIEDEL: Where was this in Brazil? In the same little town?

MR. CECULA: It was in São Paulo. I made my full exhibition in São Paolo.

MS. RIEDEL: How long had you been there, now, in Brazil?

MR. CECULA: Around two years.

That was already '75, I think, and that feeling of Brazil — that this is a temporary place — yes, it was very obvious. I felt that this is somewhere at the end of the world. You know, we were somewhere — as I'd been in the center before, living in the kibbutz, now I was completely in the corner. And I was missing this action and connection to the world, to the culture, to the contemporary things, and I decided that I would like to move farther.

I had a girlfriend at that time. She was American — Lanie. She was living within the commune with Israel and she came with us to Brazil, and she was my partner. And we decided that we'd go to the United States. She's from United States — from Pennsylvania, actually — but she has a sister living in Washington, D.C. So we decided to go to the States, we go to Washington, D.C.

MS. RIEDEL: One quick question before we move to the States. When you did your exhibition in São Paulo, how did that compare to the exhibition that you had in Israel before you left?

MR. CECULA: Well, different culture, different place, different material, different expressions, and couple of years.

MS. RIEDEL: It was all porcelain now?

MR. CECULA: It was all porcelain. All porcelain, which was freely made. It was still kind of expressive work. It was not functional. Most of the work was kind of decorative, abstracted small objects — sculptural objects. But they were beautiful, high-fire porcelain, and it was really new for ceramic being produced that way. Nobody worked with industry at that time.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, there would normally be so many problems with cracking, and breaking, no? High-fire, when you're using porcelain sculpturally like that? How did you get around that?

MR. CECULA: Well, you just have to make it right. Yes, of course, a lot of things didn't turn out, but more and more, the work was successful, and I was able to control the process. I learned quickly about how to do it right — and yes, ceramic becoming really nicely produced, and very well presented. So I have another exhibition.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, one-of-a-kind, abstract sculptural —

MR. CECULA: One-of-a-kind objects. Some of them sold. Some of them, I took them with me to the United States. But this is the example of that — I can show you just one little thing from that period.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, yes.

MR. CECULA: So, that kind of work, which is coming from 1973, or '[7]4. The porcelain is industrial, and —

MS. RIEDEL: And just a little bit of color.

MR. CECULA: Yes. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, and the very minimal cube —

MR. CECULA: My work was very much minimalistic at the time, already, and I was reductive in my own approach to the form.

MS. RIEDEL: And were they framed like that? Were the ceramics actually framed and put on the wall?

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes. I have a lot of pieces like that, yes. So some of these objects, some of them on the wall — they've all an abstracted sculptural element in the beautiful white material, which not many people saw that coming from the studio.

MS. RIEDEL: And these were cast? Or these were slab-built?

MR. CECULA: Yes. That porcelain in Brazil, everything was slip-casted, even after that it was manipulated by hand, and constructed, and all that, but it was coming from the process of slip-casting.

MS. RIEDEL: So you learned a lot about how to do that, as well, through the factory?

MR. CECULA: Yes, definitely. That was the first class of learning about slip-casting and porcelain, yes. A wonderful experience, which has given me a lot of power to continue with that later in the future.

MS. RIEDEL: And then you did something completely different — that art project, in 1979 [*Art Project 79*, La Jola Curitiba, Parana, Brazil], right before you left Brazil, which seems completely different that anything you'd done up till that point.

MR. CECULA: Right. That, because at that time — you have to also see it this way — I had been involved with ceramic, but my own orientation was always related to the fine arts. I had been very much connected to the fine arts. I read, I was connected to the process of fine arts and the position of fine arts in our culture, in contemporary culture.

And I was very clear about it that I am part of that. I'm not a part of the traditional team of making pottery in a traditional way, to maintain some kind of link of tradition. That was not my orientation.

As you see from the work — specifically, when I moved to the white porcelain, my work became much more contemporary. Not just because of the white material, but also the reductive thinking of it, that this is just a form, and form becoming evident in my work and before have to stand up because it was knowing the attraction. It was no color — not much color. It was just white in form. So the idea of developing quality form and dealing with the shape was the main idea.

Of course, the quality of the material, the porcelain dictates certain rules. And my way of dealing with that was very reductive, as well. I left [it] white; I didn't paint it a lot. So it was minimalistic in a way. That was that contemporary, modernist — early modernist thinking.

So because I was connected to the fine arts and I knew what was going on in the field of fine arts, I saw a lot of work — earthwork done in that time.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Earthworks.

MR. CECULA: Of course, it was many artists —

MS. RIEDEL: Anyone in particular?

MR. CECULA: [Laughs.] Just got the book, but this is *All My People*, which I was very much connected to the — what is the words — Robert Smithson and Christo and other people who actually made it very large-scale work — not in the galleries but outside of the galleries — was very much attractive to me and I was thinking that this is really avant-garde of our culture — being outside of the museum, being outside of the gallery, being in the nature and creating art, and land art becoming very much effective material idea for me, specifically that my material is earth, as well — clay.

So seeing it that way, I thought — to legitimize my thinking, I said, somebody should do some earthwork in clay as a ceramic contribution to that area of involvement. And I was looking how I, ceramist, can take advantage — or not advantage, but plug myself into that frame of operation.

And of course, the place where I live, it was full of clay. It was this area of factories of clay, of ceramic, of roof tiles, porcelain; everything was there in that area. So I say, wow, this is like one big studio. It's not that you have to work in the studio; you have to work outside of the studio because it is there. Material is out there.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. You just go gather it, you dig it.

MR. CECULA: Right. And that's why this idea come up — to create the work which is actually in the field; it's clay-orientated. And the *Art Project 79* became that first project. And this is exactly covering that aspect of how ceramics participates in that sense.

MS. RIEDEL: So you went out and you dug the clay, you brought it back to the factory, you turned it into bricks, fired it and came back and basically reinstalled it where it had come from.

MR. CECULA: Exactly. I created work, which is I can call it this — we didn't do nothing. [Laughs.] Because the material was there, the shape was there, and what we did, we just did what's the progress — what civilization is doing. We're taking material, conforming it to something, and then we turn it back as everything turning back to the nature. So this was the cycle. But that opened up for me first entry to the field of something which is I carry on since then. It is called *Archeology of the Future*.

Seeing ceramics as a document of the past, to eyes of archeology, where they're all defining the level of cultures and civilizations by pieces of clay. That, itself, for me was very conceptual part for making creative artwork.

So I started to deal with the issue of archeology. And knowing that I am ceramist, I came into the place that I want to prepare for the archeologists of the future material, knowing that that is the way how things are being judged already.

So that art project is first work which is actually dealing with that idea. Each brick before it was fired got a print inside of the wet clay — *Art Project 79*. And the shape of that form, which it were the bricks was actually put it in, all the clay which was taken out from them. This was coded into each brick —

MS. RIEDEL: So an impression of the negative space remained carved out.

MR. CECULA: Yes, that form was fired and then everything was returned to that place where the clay was taken out but put together with wet clay, sand, and water; not with cement, because the idea was that nature would take over this. It would disintegrate with the nature actually as the cycle of nature is going on.

And then actually each brick taking the place of being representative of the whole idea, because it's like a DNA, or it's like a cell. A code is there. And if somebody wants to reconstruct that, he has all the information on each individual brick, which is maintained this forever and ever because high-fire ceramic stay forever.

So that was the concept, and I was intending to do a couple of review or reconnaissance after that to see what's happened to the project. I didn't have a chance — I didn't have money to do that that time. I just had the idea that it is fall apart and the bricks are wheeled away somewhere. But it would be nice to go back and find the bricks in somebody's house or in somebody's porch or something and knowing that this line of how work penetrates, how work this continuing its life from disintegration into the other process.

MS. RIEDEL: And that piece is interesting, too, because in many ways it strikes me as the first example of the interaction of multiples versus one-of-a-kind and unique, and how they can fit together and what they can say about the value of one or the other.

MR. CECULA: Yes, definitely. I work with the fragment, which is make one, unified idea. That was very interesting for me to starting to understand about multiplication, or working with multiple objects.

Also, that brought me back to my architectural work I did with Logan [ph]. The idea of making large-scale work, which is I didn't have a chance to do it all these years before. So it was a kind of side effect of my process but nevertheless, I thought it was important work; I made a documentation of that; I have some materials. It was just laying; it was not published; it was not nothing. But it was done for my own satisfaction.

Of course, some people helped me with the work, some friends, a group of us. And there was little opening — there was some, within mine, something out of that. But basically, it was done just for the experience.

And then, this was carried on till I created this new work now last year. And then I thought, this is a nice way to

connect these two different —

MS. RIEDEL: Up in Katonah, we're talking about. This piece with —

MR. CECULA: Yeah, the Katonah exhibit — the *Klepisko*

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah, it's interesting, too, because it also seems to establish what we talked about on the phone, I think, last week, which is the cyclical way that you work, and an idea of when it happened in 1979, and it'll circle back around. And the architectural work might have happened earlier in Israel and then circled back around in Brazil. So it seems that you've built a long-system series.

MR. CECULA: Yes. I think nothing gets lost. The things which have become good idea — a good, important part of the creative accumulation — it's somehow coming up later; doesn't matter how many years after.

I'm finding I'm doing something now, and then I just think about it, I say, wow, this is something from the past which I already thought to do or prepare myself to make, and just now it's happened. So sometimes things have to wait a long time till they're born. You know, this incubation process.

And yes, it's a long — when you're creative on the long span of time, you see different points where these things are returning and coming back and forth, the ideas and concepts and imagination.

MS. RIEDEL: So in 1976 — '77 — you moved to the United States?

MR. CECULA: It was earlier, in '75. I moved to Washington, D.C. I just survived one year in Washington, D.C. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Were you making ceramics there? Were you working?

MR. CECULA: Yes, I had a studio. I have my studios — wherever I go, I have a studio, of course.

MS. RIEDEL: And you built a gas kiln?

MR. CECULA: No, I did that part in somebody else's studio, sometimes. And it was in Washington, D.C., or something like that. But Washington wasn't the place for me. It was political city and technocrats and everybody was doing different things. So I didn't have a good time there. I just survived it this year.

Then I know about New York and I always want to check New York and knowing that's the cultural center. And then there was this buzz about SoHo, about artists getting together. And I said, that's the place we have to check it out. And I always want to be in the center of things.

When I was Israel, I lived — from kibbutz, we moved to Tel Aviv because it was the really important time in Tel Aviv and there was a group of artists there which is we belonged to them, we were part of that; we created a gallery of our own. It was the sense of doing things together with other artists. That was a very important part of my communal collective memory.

So knowing about SoHo a little bit, that this is like a place where artists moving in and creating their own environment, I thought very attractive. And I came here with Lanie — we got married, of course, at the time when I came to the United States — to New York. And when we came to New York, we stayed in a hotel.

But we came to SoHo and from the first hour being in SoHo, I know that's the place I am going to have to be. I felt if there is anything happening in the world important for the culture in art, it's here.

MS. RIEDEL: What was it? Can you put your finger on it?

MR. CECULA: Yes. It was great atmosphere of transformation of the urban environment from industrial and neglected into the fantastic, imaginative, and creative space where artists are taking advantage of the space — urban space; lofts; taking all the industrial empty spaces; creating wonderful places where they have a studio, performance, and living. That was for me the most attractive part. Where art and life and culture and society disintegrated into this kind of process and atmosphere in Soho was wonderful.

Everybody was getting sheetrocks [sic], from the lumber to create partition in the lofts to rent sections to others, to create studios [laughs] separated from the livings, from the bedroom. It was fantastic, creative construction process where art is the — more construction than art. [Laughs.] But they actually made it their own environment to create art a little bit later.

It was a wonderful atmosphere. There was a magazine, the *Soho News* was coming out at the time. There was restaurant, food for artists. It's called Food, and just artists there. They eat soup with a big plate of bread.

And everywhere you saw artists with the paint over their jeans; openings; performances on every floor, which you can go out just by walking in and stay and see fantastic Japanese contemporary dance performance or any other performance, or installations, or this art which is people were used to at that time the self-inflicted pains and things like that was [laughs] — there was a lot of experimentation going on.

But the energy was fantastic. You rubbed shoulders with the best artists of that time. And the effect of the art field on me, on the ceramics which I was trying to produce, was great and was very important. And my work was more and more starting to lean towards the fine arts, of the expression of fine arts than to the crafts and pottery.

MS. RIEDEL: And you opened a little studio? Is that right? A little shop, as well?

MR. CECULA: Yes, it was here — just one street over — one building over. I moved to this street — when I came to New York, I said, we have to make a decision right away. And I decided we're moving to New York and the same day we found this little store; we rented the store; we go back to Washington, took our stuff in a truck, and brought everything to New York.

And this place was a very good solution for me because my work — when I came to the United States and worked in Washington, D.C., and tried to sell my work — tried to show my work to the galleries — I didn't have a success at all because at that time, everything here in this area was crafts and handmade. And my work was handmade but was not evident of handmade; there was no fingerprints. It was lumber [ph] and glazes.

So my work didn't fit into the collection of what they have in the store; they didn't know how to look at this work. And they always say, oh, your work is so European. I was thinking, what's so European about it? I didn't really get it. What was the meaning of that? But I guess this was the feeling of it, that it was white porcelain and all that. It was no market for that.

MS. RIEDEL: Because it was very minimal, very abstract as opposed to very — [inaudible] — folk craft.

MR. CECULA: Correct. And, well, I thought I didn't lose my faith in my work but I didn't feel I was in the right place so I had to find my own way of exposing myself. And that's why — because it was on the street — the studio — and had a vitrine. It was a butcher shop before. So it was a wonderful opportunity for me to create a studio — a living-space studio and little showroom.

I closed the window facing the street — it made a very nice vitrine — and put nice lights; put three of my objects, with one of my objects in the window, in a nice environment. And two days later, or a day later, I already have people knocking on the door; Architects, artists. Wow, you make that? Can we buy it? I said, well, here we go. I'm in the right place.

And immediately, I started to have contacts and be exposed, and magazines start to come and they knew it, I guess, this is new and fresh, and new ideas. And I was exposed tremendously in all the New York magazines and press. And people start to come and orders. It moved right away, so I had a good feeling.

MS. RIEDEL: And the work at this time, is it purely sculptural or are you doing design for —

MR. CECULA: It was already something of blend of the design and the sculpture because my work was not functional but looked functional — like teapots; crazy teapots of different kinds, which is becoming compositions and not for tea but the object looked like, condition. And I made more and more abstracted work, which is actually I was playing with utility; that it looks utilitarian but it's not.

So this is becoming the design moving to making fine art. But this area between design and art started to becoming gray area, which was very interesting for me. And from that time, I think I and probably many others got involved in that direction where actually art and design are starting to bridge together, and there is overlap, and that is a wonderful place to explore it.

MS. RIEDEL: And when did you found Modus Design?

MR. CECULA: Modus Design came later. First I started my studio — and this is the chronology of that. I established the studio and having that little showroom. The showroom was getting bigger and bigger because there was more and more interest. And it makes the studio smaller and smaller, and more and more showroom. And it comes to the point when I have to move away from that studio and make it a big studio for production because I have orders.

MS. RIEDEL: And in your studio, were you able to produce everything? You had every —

MR. CECULA: Yes, it was small, and it was difficult, but it was —

MS. RIEDEL: You didn't have to send out — you didn't design and have somebody else —

MR. CECULA: No, no. I worked my own. I opened a big studio in Brooklyn at that time. Like many artists start to move to studios in Brooklyn, I open studio in Brooklyn at that time. I have a loft which is along Greene Street at that time. And that became showroom. That store here becomes totally showroom. We called it Contemporary Porcelain. And this was the first place which was showing art porcelain — artistical [sic] porcelain. And Lanie was running the gallery.

We started having exhibitions of other artists, also. We brought work from Austria, from Germany, from Holland, from Europe, and we showed European ceramics here. For the first time, was exposure from Europe. It was a wonderful new presentation of new meanings and work about — different from what was in United States.

MS. RIEDEL: So a very postmodern focus, all sculptural.

MR. CECULA: Right, correct. We are already in the period when Memphis starting to penetrate — the style of [the] Memphis [Group] — which has brought fantastic explosion of ceramics which is not functional but funny, colorful. And I started to see also in United States, Peter Shire in California. Jack Earl was fantastic inspiration for me; was one of the people which has really affected my work very much.

MS. RIEDEL: Really — Jack? Oh, because he did such amazing work with porcelain; so narrative.

MR. CECULA: Yes, and he was one of the artists which has probably first conceptual content in his work. And for me, it was big revelation to see this kind of operation.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you looking at Ken Price or Ron Nagle?

MR. CECULA: Ken Price, of course. Ken Price, Ron Nagle, also. But his Price [ph] was really mostly influential, I think, because he was diversified; he used slip-casting techniques; he used low tech — actually hobby artist materials. He took a different approach to make ceramics. That was, for me, fantastic to see. And this was also my orientation, and so I was very much parallel to follow up his work as well in my own development.

And I was starting work also in the Memphis period. I always follow up the trends which has come from art and architecture, and I was looking how they penetrate in the ceramics field. I was one of these people, maybe, who actually was plugging these styles and expressions into ceramics and into my studio, experimenting quite early with them.

So the gallery became very active and became very well-known and was well-covered. It was a beautiful design. We got an award for the design of the space and all different kinds of this. And, yeah, it was attractive to not only be — in ceramics, which is leading with its own work, but also support this whole movement of the group of people who work in the same way of thinking.

So to make a point, it was that I am not solo; I am a part of some kind of movement, some kind of group, which is maybe not yet here but it's already in Europe. I started to recognize these differences already that time and I identified myself with more in European expression at that time; with Kurt Spurey and all these people from the Vienna school; with Mateu Tung [ph] which was first design-orientated ceramics; the Vienna collection, which was the first production of utilitarian things made by the design-like orientated processes. So then the design started to really become part of the process of my studio. And design as a design started to be more and more concrete in my work.

MS. RIEDEL: And when did you open the studio?

MR. CECULA: Then, I opened the studio in Brooklyn. It was —

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, sorry, no, Contemporary, the shop. Contemporary Porcelain —

MR. CECULA: I opened completely the gallery turned now to be gallery; the studio, I moved my studio to Brooklyn; I have two or three people working for me; I have —

MS. RIEDEL: This is late '70s, early '80s?

MR. CECULA: Yes, it was '78 already, I think. I got a position of teacher in technical ceramics [ph] department of Parsons School of Design at that time. I was called to open and create a department.

MS. RIEDEL: What year was that when you started at Parsons?

MR. CECULA: In '79, yes, maybe '80. I've been there for 20 years so it was, like, early. Yes, I was called to open the design department at Parsons School of Design. And it was for me big challenge. I realized that this is chance for me to actually start to deal with education and to share that vision which I have about new ceramics, farther.

What was really great about it that I teach not the ceramists; I teach project design students. And that gives me completely new look on how the design operates and design methodology.

MS. RIEDEL: Because by now you had started Modus. I think Modus started in the early '80s and Parsons was '85?

MR. CECULA: Not yet. Modus started a little bit later. But this is the transition from this studio to Brooklyn and teaching at Parsons. By receiving more and more orders on my production work because I started to do some production work, some items.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was this like? What was the production work? Ceramics?

MR. CECULA: Rice bowls, little tea sets, breakfast sets.

MS. RIEDEL: All porcelain?

MR. CECULA: All porcelain, all design, all semi-functional —

MS. RIEDEL: Unglazed or clear?

MR. CECULA: Glazed, yes, of course. But then I started to use decals, so industrial processes of decals, colors, decorated plates and things like that. I designed a line for Tiffany's; I designed a line for Barneys. There were starting to be these kinds of operations going on, and I needed to have a bigger studio and help and more assistance.

MS. RIEDEL: For Tiffany's, you designed tableware?

MR. CECULA: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And Barneys as well?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. CECULA: There was a line to be designing for them. And for Tiffany's, it was porcelain; for Barneys, it was colored dishes.

MS. RIEDEL: So there was color that was introduced.

MR. CECULA: I did different things for them.

MS. RIEDEL: Was Tiffany's all white? Just very minimal, clean —

MR. CECULA: For Tiffany's, it was very nice. I don't think I have it here or anything. But it was wonderful. It was white porcelain dishes where I just actually, with the china paint make dirty the edges; like, paint — gold, red, little touches of the color. But they're not beautiful lines but just, like, a fragment of expression. And they loved it; they thought it was very contemporary. And so things like that.

But what was really more important was to establish a movement; not that I was establishing the movement but I was sensing it there and I was giving them opportunity to be visible and make it. The kind of first curatorial kind of inspiration [laughs] work. Actually, I looked into Europe to some groups of artists, which is we created the connection with them and established an exhibition for them.

MS. RIEDEL: Who were some of those groups?

MR. CECULA: For example, we showed the whole department from Vienna from Mateu Tung. We showed a group from early Dutch ceramists at that time from Rotterdam Gallery. We made contact, and we showed it. We showed individual artists from Germany and France and England. And we made group shows, individual shows.

MS. RIEDEL: So it was a very international focus.

MR. CECULA: Yes, right away.

MS. RIEDEL: Primarily Europe.

MR. CECULA: Yes. We were starting to feel we had a mission that we are introducing new types of ceramics in this country. And through this contemporary porcelain, we wanted to penetrate it and we wanted to give

exposure and affect the field so we could get an article in *Ceramic[s] Monthly* and other places. It never was easy because this field was very defensive here and people in here didn't want to accept the changes coming. And the white porcelain was not effective to them; it was not really — it was soulless. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Soulless. You were really expanding the continuum of functional ceramics in New York at the time from the more folk pottery to more minimal, European, postmodern approach, yes?

MR. CECULA: Yes, objects. Then it started a period of objects. So the utilitarian works were utilitarian works but it was also the principle of objects. Everything what I did contained some concept which I established for myself in my work. Even if this is functional, I want it to participate with creativity of people.

So I made a lot of work where the people have to play with them. The sets of coffee and teapot on tray for decoration is distributed on the tray around the form, and when you're moving these things around it, you created compositions. Things which always have this interactive principle, even if those were just to look on it or if this was to functional, like I made the rice bowls with the chopsticks.

When I put the chopsticks on the rice bowls, I created grooves for them. And by putting them together, you created very nice landscape of the table. I call that "working with the landscape of the table," that you can arrange it different arrangements. That was the principle of it. How I entered into the domestic sphere where I want to just not provide the dishes to eat from it but I want to provide dishes which have different types of function in utilitarian area.

I used to create lot of ceremonial sets, which is coming from Zen kind of influence — [Japanese] tea ceremony — where I wanted to make them Western. I wanted to translate that to the Western sphere, that whole idea. So the design was more for Western but the principle of the ceremony was there. I want to enter that ceremony would be part of Western life.

And I was making — as a designer, I thought I have a mission to create objects which will dictate or force people to make ceremonies or make different approaches about life and how you're using ceramics with attention, with a little bit more, slower time. That was my motto into the design. And the design was having these elements into them as they were developed.

MS. RIEDEL: So it would affect the way human beings interacted with the objects and changed the way they interacted and then changed — and then it hopefully inspires one sort of thought or another.

MR. CECULA: Yes, exactly. Then I discovered that designers have this kind of position; that he can dictate [laughs] things by making objects. If you create a handle like that, that's how it's going to be handled. Or if it's going to be left-handled or right-handled or it's going to be positioning, or cup have to be turned into a dish because it cannot stand by themselves. This is the principles which is you imposing on the owner. And that became relevant to the form of design. So that period is full of this kind of exploration of early design principles. We're talking about '70s, early '80s, where design wasn't yet the word so much.

MS. RIEDEL: This makes me think of something we discussed on the phone last week, which is that you said very early on, contemporary jazz and modern dance were very much of an influence. And just listening to the way you're describing these designs, it sounds like counterpoint and dissonance and different ways of composition, but based on rhythm and pattern and deconstruction; putting things together in different ways. Was that some of the thinking going on behind the thesis?

MR. CECULA: Yet it's subliminal. You know, it's not really clear where these things are popping up in the work. But the nature of thinking, the nature of what you allowed yourself to do came from that. That idea of making, for example, not harmonious connection was okay, justified or legitimized, came from that. That by seeing that, that you can do that in jazz or you can do that in dance — you can do that in ceramics.

So it was translating that into my method of working — color or form or shape or functional concept — was part of that. So it wasn't the translation of jazz into the ceramic in that way or dance in that way, but the idea of how you function and how you allowed yourself to think about what you want to do. And the position which you're taking for yourself was from that.

MS. RIEDEL: That makes sense.

MR. CECULA: A lot of influence, yes, of course. And later, it's starting to already get more — thinner and probably becoming — different areas start to get affected as well. You know, of course, when I made ceramics — when I started colors and decals, I developed this technique of printing, myself, sheets of colors — just my decal company — and then I cut the decals and composed it because I didn't want to have a permanent pattern so I just took the colors and worked with them.

So that allowed me to play with more graphics on the ceramics. And then of course, the whole rational constructivism appealed to me as an element of color, form, and Mondrian and all that part of color sphere in thinking. We're going back to the very big influence of Suetin and Rodchenko and a lot of artists which in that period moved to the factory to make their art in the factory.

And so that was close to me because I was an artist who used the industrial process. So it was natural for me to look into this rational constructivism and suprematism period and take advantage of their conceptive thinking, as well as Bauhaus from the other side.

So my influence started to be kind of a blend of Bauhaus, rational constructivism, and Zen aesthetics in one kind of salad, which is actually — all of them actually can synchronize nicely because they have very similar principles.

But, yes, I was drawn into inspiration from there more from than from, let's say, traditional Japanese pottery or the California funky expression of the American clay work, at that time. So my head was turning more East and towards Europe than towards the local exploration of clay work in the States.

MS. RIEDEL: So there's always been a back-and-forth between your work and what's going on in terms of Europe.

MR. CECULA: Yes. And I actually started to recognize in myself that I had much more of that; that my own personality is more connected to that, let's say; that my work is becoming a little bit more intellectual, in a sense, than more expressive. That change, maybe, in that way.

But, true, I also was feeling a lot about tactile and emotions, which is so my work is not always tactile; there also was this contact with the body. And it's just kind of go to the filters, which is most reductive and more refined, instead of being over-decorated and overdone and over-telled [sic] and over-said and all that. The idea — what I call it, the discipline of imagination, the discipline of reductiveness. That not every place has to be filled up; there is a little bit white. So that was the principle of that period, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Then, so you started teaching in Parsons. You have the studio going and you have — the Contemporary Porcelain shop is open and now —

MR. CECULA: And then Modus is starting to open up because I started to work with Parsons and all the design becoming clearer for me as an entity, as a profession, as a part of the culture, as a substance, as a medium. And I'm starting to feel the market in design and business; it's all becoming integral kind of elements of that game.

And I said, okay, so I have to establish now a firm, design firm, where not only I, but I can work in groups because it's the idea of collective thinking becoming interesting for me. So I made a project with a group of students; how they work together, learn, students to creatively work together to create a team of design.

All that starting to also become part for me. So my work with the school was not one-way, I teach them; *I* learned also a lot. And I absorbed from school and from that atmosphere which is the school was standing for a lot of things which I adopted to my own operation. And then, of course, I created the Modus Design, that first design group in ceramics, working as umbrella for my designs and others.

MS. RIEDEL: Did Modus produce all its own work?

MR. CECULA: Yes. In the early stages, all was produced here in Brooklyn.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was all functional work.

MR. CECULA: Yes. Mostly was functional.

MS. RIEDEL: And very minimal and mostly porcelain —

MR. CECULA: Only porcelain. Only porcelain.

MS. RIEDEL: But at a later point, you began to introduce new materials that were being developed, yes?

MR. CECULA: That's later, when I came to Poland. But in that period, I have a studio in Brooklyn — large studio in Brooklyn, beautiful studio. I have three kilns, I have three people — employees, assistants — and we produced daily work. It was routine, like a factory, almost, operation. For a couple of years, we worked like that. The studio in Brooklyn was wonderful. It was full of artists working there. So it was a very creative place also to work.

And we were starting to make shows. Instead of exhibitions — shows. We go to Rhinebeck show; we go to Philadelphia show; we show in Javits Center; in gift shops; there's starting to be this design-orientated area. So

we're starting to move now from crafts to the design more and more, and work becoming more design-orientated. Also, it's fitting more into this category. So, it's from Rhinebeck, which is this craft show, to the Javits Center, which is the design show. That was the new transition.

MS. RIEDEL: And things were mostly designed in sets and multiples. They would interact; sometimes they would stack. There would be relationships among different vessels within that certain form.

MR. CECULA: That's right, correct. Forms was like that. Always was dealing with the table and domestic ceramics in that time. But always interactive and different from the regular things you could find and create it better.

MS. RIEDEL: I think of most of them as being monochromatic. But then I think of teapots with very elaborate sort of striped patterns.

MR. CECULA: Teapots is always — you know, teapots is a magic thing for ceramists because this is one of those objects when you can really play with improvisation because it has several elements. It has a foot, body, a spout, handle, lid, caps and things, so it's a unit, it's a collection, it's an environment, it's several things. So the teapots are becoming really exploratory material and if we look in the ceramics field, we have teapots and teapots and there are books about teapots and it's fantastic material to work with.

MS. RIEDEL: That to me seems the one form where you really actually play with pattern. The others seem to much more focus specifically on form.

MR. CECULA: Yes. Then it started to be more of an idea of what you do with surface and form. And if you see here with the example, the other teapot, when you make teapot and make it with different things out of it — cup and saucer, cup and cup, and teapot. But you see, this is the period where actually I took the advantage of ready-made ideas and translated them into my own work.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And what year are these from?

MR. CECULA: Well, we can look it on the back, I think. There is a year on that. No, this one don't have it. I assume this is '80s, 80-something.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, this is more patterned than I've seen, I think, than the earlier work.

MR. CECULA: Yes, this is the time when I — in different period, I do different thing. But I do think so, I think it's around '85.

I started to explore the industrial processes more and more. And then not just the making of the object but also decoration of the object. So I started to get involved in decals — ceramic, printed decoration. And I acquired little decals from different places and I was composing from there.

I think after Howard Kottler, I was probably another one who actually took advantage of the commercial decals, as Howard Kottler was really influential on my work. So in a way, I did the kind of search for how I can incorporate differently the banalic [sic] patterns of little roses, the classic decorations. And that led me towards this manipulation of the design form and the surface.

I believe that this is have a lot of impact later on the field, because that idea of the kind of lightness and usage of the industrial process of slip-casting. You know, when I started to make slip-casting process, it was forbidden in ceramics studio. Plaster was forbidden in the ceramics studio. Whoever make molds — mold was industrial. It was a no-no.

So [laughs] it was kind of breaking ground for this idea; that processes and work and the result of it actually created some kind of legitimization, and for many other ceramists. I teach and lecture so I actually introduced the processes of method and distributed that towards the field.

And what's really happened in that time is that many ceramists who left city — dropped out cities — people who went to the country to create their own lifestyle — starting to coming back to the city. In the '80s, we're starting to see a returning of many people who tried the country life for a while and found it boring or not sufficient and start to move back to the city.

And then when you move to the city and you make ceramics, then you have to change your perception about how you want to work, and the methods which you work in the country are not sufficient in the city — space, economy. So people look for different solutions. And then slip-casting as a method of production started to become evident.

And everybody called me and asked me and I was giving advice to hundreds of people how to do slip-casting and mold. People really want to know how to make things like that. In a way, they was not trained because the

schools didn't teach that stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: No, not at all.

MR. CECULA: No. So it was a new kind of atmosphere and I was kind of on the early part of that, where actually I felt I was contributing and also I was seen as a resource for that kind of things. I knew the industry, I knew where to get materials, I knew how to put together this situation [inaudible] production like that. So I was always invited to make workshop and things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were you teaching at Parsons? Were you teaching in the design department, per se?

MR. CECULA: Yes, I was teaching ceramics. But more and more, it was moving towards the design because the students, which had come to learn ceramics — it was the design students — product design — which is most of the year, or time in the school, they made models in foam, in synthetic materials. And when they came to ceramics, they haven't encountered real material. And after a little bit of process, they could actually achieve final, made product which is functioning; not only prototype, not mock-up, but real product. That was a big change.

And I generated tremendous amount of interest among the design — product design students — and they all want to take ceramics courses, a ceramics semester, one, two. And many of them become ceramists. They end up the graduation of the product design with a ceramics product. Wonderful product. All the magazines, we have publicity all over because it was, really, unique new product made by the designer; ceramic made by the designers.

This, I can say, was one of the first places — maybe in Vienna, Mateu Tung teach similar processes there. But this was here in the United States. Parsons School was the first school which has introduced slip-casting into method and design methodology to the ceramics, and actually produce ceramists as designers.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And you introduced that.

MR. CECULA: Yes. I mean, yes. I was — my part here at the school of Parsons School of Design which was actually looked through this area as a very leading department, because we was different and doing different things.

MS. RIEDEL: So when you were teaching, did the curriculum include both the technique of slip-casting itself and then how to work with industry as well?

MR. CECULA: Industry was difficult because there was no industry already in the States so much. But we did bring industrial processes into the school. So it was mainly industry in the [inaudible/cross talk].

MS. RIEDEL: Like a cottage industry, mm-hmm [Affirmative.].

MR. CECULA: But what really is important to realize at that time that these students are not ceramists. So when they come to the clay, they come with ideas of products. And they don't carry the baggage of this tradition of clay, which is all other ceramists have it. They didn't interested in wood-fire or things like that or effect of glazes and all that. They're interested in creating concept, product, and objects in the reductive form and it is speaking as a contemporary product design. This is made in ceramic, as it could be made in plastic, wood, or metal. That becomes just another method.

But, because ceramic is magic; because it's contained so many different things into the quality of the material and the history, which is it carry on with them, that becomes richer and richer from plastic or other materials, and ceramic today, if we see this exhibition, we can see how it is actually retro, kind of retrospectivity into this tradition of ceramics; how to take advantage of the baroque and classic and nostalgic, pastoral landscape and blue colors and Delft blue and all that. It's not just material. It is what ceramic culture is about.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. The entire history of it.

MR. CECULA: So I'm immediately realizing that I'm not working with clay; I'm not working with ceramic. I'm working with the ceramic medium. And my work is *about* ceramic. And then I start to take advantage of the classics, amphora, and shapes which is what was in past. So all that becomes a vocabulary. It's not just material. It was incorporated already with this old tradition of the culture, which is porcelain, specifically, through Europe and the Far East.

MS. RIEDEL: Just to be clear, now we're talking specifically about your work and not what you were teaching at Parsons, correct?

MR. CECULA: You cannot separate it. It is symbiotics.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, so you bring that into Parsons, as well.

MR. CECULA: Obviously. That's what's also wonderful about Parsons is that we all was people who has a part-time job. Teaching was not the only thing we do. We all have businesses, design operations outside. And we brought the experience — we in New York City — we brought the experience of the urban, economical sense of city with all the business sense of it into the design, into the creative process of ceramics.

And that created a field. That created a field.

And it all became kind of base for what's today's ceramic designs. I'm not saying this is the only one, but from this area, that's what it was. Parsons School of Design contributed tremendously to the period of 20 years to what ceramics is today. I am sure about that.

MS. RIEDEL: So expanding that continuum of what's possible, expanding the concept of the history, bringing that more into the contemporary day.

MR. CECULA: Right. Curriculum was created this way, that it gives the students of product design free environment in which they can create a concept supported by final, good material, like ceramics or porcelain. Porcelain available in Parsons School of Design, all the methodology was available; technique was taught, these industrial processes.

But the concept was — for example: object in transition. This is the assignment. And then, students have enough room to take this as much as they want — if to stay in the utilitarian section or pull it out farther, farther, and farther. That was always the principle of the assignments.

Sometimes, I have like an architectural or modular element in the breaks [ph] or something which is different processes and projects — and different projects all the time. Every semester, different projects. So the diversity of projects taught the students different ways of thinking and the way to using this material. But all was related to the design.

MS. RIEDEL: But they had free range to go from functional to sculptural, everything in between.

MR. CECULA: That's why they loved it, because in the design area where they teach product design, they probably have to stay more dealing with the issue of the function or principle of it. But here in ceramics, they could liberate — they could be free. They could fly and take a cup and make from the cup a sculpture. It was allowed. And for them, it was very important, I guess, and very contributive to their creative thinking. So we was very attractive to the department.

MS. RIEDEL: As we were discussing earlier, the concept became primary.

MR. CECULA: And so you see, this is my thinking. Whatever was happening in my own development was passed to the school, passed to the students. I created tremendous amount of students which is work similar within I, or they developed in different directions. But basically, it came from that kind of orientation of that freedom of making the object the way you want it and this kind of distillization [sic] of it in a minimalistic or reductive way, or at least to be contemporary in a sense.

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: So much of what you learned in terms of ceramics, you learned outside of a university or a formal school setting. You had your apprenticeships in Israel, two different ones through the kibbutz, a lot of it was self-taught with the initial porcelain, then you were down in Brazil. How do you see universities or more formal training fitting into the range of design, craft, art?

MR. CECULA: In the States, there is the problem. It is the problem with ceramic department in the States, that they are kind of forgotten in their own time. They stay [laughs] — call it a reformation; they didn't go through reformation for a long time. It's simply that there is teachers [who] work in this department for many, many years, with the wrong techniques, and because they are professional teachers on tenures, they are staying there for life. They don't have much more experience from outside. They don't participate so much in the outside competitions of things and they don't bring much fresh material to the students. They teach the traditional method of Oriental glazes, with fire, gas fire, stonework, all expression of clay, which is — today, it's not that interesting anymore.

Nevertheless, we see a lot of work coming up today. But until today, the department in ceramics — the ceramic department in the schools was minor and many of them are closing because they're very expensive and they actually do manual process — the handmade stuff is not interesting any more [to] schools, which is — I don't think it's a right direction and we find our own things at Parsons.

And maybe if I can bring example: One day that we got information that most of the handmade processes will be cancelled and because we are all going digital and we're all going to be just working on the computer, and we all demonstrate and we all fight to bring and live the connection to the handmade, to the process of touch. We think it's important, and I think ceramic has a mission to actually bring the feeling and the form together and not just to stay in this digital, electronic principle.

Which are very valuable, but we're thinking that the connection of the tactile and the form as very real, even in the contemporary world, today, and we are actually going to be missing it if we not continue to — so we brought a lot of work about tactile, into this digital area, where, actually, we call the "digital hand" to balance that idea between the digital and handmade processes. So in my opinion —

MS. RIEDEL: So you found a way to do that? To have the actual handmade interact with the digital? To have both at the same time?

MR. CECULA: That was the mission. It was clear, philosophical mission. We made it manifesto. We wrote things about it and we thought, it is this — the whole technology of digital are skipping the hand-touch, the hand-contact between the man and the form and we need to guard.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember when this happened? Is it fairly recently to when you were —

MR. CECULA: Eighty-something — it is '88, '89.

MS. RIEDEL: Quite a while ago.

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So you really fought to maintain —

MR. CECULA: Yes, because it was the direction of the school, and we reacted to that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, of course.

MR. CECULA: And I think many schools go through it and going through it. They're giving up all this — what do you call it — manual, or the —

MS. RIEDEL: Manual or manipulated or plastic or —

MR. CECULA: Yes, the — [inaudible] hand-professional, what do you call this? It's like mechanics and things, you know. They want to give up.

MS. RIEDEL: It's going all towards CAD and —

MR. CECULA: So, you know, we reacted to that, and the students themselves organized themselves and it was a collective kind of appearance. But also, it's not only we, because I think also the world realized that this evolution of technology suddenly brought in question a lot of things, how we are progressing, and we saw that even in the modeling processes and just the technical, technological system of modeling in computer, we saw that there is a turning now to the handmade operation.

And these joysticks, for example, which is you carving in a computer, not to the numbers, so the idea that the hand is leading towards how you shaping things as important element, it also became evident even in the development of technology.

MS. RIEDEL: That's very interesting.

MR. CECULA: Yes. And so technology returned back after that to try to bridge that contact of man and the process.

MS. RIEDEL: So there's something about the actual forming of the object and the hand's involvement in that, that's somehow very important.

MR. CECULA: Very important.

MS. RIEDEL: Really significant.

MR. CECULA: Yes. It is important when you are shaping the object with your hand: Are you shaping this object to the computer-generated information? The amount of the information which your hand is passing through, which is the most important element of our recognizing the world around us. Except that we see, the first thing what

we do: We touch. If we want to be sure about something, we don't just look, we also touch. So we discover that we cannot be without touch.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: Even in the electronic world we are living. So the element of touch must be maintained and we thought, yes, ceramic is that kind of medium. We just have to continue, to be fragile, breakable, touchable. This is what ceramic should represent in contemporary culture and we thought this is the ideology.

MS. RIEDEL: And design seems the perfect format for that balance between the hand and the digital.

MR. CECULA: Exactly. So many projects and many assignments born with that thinking. We did tactile projects with it, fragile projects. We did projects about all different, specifically to show the contrast between this digital or plastic and ceramic or material processes. That was the contrast operation.

MS. RIEDEL: You were at Parsons for about 15 years, from '85 to 2000 or so, is that correct?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you see that dialog evolve over that time?

MR. CECULA: Yes, of course.

MS. RIEDEL: And it continues now, do you —

MR. CECULA: Now it's a little bit fall down, because there's no department really active there. After I left, it was kind of winded down. But yes, it's happening on other places. It's happening in other schools — I'm in Europe, I teach in Europe, I see that now. Wonderful progression of that — exactly that — in other schools.

MS. RIEDEL: When you think back on your own educational experience, is there one or two that stand out as really exceptional and seminal for what you've gone on to do?

MR. CECULA: You mean with school at Parsons?

MS. RIEDEL: No, for yourself as a student, when you were — as an apprentice, and then in Israel and Brazil, and then — or even just as a young artist starting to work. Is there anything, anyone who served as a particular mentor or any apprenticeship that you felt was particularly valuable or formative?

MR. CECULA: That apprenticeship, which they have it, there's only this apprenticeship. You see, I am self-taught person. I do a lot of experimentation through my own process and I'm learning from my own results. You know, I did some workshop and things, I go to places, but I'm a person just taking advantage of the situations. So whatever environment I'm in, I'm plugged into it, I take advantage of what exists there and I'm learning from that, what's happened there.

So I don't have it — can pinpoint it on some specific names or persons or things. It's just that being very much connected to the strategies of fine art, by living in Soho and having a lot of artist friends, my thinking about ceramic was not typical ceramic thinking. It was based on the — how other artists operate. How conceptual thinking going on. How the installations and work and the combination of materials or the way, how did object have to transform or translate something or pass something. That was coming from the observation and communication with the fine art.

MS. RIEDEL: And whose work in particular influenced you?

MR. CECULA: In fine art?

MS. RIEDEL: Mmm.

MR. CECULA: Surely you know the sculptor Richard Serra and Donald Judd. Minimalist people of Japanese — lot of Japanese artists, which is, I don't remember their names, but they're fantastic inspiration resources. I also very much follow the young artists — you know, the one which is unknown.

I have no certain kind of — I absorb and the selection happens somewhere in the process of my own way of using that later. So I took courses in Whitney with artists, fine artists. I was not even telling anybody I work in clay, but [laughs] it would have sounded kind of strange. But I took art with Trisha Brown and with Christo —

MS. RIEDEL: Really? With Trisha Brown?

MR. CECULA: Yes. Oh, yes, of course.

MS. RIEDEL: Dance classes?

MR. CECULA: Of course. It was wonderful course.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. CECULA: Yes. And performing artists —

MS. RIEDEL: Was she teaching choreography classes or movement classes?

MR. CECULA: No, she has a lecture about her art, about her work.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay. Yes.

MR. CECULA: We were there, the kind of course of "communication with the artist," it's called, and we were just getting artists there to talk and show and discussing with us about the way operation and that, all that was part of my education. This is my school.

MS. RIEDEL: And she did so much collaborative work with Rauschenberg and with Laurie Anderson.

MR. CECULA: Yes, of course, of course. Merce Cunningham.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. CECULA: This was New York of that time. I lived here and I absorbed this and I participated in that and go all the performance and all this — Laurie Anderson, and all this development of that, I think, have influence on me, not directly but in certain way. This was my culture. And on that culture I base my ceramics. That's why my ceramics always kind of have a link to that *Scatology*, or other work have this kind of strange link towards art, more than to the typical ceramic sculptures.

MS. RIEDEL: That seems like a perfect entrée. Let's move and begin to talk about that work, because that was a fairly huge shift and it had been coming for a while. But that first show was *Scatology*, yes, and that was 19 —

MR. CECULA: *Scatology* was '92.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: And that was the also result of being in the center, in Holland in '92, where is the European Ceramic Work Centre. I was invited twice there.

MS. RIEDEL: Is this a residency?

MR. CECULA: A residency which is —

MS. RIEDEL: What's the name again?

MR. CECULA: European Ceramic Work Centre.

MS. RIEDEL: And where is it located?

MR. CECULA: In the Hertogenbosch. In Holland. And then, you know, Holland was already design — beginning of the design development, develop design and all that. So being there and working there and working with this place where actually was created to bring artists to work in ceramic.

MS. RIEDEL: It's a residency, right, Marek?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And for long? Three months?

MR. CECULA: Three months.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was '92?

MR. CECULA: Ninety-two.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CECULA: So you are in the 12 people in this place, and most of them are sculpture artists, and you are only one ceramist or there are two ceramists only. So you are in the totally different ambiance and different atmosphere of process, of making. And that is very big influence.

So '92 was big break into my own way, how I operate and how I produce my work and I come out with this Scatology series, which is opening up a lot of doors for me. From there, it just, Garth Clark Gallery became part of my life, and —

MS. RIEDEL: That's when you started to show with Garth Clark, was after you had done that work?

MR. CECULA: That was the trans-exhibition in *Scatology*. And then the Modernism [gallery] in San Francisco.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: I have a show there because he [Garth Clark or Martin Muller] loved my work. He sold my work. That was less interesting.

And so we were passing by the corridor of Garth Clark, and he just looked from saying something — he get in, say, who is this work? Marek Cecula. Can I have his address? And I have a show. [Laughs.]

Things like that. So there I felt that I — it's also I started to get support. I started to be recognized. I started to sense it, that my input is becoming visible and recognizable. And it's given me security to continue and to bring forward more work and more concept.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you actually make this work when you were in Holland?

MR. CECULA: Yes. It was created there.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you have an idea for it before you went, or did it come to you as you were working there?

MR. CECULA: No. As I told you, I am kind of responding to the situations and I was there and I just have to produce a project. I come with some idea, but I abandoned them right away and I discovered something else and I just go with the process.

The *Scatology*: It's important. And here, Hygiene, which is second work after that, important because it was — for the first time, I actually plugged into the social status, social system, social condition, and this was AIDS period. This epidemic started, just; it was tremendous impact on all of us, as a society, and I say, as an artist, what I am, I have to respond.

This is not AIDS and I have to be sensitive to the situations, of course. I always work with social connection and my work always was relating to the human beings and human touch and social behavior, a kind of anthropological look into this world around me. And I say, okay. I have a kind of responsibility to create work which is dealing with this subject and that's why I create the *Scatology* and *Hygiene*.

It is all the work in that context, period, of the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. Not directly related in response, but it is taking that under the consideration. Of course, you know, I could take inspiration from other sources, but this was the most radical and more important, the most important.

MS. RIEDEL: That series, too, seemed to incorporate such powerful juxtapositions in terms of concept and format, in terms of appearance and reference. I mean, it really was a breakthrough series. It was the first real series of sculpture, yes?

MR. CECULA: Yes. And this also created wave on the — a ripple on the field because it was, for the first time, kind of industrial, utilitarian, not utilitarian, strong evoking, emotional, and functional aspects. So the work was multi-facet, and it's created a lot of different layers, impact in different layers, and I saw it right away.

It was interesting to observe how this influence of that work was, became evident in the field and I saw work then in Scandinavia and here and there which is kind of scatology-related. People then say, oh! We can talk about this kind of subjects: the toilet, the body, the fluid, the dirty stuff. It is becoming legitimized to some degree as a subject matter, notion of expression, things to talk about.

MS. RIEDEL: Back between the extremely private and the sort of impersonal and public —

MR. CECULA: Exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: — the very clean and the very erotic —

MR. CECULA: And on one hand, it's desirable because everybody wants to touch it, but then you don't touch things like that. It is sterile and it is hygienic, who knows, and so it is both. It is a psychological work. Lot of all the *Scatology*, it's really about the kind of psychological position because people drawn to the work, and they think, I know this work — I don't know from where!

So the idea is to create the work which is live-impact on the people. Not the visual satisfaction of, oh, how beautiful it is, and you go home and forget about it. But you bring home something that you're not completely clear about it, and they dragging with you through the night, you know — what was this about?

That is what I want to put in the work. That kind of ammunition [ph] and this work, I want to have it. But it's not totally just give you, oh, I understand and I like it, but I don't know, I don't know if I like it, I don't know what it is — that pull. And that is more interesting for me than just give something, oh.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting, too, because I think there was a real power to many of those pieces, because they were multiples and that was interesting.

MR. CECULA: Because I, with the work, I made the statement that I'm not interested in uniqueness and originality, I'm interested in concept. I'm interested in transformation of how this concept is affecting us and surely if you look in the work, like *Scatology*, and you see that there is this six of them and you think, what crazy factory making things which is obstructed? So the idea of production of art came in the picture as well.

So it's a multilayer concept, and I think that's why it was recognized like that, that it has it from each angle, you look in that differently, and you see different things and connecting this to the different things. It's a richness of the materials, which is inside of the work, have this power, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: And you're right, I think there is, in that series also, just a real profound infusion of psychological content that we hadn't seen before.

MR. CECULA: More and more, from that time I started to see that, that this part of my layers, which is I want to enter to the work. Just excuse me one second; I go to bathroom.

[END DISC ONE.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Marek Cecula at the artist's home in New York on May 19, 2009, for the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art. This is disc number two.

We just started to talk about *Scatology*. Did you, at the time, when you made that piece and you had clearly moved into the fine art realm, did you think about stopping Modus Design? Did you think about discontinuing the design work and the production work?

MR. CECULA: No. You see, that was, again, the same kind of situation. I believe that ceramic is that kind of medium that you can do both. And it is very interesting to notice that when you work in both, when you make functional design and you make abstract sculptures or semi-abstract sculptures, the shift between one aspect to the other is real; it's happening in the studio.

And many ideas which is happening, let's say, for example, in the development of some sculpture later penetrate into the functional work and versa versa [sic]. Many things which is put into the utilitarian work suddenly becoming, also, not utilitarian and become art. So the idea of the symbiotics between both of them is very interesting and very active component of ceramic activity.

And I think that's what's wonderful about ceramic medium — that this pull between the function and not function, between the creative and the utilitarian, and materials which is crossing from one place to the other are very exciting and very interesting and very unique for ceramic. And I think I, at least, try to be diverse and using both — have the ability to think functionally and technically and also to think abstractly and completely free and unlimited. So it is that kind of freedom which exists in ceramic, which I take advantage of it.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems like, also, psychologically, that back-and-forth embodies a tension that would appeal to you, too, because many people focus on one or the other; it's rare, I think, to find somebody that does both design for functional, as well as fine art and sculptural work. And there's an inherent tension, I think, between the two of them. And for you to constantly go back and forth seems, to me, to help conjure the tension that appears in so much of your work — that unexpected juxtaposition. And maybe it is that back-and-forth between the two.

MR. CECULA: Yes, it's reflected, definitely. Yes, it is reflecting that, and it is also something which is happening between — this gray area between the utilitarian and not utilitarian becomes very interesting. And we in ceramics have that all the time, historically, because we see a lot of ceramic which is in the [inaudible] or on the

wall, and it is ceramic. It's functional because it's a plate; it's a cup, which is in the — but we're not using it.

So there is this idea that this ceramic, functional object also taking place in that other area, which is not utilitarian, even if it's utilitarian itself. How many grandmothers' beautiful porcelain, and this is unusable, or usable once a year? So that whole thing is immaterial. All that is a part of our orientation. And when I create work, I think about it, you know.

I can create object, which, once it's on the table [inaudible] on the wall, or in the cabinet or on the pedestal. So we, in the same material, we can arrive at all different places. And I don't say that everybody can do that and do that, but in my case, I am capable to satisfy well all of the aspects of that.

And I produce, as the Modus Design, very good utilitarian design, conceptual thinking in the design area, but I also produce work which is completely not functional. It's an installation or it's groups of work which is just suggesting industrialization or utilitarian aspects or function, but they are functioning for something else.

MS. RIEDEL: The most direct example I can think of that is your piece, *The Porcelain Carpet*, which goes back and forth between utility and non-utility — implying utility but being, really, completely unusable.

MR. CECULA: Yes, that work has this kind of mission. That work was created in that way, that it is actually first major work of mine where I do industrial product — industrial ready-made.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's because you used the plates and then the decals. Was that the first major use of the decals as well?

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes. Also, this is first usage, technically, in the field, that the artist took advantage of this new technology of the digital printing of decals, and this was just the beginning of that technology arrived, where I did the carpet. So it was also the technological application of something which has just happened in ceramic field, or for ceramic field, which I took advantage of it.

And because it exists, it's allowed me to produce that work, because if I would make the traditional decals — silkscreen — I would never arrive at this work, because it would be thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars to produce it. Even so, it costs $30,000. That was the budget. But this was the work where, actually, the aspect of craft, design, utility, and installation came in place. And it was created that, here's a plate which you cannot eat on it; it's a carpet, which you cannot walk on it. And the paradox of these both making that juxtaposition.

But the idea was also to take something which comes from the world of craft, which has technical process in the traditional way, because creation of carpet is a very much crafted art process. Where this is moved into the digital part, we used very similar principles, because computer is also — carpet is actually — the end of the threads — it's the pixels. And this digital process, it's all pixels.

So the idea of something which exists in the traditional realm of technology moved into the new technology — digital technology — was very much symbiotic. I was very much interested in that connection, and how to take something which is so handmade and made it so digital. And this was the process which is actually a tall [ph] image of northern Indian 18th-century carpet into the very contemporary moment of technology, which has allowed me to produce this kind of work.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's something, too, that seems to repeat in your work, is technological innovations will inspire in pieces because you're interested in experimenting with what's come out.

MR. CECULA: That I learned from being a design student and being in design school, that your eyes are open on the new technology and materials and taking advantage of it immediately to test it, how this is working, and create [inaudible]. So every little innovation which is happening in ceramic field and I was aware of it, I plug it into my process. And if it's a material or technique or process, I will probably use it. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: This piece is interesting, too, because it was commissioned, right, from a nonprofit space?

MR. CECULA: It was not commissioned; it was my proposition, which is, they give me budget to do it. Yes, of course, they have been sponsor of that.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Have you done many commissions? I mean, you certainly must have for industry.

MR. CECULA: Some — not that much. But I'm doing commission now for the kind of really urban work that is happening now. But that time, no. I was just on my own and I was actually just investing my own money and things, really. And this was the first one which was granted, which is to produce a specific work.

The work was created the way that, actually, the carpet was photographed here in New York and the special

system of photographing — just as for large paintings, there is a special cameras and special system of photographing that. So I used all different, new methods to create that work, which is not so much typical for ceramic.

MS. RIEDEL: Metals?

MR. CECULA: Metals.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, oh, okay.

MR. CECULA: Yes, different metals because this photographing of this carpet and then the transformation into digital files, of such large files, and then, actually translating them into the individual, one-to-one decals and distributing them into circles instead of carpet, and create system to applying that, that it will work — everything.

And then the plates came from Poland; decal was produced in Chicago; application was happened in Pennsylvania; and exhibition was in Kansas City! [Laughs.] So this was my first kind of operation outside of the studio, creating installation which is coming from different sources and ending up in the floor of the Grand Arts in Kansas City. During the NCECA time, it was the period where — right — so it was seen by a lot of ceramic artists and ceramic students.

And I think that was also part of this — and in my way, I do a lot of work for the field, if I can say. I'm interested to affect the ceramic field, because I know — I am insider — I know the story of this field and I know how to suggest things that it will be taken farther by others. That's my educational, kind of —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, certainly teaching figures in there.

MR. CECULA: Teaching to make that kind of awareness.

MS. RIEDEL: I bounced us way into the future by bringing up *The Porcelain Carpet*, but I want to go back to *Hygiene*. That was the second in the Scatology series and that exhibition in particular was shown all over. It was not just in the U.S., but it was in Germany, it was in Poland, Israel, also Norway?

MR. CECULA: Norway, yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, so that, it seems, really brought a tremendous amount of exposure to the work.

MR. CECULA: Yes, the *Scatology* and *Hygiene* — both these works have this kind of large, international tour. And you know, yes, it was simply the opportunity, which was happening. But then I have the Garth Clark Gallery as my gallery and I have to be, every year, ready with a show, I think. So it's also mobilized me to be showing artist. And I have to have new work every certain amount of time being ready for exhibitions and, also, people expecting from me new shows and new things. So I was plugged into that kind of structure to respond.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is the late '90s, so you were still teaching, you're still running Modus Design.

MR. CECULA: Modus Design, yes, and becoming artist and making artwork. Yes, it's — you know, I dance on many weddings.

MS. RIEDEL: Oftentimes, studio artists will teach — you'll find that overlap — but then to have a design firm on the side —

MR. CECULA: Well, you see, I organize myself this way — that I have a studio, I have assistants, I have people working. I teach, I produce, I've been there, I've been there. I did lectures. I travel abroad to speak. So it was happening all the time at once, you know, but I made a system that it works. I have a gallery, I have things, da, da — [laughs]. So it's kind of coordinate and kind of working.

MS. RIEDEL: After *Hygiene*, the series *Violations* came along, and that seemed a real departure from the previous —

MR. CECULA: Yes, *Violations* was a collection of ideas put together. I have it — a compilation of a lot of different things which is waited to be explored or be exposed, or take advantage of them. And one of them was that little shard of Nazi plate, which I found it in first day of being in Poland after 20-some years not being there. And by walking on the beach with my sister on the first day of being in Poland, I saw something white in the sand, and I pick up and it was the shard of the plate — porcelain plate from Nazi period with the Nazi symbol on it.

MS. RIEDEL: That's extraordinary.

MR. CECULA: And I picked it up and said, wow, this piece is waiting for me 40 years? So I pick up from the soil — from the sand —

MS. RIEDEL: From the earth.

MR. CECULA: Yes, from the earth and, as a ceramist and porcelain, I thought it symbolic.

MS. RIEDEL: The sand — absolutely.

MR. CECULA: So I took it home and it was here for a time. When *Violations* came, several different things dictate — see, I'm working thematically, usually. I establish a thematic situation for my exhibition and then I work it towards that. Usually, it's coming from the conditions or situations where I am, or the social or the — some experience or something which has brought me to create this subject.

The main influence on the *Violations* series was what I saw in London — I'd been in London and [Princess] Diana was killed in [an] accident, and the day after, in the memorabilia stores, I saw little porcelain plates with Diana face on it and the date of the birth and death, and *next day*, the product was in the store. As I saw that, I thought, wow, here it is. This is a violation. This is interference with privacy, with the tragedy — and it's on porcelain.

And I felt very much that this is material for me. So I bought plate like that. And here is it. You see that.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah! That's the actual plate.

MR. CECULA: This is the actual plate I brought from London, and I learned to break it, because that's what I want to do. I want to create that tragedy — repeat that type of accident situation. So I made this slab of concrete, you see, and I bought some other plates and I learned how to break them. Actually, I had to learn how to break plates.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Learn how to break plates.

MR. CECULA: [Laughs.] It's good for ceramist. And then I put glue under it — epoxy — and put it on this platter and put the wood on it and jump on it and smash it. And as it is crushed, that's how it stays. So there's no composition here; it is accident. And that accident is a part of that violation. So that work was the first work, which was creating the subject of violations.

And then I start to look for other elements which is creating violation or have a violation element into it, and of course, the shard of that became, definitely, another element, another candidate for that show. And I made this shard — I put it — I created a plate from plaster and I located that piece in the center of it, and showing that backside face. So I'm showing the backside of the plate as a things [sic] to look — not in front.

In that moment, by creation of the work, I also enter this new idea of ceramic as evidence — not as object of beauty or the creation of functional, but also archeology of the future. Again, element which is showing status of culture, exposed this way specifically to recognize the violation of that culture, or of that period. And here is the ceramic serving the history as a document, not as a piece of decorative element.

MS. RIEDEL: That's very interesting — yes, as evidence.

MR. CECULA: And that is the conceptual thinking of ceramic as a ceramic material and its position in our culture or history. And that is a continuation. So you see, in my work, because I'm jumping from subject to subject and my work is not signature, related, and line up horizontally with development from one work to the other, it's jumping from different — but if you look in many of these works together, you definitely find a common thread, which is making that work unified as a — identified with the artist.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And I think that's so interesting about *Violations*. Just listening to you speak about that makes me think that's the first series where you really used shards and that whole — is that correct?

MR. CECULA: That's correct — broken, broken.

MS. RIEDEL: And that whole concept — yes, of fragmentation.

MR. CECULA: Destruction becoming part of the creativity.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, interesting.

MR. CECULA: That, really, is the beginning of my development in the direction of — as destruction, because ceramic is fragile and breakable — that this element of breakable and fragility is becoming part of the work, that

it is participating in the final format of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. CECULA: So because we, in ceramics, are trained to create and achieve success by making something good — [laughs] the time comes to take it apart and actually learn how to break and how to be aggressive with this material, but still showing the beauty through that.

MS. RIEDEL: There are two other objects in the *Violations* exhibition, as I remember. One was a series of four shelves of cream-colored white coffee pots — is that right?

MR. CECULA: In *Violations*, there was several different things. There was the — yes, there was the cups.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and then a couple of vases — some very beautiful cream vases, set, it looked like, in boxes of shards, as well.

MR. CECULA: Yes, right. That was another group of work, which is actually talking about a type of violation because we, in ceramics, tends to cover the surface of ceramics with decoration, and we call that dressing up. [Laughs.] We dress the ceramic — that's what the industrial [inaudible] we dress these things up. Okay, so I undress and I created two sets of vases — commercial vases.

This is also my first, actually, real usage of ready-made. So I took the ready-made vase and I cast it, and one I fired and covered with decoration, and one I just make a bisque and not covered with decoration. The one with decoration was shattered — broke completely — and the other was standing up, inside of its own decorations. So I put the box with the shards and the vases inside, like undressed, with the decorations laying down all over — the shards. But that is another link towards this kind of violation of process, by breaking, creating conceptual or aesthetic art.

And there was some other works in that period, but these three of them, they are the main sources of that exhibition, of *Violations*. You know, I challenge myself by putting titles to my exhibitions, and then I have to bridge that title with the work. And it's leading me towards looking for different strategies and different thinking about how to create object that it's relating and have the connotation of that — belongs to that subject. So as you see, the *Scatology*, *Hygiene*, *Violations*, *Interface* — they're all having some kind of title which is generating ideas to bridge into that idea.

MS. RIEDEL: So as you're working on the series, you're stretching the concept of the series between the work itself and the title.

MR. CECULA: Exactly. Exactly, yes, exactly. I work with the concept and I see how this concept is stretching toward different directions and how I can utilize that in ceramics. I work free of materials, let's say, but I do strictly use ceramic, most of the time, but in different ways. Many times, the justification for ceramics is the subject matter itself, because with *Scatology*, I could be stone sculptor, but if I would like to make *Scatology*, I would probably turn to ceramic.

MS. RIEDEL: Of course.

MR. CECULA: So the necessity of the material in the subject becomes evident and important. That is how I use ceramics — not because I am a clay person. I choose the subject where the usage of it is totally justified.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Well, it goes back to Bauhaus roots, it feels like — the material is the message. There's something inherently ceramic in the content of the message.

MR. CECULA: It's not that I found a bunch of clay in my studio and said, what am I going to do with that? [Laughs.] First, I [inaudible] and then I look for what kind of batch of clay I can use it. This is the way. So it's coming from there, not from there. It's coming from more idea and concept and applying that to the appropriate material, or bringing them together to work right.

MS. RIEDEL: It's always about a continuum, isn't it? And the tension that comes with that continuum and finding how it fits together. And sometimes, there's an inherent tension in holding it together.

MR. CECULA: And one brings to the other, because you start to work with one subject and you see how you're utilizing the material into the subject. It immediately opens up another room for another explorations in different area, of that. So it is a kind of methodology or strategy of thinking and processes involved into that, that are leading you to the final result. And then it is justified and it's full and it's through — kind of justified process.

Many times, I see works and say, oh, it could be done in metal, it could be done in wood; it doesn't really matter. And it's, like, just because he's a clay person, he made it in clay. Many times, it happens like that. I try to be

very much — I'm not against it, but I'm trying not to be like that.

And also, I am not about process so much. My work doesn't show the evidence how it was done. And I don't want to grab attention of anybody — oh, how you made it? I want them to see what it is and put all his energy and focus on what it is and what it means, instead of, oh, it was so many hours of hand process, or it was so many brushstrokes, or it was so — I don't want that to interfere with this process of analyzing or exploring or experiencing the work.

Many times, I remove myself as a maker, and I become anonymous in front of my object. That happens specifically in the industrial — in the wood-fire process, where I completely remove myself as the maker. I would talk about that later.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: You see, I strategize my processes, and maybe my work is seen more in that kind of context, like fine art, you know. When the sculptor makes the sculpture or painting — doesn't matter the medium — he thinks about a subject which is he wants to get involved and then he chooses the materials and processes to execute that. So I do the same thing. But I operate in the ceramic area and I look in the ceramic landscape, where it is, where I can get plug, or what was not explored yet and has valuable potentials.

MS. RIEDEL: And as a material, it is so diverse, as we said earlier, that it allows you all sorts of opportunities.

MR. CECULA: Look at the *Klepisko* and look at *Scatology*. It's day and night in the process, in achievement, in thinking, in strategies and everything. And both are actually the same material — or come from the same family.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], that's true.

MR. CECULA: So I'm not kind of backing up from challenges, which is demanding a different thinking of taking advantage of different way ceramic is used. It has to feed into my standard of thinking and to keep my point of — where I feel that my position is.

MS. RIEDEL: And you've said that one series often leads to the next —

MR. CECULA: Like *Scatology* leads to *Hygiene*.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. Now, that makes —

MR. CECULA: Like the carpet leads to the *Last Supper*.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, of course. But how — did *Hygiene* lead to *Violations*?

MR. CECULA: Well, maybe not, but the idea of what's interesting in life [laughs] — it's where these kind of things on the edge of our social behavior — I like that. I say many times, I am anthropologist, to some degree. I am investigating the social behavior and I'm taking advantage of certain — in functional design area, also — but in sculptural area.

So I design things with knowledge of how people behave on the table, but I sculpt it with how people behave when they're standing up. This is the pull, which I'm trying to use, in a way, you know? I want things to be richer. I don't things to be just, eh, could be done, could be not done — you know. The reasons to exist have to be supported, and more today than anytime before.

So today, creating object is like question: Why are you doing that? What for are you doing that? Are there not enough things already? [Laughs.] I mean, you have to ask yourself this question. And this is valid for the designer, as well as the artist. And I'm kind of on that area. I'm kind of conscious on that, and I'm using that.

MS. RIEDEL: The edge — it seems a lot of this work is always about or on the edge.

MR. CECULA: Yes, because I think there, there is that one substance, which is, I call provocation, which can be used in many different ways — in a beautiful way and in an aggressive way. And I use provocation to create more juice, to create more reaction, to create more response.

Because through using things which is sensitive with our life, which is, we honor, we love, we have adoration for it, and if I violate, if I undermine this establishment in our hierarchy of thinking or feeling, I am right away in the big pull of emotions. I'm touching a nerve, not just the skin; I'm deeper.

So I like to use religions, social status, culture, hierarchies — these things, which have already amplification — they have energy inside of them. When I deal with these subjects, I ring the big bell right away. I'm not telling

my story. [Laughs.] Every artist has strategies, you know, and we're looking at things because in front of us is the whole world to explore it. And I look where I fit, you know, what I might like to use from that collection of things. And I'm choosing — I'm careful in choosing.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So *Mutants* feels like a departure from anything that's come before, because these were, really, also working with multiples, and they were casts from actual industry, yes?

MR. CECULA: Yes, *Mutants* are a very interesting story, because Mutants are the beginning — are part of my first Industrial Interference series. By working as a designer, it is again bringing these two issues together: design and sculpture, and art. Because when I am in a factory — I came to produce my rice bowls or some vases or some — for my Modus Design.

So I am in the factory; I am doing the series work by myself; I am introducing the process; I am taking care of how it should be made. But I'm in the environment which is fully of production, of creative things, of wonderful material of ceramic and porcelain, like I am working with, doing certain different things. So my sensitivity, my awareness, is there as well. It's not only that I came to make a vase.

I am — oh, what's this? What's this — 100 of these teapots looking the same doing on the shelf? What does it mean for the society? What does it mean to our culture? What does it mean to our value of aesthetics and diversity of our own choices of what's better from the others — the selection idea? And I say, ha, here's the production of certain aesthetics which fit — and convince everybody that this is the beautiful object.

This teapot with this handle, baroque-ish, established by some designer or some — probably not even designer — somebody who makes that — is dictated, now, to the society, to the conformisting [sic] type of group of people, which is, oh, that's a nice teapot; I should have it. And the neighbor has the same teapot, and it's nice; and it's another; and it's another. And then you see that this is the production of aesthetic values.

And then you stand and say, wow, what should I do, as an artist? I feel like I want to reject that. I feel like I want to rebel against that. And the *Mutants* are the rebellion against that. [Laughs.] They are original, beautiful teapots — humble, functional, decorative with all the banalic [sic] proportion and colors — not colors, but decoration and forms, and all that — for everybody, for masses. So my intention is to diversify that — to break this routine, this mode of the mass production — to interfere with the process of making the same things.

As a designer and creative artist, my position, now, suddenly became, ha, I want to be sabotage. I want to sabotage the industry, which is serving me, because I am making, also, multiplication of my own products! So I act both as a supporter and as a critic. And here, in *Mutants*, it was that. I stand in front of these masses of the same teapot and I rebel it. And I took them and I start to manipulating them that each one becomes different from the other, on the same form — to diversify the same shape by changing exactly the things which is making them be beautiful — the balance, the proportions — I made them different, mutant shapes. That's why they're called *Mutants*. They're not standing straight.

MS. RIEDEL: Odd bulges, strange cuts, holes —

MR. CECULA: Yes, so I interfere with all that which is supposed to be right. I made it wrong. By interfering, I created new animal. I created some kind of deviation of something. And then I start to think, okay, so here it is — I'm on something very interesting and new.

And I can actually make it more than one; I can make a whole series of that. I see how rich is that area, and immediately I am recognizing that. Okay, so I'm going to create a project where I'm going to take three elements from nature and I'm going to affect and sabotage the industrial process through these elements — air, water, and fire — three elements locked into ceramic very much.

So the first *Mutant* — it was air, because I blow air into the soft clay forms when it still was wet, that I could explode it or make it bumps, or different shape on them, from one to the other, by using air. Then there came another series — the industrial, which was usage of fire, and then came another series of Beauty of Imperfection [2003-06], which was the usage of water.

But the *Mutants* are first and the most, kind of, early — I call this *Industrial Interference*, which is series of work which has carried on from that period through three or four years. And it culminated with the *Beauty of Imperfection* in the Garth Clark last exhibition.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm, and the *Mutants* — they're all monochromatic, correct? They're all white. And then Industrial," you get all the ash from the anagama [kiln] and then, *Beauty of Imperfection*, you actually introduced pattern, right? And some decals.

MR. CECULA: Exactly, decoration. So the two different aspects of it. By air, it's just changing of the form. By fire,

changing the appearance and the whole palette of colors, which is actually painted not by human beings, but by fire, which only the ceramic process can achieve. And it's made like that.

MS. RIEDEL: It's also an interesting meeting of East and West, in that sense.

MR. CECULA: Yes, of course, because that's anagama, and wood-fire is an Eastern kind of — our macho ceramist mentality and we're all pyromaniac, in a way — we all fire and love the fire and all that — so I returned to that because it's not interesting to me to make it original work and fire them for the effect of glazes — of wood fire — but for the process, for the violation, for the aggressiveness of that and unpredictability of that, that's what interested me in the wood fire.

I was in Denmark in that center where they have a beautiful anagama kiln, and I was around a wood fire when artists brought wonderful hand-thrown pieces and all the objects and glazing them special way and put them in the kiln. And they opened the kiln after three days and it all looked different, with a lot of disappointment, with a lot of excitement, that it's supposed to be red and it came dark, and it's blue and it's broken.

And — I said, wow! I said, this is the creativity. Let the kiln to do the work; why should we do the work? So let the kiln to do work on something which is standardized. And then I took it industrial — the Royal Copenhagen, was classic bisque work. I took bisque work from this industry and I brought to this Denmark kiln in that place, and then everybody just eyebrows like this: What the hell this guy is doing?

And you know, everybody wants to get the best effect, so everybody fighting the kilner to put the work. And I said, I don't care; put wherever. Wherever is the worst, this probably would be better. And then, when I opened the kiln, how worse the work looked like? The work was better. For the envy of everybody else around me, who was expecting the effect and got not exactly what they're expecting, I was not expecting anything and get the most incredible result.

So that was, again, this reverse kind of operation — turning things upside down to get the creative effect of the process. And in this case, I completely removed myself. I just make the composition of putting the pieces together, locating them in the kiln, and let the kiln to do the work. And that's ceramic process. So here is, again, taking advantage of the most traditional and most important root — the center of the ceramic — the principle of firing — to be the creative process.

MS. RIEDEL: And to turn it on its head, really. I mean, the idea of firing these forms in an anagama kiln.

MR. CECULA: And everybody flipped out, because it make, really, reference to the, I think older and next [ph] fire of wood. I am now participating, in Korea, in exhibition which is all about wood fire. And they died to get my work into it, because it is the other side of what, actually, everybody is doing with wood fire. So to be kind of controversial in that sense, it's also important. It's important to turn things upside down and really investigating them again from different perspective.

And the *Industrial* series of work is very significant work, for me, for the field, I think, also, by introducing this kind of principle of operation — that you take something standardized, highly quality, of everything should look the same, no one spot of black because it's rejected right away. So the idea of the purity and the execution which is on this industrial work is implanted on them. When they go to the result of wood fire, changes completely — but making them even more beautiful and more unique, because each of these objects is original, even so it's coming from mass production.

So it's, again, my interference with the mass production is here as a strategy to take advantage of something which is unified, but became unique by using ceramic process. And really, I made original work from mass production, which is they look beautiful. And it is paradox of the values, which is also part of the context of the work — changing of the value. Because here it is, unfunctional, burned, work costs $40,000 when the teapot like that — beautiful, white, and functional — costs only $10 or $20.

So the idea that we take advantage of uniqueness and transformation and paying for it is a value element against the element which is well-made and well-functional, which is — should participate in life.

So here, it was the first time I introducing the element of value — exchange element of value, from what's correct and what's not correct. And the not-correct is more valuable than correct. So that's the art. That's where art coming in the place, turning the perception of our own establishment, of our own values regarding the things.

MS. RIEDEL: And it seems there's a continual turning of the expected into the unexpected from the industrial production to the one of a kind, from the very way —

MR. CECULA: That's the trick, that's the trick. That's if you're observing series of work, you're finding that. If

you're observing one work, oh, what, he's jumping from one — he's so eclectic. Yes, but if you look deep, you see that signature. You see the signature. It's just not obvious. It's not that way that it's happening on other artists' work, you know, which is they have to maintain this style because they're selling and collectors, and all that.

I never have a market. I know I'm not a center artist. My work — Garth Clark never really sold my work to the degree that it was worth it for him to carry me. But he shows my work nevertheless. So it is important to understand that it is not about only economy; it is about, also, the position. And my work was always like that.

MS. RIEDEL: And just to listen to you talk about the three different series in the industrial series, *Industrial Interference*, makes me think, also, of *The Porcelain Carpet* and just the different ways of looking at the ceramic industrial process and just, stretching it and playing with it, inverting it, turning it on its head, breaking it, combining it with something else and turning it into something else entirely. That really seems to be —

MR. CECULA: That's my experimentalism. That's where I actually — most interesting to me — to stretch the things, you know, to stretch things which is already done or exists and I'm just able to pull them farther. Stretch the envelope.

MS. RIEDEL: We didn't talk at all about *Interface*, and I'd like to discuss it at least briefly, because I think that series is so interesting because, to me, that also addresses something we haven't talked about specifically, which is the dialog between interior and exterior that that series seemed to bring up, specifically.

MR. CECULA: Yes, the *Interface* — it's coming at a very tragic time. This is September 11. I'm in New York and I'm witness to all that what's happening here. And here I am, in front of the exhibition, which is I have to create — produce creative work. And I feel nothing — nothing like I want to do in that sense. With the world around me collapsing and this tragedy and with it so evident and so close to me, I couldn't really work. It was not only I; probably many artists couldn't work. Because it was — feels trivial to do things like that in front of what's happened.

So nevertheless, the exhibition has to happen, life goes on, and I'm in the process of rethinking my own exhibition right now. And I'm going to do *Interface*, because I think about human beings and I think about — exactly — interior/exterior — about our inside, our outside here, the situation is so tragic, a lot of life lost. The reason not known for that — really stupid, not really valid, in a way. And I'm creating this work and I want to make work which is about connection between people, about unifications, about love instead of hate, about contact instead of departure.

And so most of the work in *Interface* is about contact between people, between things. There is the hands there, there is the idea of these hands, like that. It is functional work, because people should put hand inside of it from both sides and touch themselves in the middle. There's two faces there, which is standing in front — or rather, there were two people who put their heads and connect themselves to each other. That idea that I'm making an object for connections through ceramic was the main thing.

Sure, about also, the exploration of our content — you know, who we are inside and who we are outside. So the idea of the inside of very much golden, very much pure, and very much — [inaudible] — was representing, more or less, that our souls and our life, which is outside, this could be rough and unclean, but the interiors; that was all that under the influence of that period of September 11 and the early tragedy — I mean, this tragedy of the human — then after the other things. And I feel that something of that penetrated that work and make that work effective, in that way. It was all about body parts, also.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, and also, it was about multiples, but it was all about pairs.

MR. CECULA: Pairs, yes. It was grouping; it was not individual. Not the [inaudible] was individual; not the action was individual. And our collective suffering and our collective tragedy was evident. And I thought, maybe that in the work, it's coming through.

MS. RIEDEL: I know it was very different than any of the others, yes.

MR. CECULA: It was difficult work for me, and I don't think it's the most important, or — but it was something I had to do it and I had to, like, take it out for myself.

MS. RIEDEL: And did that come before or after *Look Into My Mind*?

MR. CECULA: No, *Look Into My Mind*, was, I think, in the *Violation* period. But it was different section of the work because Garth Clark has another room with a very beautiful vitrine, and I just really wanted to do something there. And I was always looked under the situation that, what is this about art that other people coming to look into it? [Laughs.] What is there?

And I think about it, you know, we actually expose in front of the public. You know, when you paint and you are a painter and you are an expressive painter, you paint and paint and paint, but then when it's in the gallery, every evidence of the brushstroke is evidence against you, could be. It could be — you can look and say, oh, here's a hesitation; here, he didn't feel; here's your life. Your interior, your inside is exposed there. It's like you're naked in front of the public. And in a way, I improvise on that thinking like that.

So okay, on the principle of that; I want to create the work about it. So, look into my mind — I invite people, instead of just observe around and [inaudible] analyze my world. Here, look into my mind and not analyze; I'll show you what I have inside! And I made seven heads, which is all the same, which is no different, and every one had the third eye open. And when you look inside of it, you see the vitrine, and you see the Marek in childhood, Marek — like a grandmother's photograph album.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Are the interiors all different?

MR. CECULA: Yes, each one is different. I did a lot of decals — I have a process to do that — and I am putting each one of these heads a different part of my life — kind of mixed collages. But I allowed people to look into my life. It's like my grandmother forces everybody to look into — you know that. So it was that kind of implication and that kind of provocation to peep in somebody's life. Physically, people have to go and look, like that. That was the intention of this work. And I thought it an interesting idea as a principle, and that's why I incorporated that into this.

MS. RIEDEL: And the contrasting and the juxtaposition between this completely empty, pristine exterior —

MR. CECULA: Neutral. And then light comes through the porcelain and it was nice because there was no electricity or anything. It's just the thin, very thin section of that part of the head lets the light to go through. And when you look inside, you see in the dim light, it's like scenes —

MS. RIEDEL: Like memories or dreams in the interior.

MR. CECULA: Yes, and you see that, kind of scene of, all the assemblage of this images. I love that work. Actually, they wanted to show this in Israel now. They have something about look into work and they would look good for that one, but I have it in Brooklyn and I couldn't bring it. But anyway, I love that work. It's very nice. *Look Into My Mind*. And I want it to be clear to people that the artist allows people to look into them. I mean, he makes work, actually, to emphasize that.

MS. RIEDEL: And I love the fact that the interior of the mind were commercial decals. [Laughs.] I mean, a combination of commercial decals that told a story.

MR. CECULA: Like a memory, you know — a recorded memory.

MS. RIEDEL: But there's something — there's an interference or confluence between the industrial and the commercial and the private and personal in that placement, again, that just worked really well.

MR. CECULA: Yes, very much so, very much so. I do a lot improvisation on that subject, because private and public is my central thing on a lot of things. I made a lot of projects with students about that. And it is my issue, also, as well, to what extent the private was — and *Look Into My Mind* was exactly that — to what extent I am private, or I'm not private at all. As an artist, maybe I'm not.

You become public figure. When you expose yourself and show your work, you open yourself to the public. It's an act.

MS. RIEDEL*: The Stand* strikes me as really different than anything else.

MR. CECULA: *The Stand* is also from September 11.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, is it?

MR. CECULA: Yes, very much so. It was moved to the carpet area, but it was created earlier. Yes, there's no heroes — that idea of no heroes. Actually, I created the Olympic stand on which you cannot stand. So there is this higher — first place, second place, third place — but it's not occupied by anybody.

It's made from fragile pieces of porcelain on which you can — you're afraid to touch. So you don't need to stand on that. So that was the point of that. And I wanted to show that work, and I incorporated that in another room in the gallery of Grand Arts in Kansas City as a separate work.

MS. RIEDEL: You showed with Garth Clark from the mid-'90s till when he closed, correct?

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

MS. RIEDEL: Have you shown with anyone — in Modernism, have you shown with —

MR. CECULA: Modernism, I showed a couple exhibitions, yes. But it's far away. Here, I have the contacts. Here, I have the New York crowd, my own people. I was doing work with my own realm, you know, in my own neighborhood. So it was more local for me.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you shown with many nonprofit spaces as well?

MR. CECULA: Not that much.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. In Kansas City.

MR. CECULA: I show in museums and other things, primarily. But Garth Clark, for me, was my window to the outside world. And he deal with my work and published and all that, and he's a very big supporter of my work. And now he's going to write a book.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, great, great.

MR. CECULA: We can take off this some sort — [laughs].

MS. RIEDEL: That's wonderful. And how did the reception to your work change, over the years, at the exhibitions? Was there anything notable?

MR. CECULA: Well, yes. I feel that my work is educational and my exhibitions are educational. I'm not teaching students, maybe; I'm teaching the public; I'm teaching the collectors; I'm exposing myself to the people who evaluate the work — the critics, the writers. I'm — yes, I want to provoke intellectual thinking about my work. I want to provoke the aspect of recognition of the work.

And I think the change, it was. People started to — accepted the conceptual content, more often, of the work. And I probably was contributing to that, as many others. And I did my own share in that. But I think we do educating people and we do recognizing that people are — see, contemporary art have to be engaged and involved. You cannot be passive observer. You have to, if you want to really get something out of it, you have to be educated.

You have to learn; you have to read; you have to know; you have to think about how strategies work, how artists work, what it means. And we do that through showing and through explaining and through writing and through the artist statement and through critiques and other things. And that is effective.

MS. RIEDEL: And have you seen, do you think, an evolution in the understanding of your work over time?

MR. CECULA: Yes, of course, of course. You know, I am neutral about that, because it's not that work should make their own things, but I am helping to understand my work. I'm writing, also, about each of my works. I try to be analytical about it, also, and I try to put it in context of time and space.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. I think we've covered fairly well the *Industrial Interference*. Did you want to say any more about the *Industrial*, or *Beauty of Imperfection* series?

MR. CECULA: Well, yes. Maybe to finalize this series of projects of air, fire, and water. The last one — water — it was the final stage of that project. And here, I am actually affecting the ceramic — unfired ceramic — with water, because disintegration of clay. But then I fire them and decorating them, which is actually — in final stage, you see imperfect object which is completely not functional, but somehow beautiful.

Somehow, it has emotions more than functional object. With functional object, it just serves the purpose. But these are, like — don't have a purpose. And that element that it doesn't have another purpose — that this is its own position there, creating emotional content.

And so many times, on that work of *Beauty of Imperfection*, when people look in that work, they say, oh, my God, what's happened to this little teapot? It's a pity. There is not that feeling of something, because disintegration is not normal disintegration. It's not break — somebody throw the stone or drop it on the floor. You see disintegration of material. And the ceramic is not that kind of material which is disintegrated with time. So that process is un-understandable [ph]. And we see that there is some other forces affecting that work — that it's time or something.

And that name, *Beauty of Imperfection*, directing people — that's also very important — the titles are important to make connection to the work — that people started to understand it, that there is something in that un-

functionality and something in that destructiveness which is making this work being wanted, being liked, being valuable, being willing to pay for it, really.

MS. RIEDEL: It's true, when I think of ceramics, I think of the *Industrial* — the anagama pieces — some of them even begin to melt. That's understandable, because clay will melt if it gets too hot, but there is something about the *Beauty of Imperfection* series — you see the way that they are deformed and it's not something that traditionally happens to ceramic.

And I think that we must all inherently have some sense of ceramic — we interact with it so much during our lives in so many different ways — that there is something just inherently disturbing —

MR. CECULA: The mystery — there is element of mystery in *Beauty of Imperfection* which is people don't get it, but they feel it. So not intellectually, but they are responding emotionally and then they just can take it for the interpretation. So this work works differently. This work is actually immediately showing something — "Uh!" — in your stomach — just you feel — wow, my gut. Oh, but how? Oh, but what it means? And then, then, then, then, then.

So yes, it's multilayer, again — just bringing in different sequence — sometimes from this — [laughs]. But I love the *Beauty of Imperfection* very much. I think it's a much simpler work, also, where my efforts are so different — my process is so different from anything else. Here, I have to learn how to destroy it. I really have to learn how to destroy it. I really have to learn what destruction means to become aesthetical element.

And I put them in the water and I was observing the disintegration and I say, ah, I have to stop here! And I have to catch this moment of the structure in the most exciting place for me, at least. And that is where art is. So it is not in the process of making — achieving successful processes to achieve the final goal; it is the process of disintegration, which can lead you to the final goal. And disintegration — you have to learn how to catch, how to stop — before everything disintegrates.

MS. RIEDEL: And there's something about the fragility of the edges in the *Beauty of Imperfection* — the pieces at the Museum of Arts and Design, the coffeepot, I'm thinking of — just the way the edges are frayed. It's just — you know, it's a delicate edge.

MR. CECULA: You see the process; I put this in the water and you see the flakes disintegrating slowly — coming down. And you see this clay — the thickness of the clay becomes layers. And you observe wonderful processes and you say, wow, stop here, stop. And then it's too late! Oh, well. [Laughs.]

So in all these works, all these works, it has to be understood — all these three groups of work and many of mine, but specifically in these groups, we work with volume. Not every piece is successful. You create a lot of pieces. And you edit it and you choose the best one, which is representing the process in the way that takes — what you want to say.

So in *Beauty of Imperfection*, I have many, many, many works and I choose just a small amount of them. *Mutants* was more predicted. But all the other ones was created in large volumes to be able to choose the section which is right.

MS. RIEDEL: That's an interesting point.

MR. CECULA: Yes. So that's why I work with the industrial materials — because I have an abundance of this material. And then later, in *Fragmentation*, it's even more of that, because I just work with shards, or with broken elements from the factory, which they throw it away. So it's — yet, here, I destroyed myself, the work, but here, I'm using destroyed material already. So it's a whole — but that, maybe, we talk about next time.

The fragmentation is very important work and the *Klepisko* is a subject which is — takes time to discuss that, maybe. But it all leads one to each other. And that idea that, from last 10 years, I'm working with *Industrial Interference* is just this progression of that. My choice was, again, very much strategized because to produce elements then destroying them is kind of painful. But when you take it made by machine, it's different [laughs]. So I have different physical and emotional connections to them.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting. That makes sense.

MR. CECULA: Yes, so that's why I'm so happy to use the industrial process, because there's abundance of it [laughs] and I can really work large and not to be feared, oh, I have to make another piece now. I just continue, you know. There's a kind of plus or minus in every one of this aspect of that, but with this industrial process, this is the very strong [inaudible] abundance and quantity, massiveness of that.

MS. RIEDEL: And the objects themselves are the material, really. You can have as much of that as you need.

MR. CECULA: And the volume of that, yes. Also the idea that art and industry can be connected — it's interesting. And ceramic is one of the — because there is no factory who makes paintings. [Laughs.] There's factories that make ceramics. And we see ceramics today as an exhibition of object factory — you can see that there's industry which is producing unique work, now. Now, it's penetrating, even, the industry — that idea of uniqueness and originality and all that. So we see that effect.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. That collaboration between industry and the designer was really interesting.

MR. CECULA: And that exhibition, actually, is about that.

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. The *Beauty of Imperfection* was finished in 2006 and that was the end of the *Industrial Interference* series. Then was the next major work *Klepisko*?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And that was a huge deviation from what you'd been doing and a real return in many ways to that initial piece from Brazil. How did that piece come about?

MR. CECULA: Certain reasons was involved in that occurrence that is happening. First of all, this is already the time when I don't have a studio in New York.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah. Ah, because you've moved Modus to Poland.

MR. CECULA: I moved to Poland. My studio is in Poland.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, let's stop for just a minute and talk about that. What inspired that return to Poland?

MR. CECULA: The return to Poland was to go after the production. Modus Design — I need to be getting more orders and more orders. And I am tired of producing in my studio in Brooklyn. It's not efficient enough. And it's costing too much money and I am not interested in duplication so much and stuff like that.

So I just said, okay, if I have orders, I have to produce them. That's natural step of design to move to the industry. I'm from Poland. I know the Polish industry. I know the language. I know the people. I can drink vodka with them and talk with them. [Laughs.] And I can just get my work done. So I go to Poland and industry myself to the industry. But I'm also from Poland, so I have a place to stay.

MS. RIEDEL: Had you been back since you'd left? Not really.

MR. CECULA: You know, there was a period when I didn't go to Poland because it was the communist social system and I wasn't interested to go there. But then things start to change in Poland and it was start to be attractive to go there. And I could make a business there. So I go to Poland to introduce my work to the factories and produce it for myself — production in Poland.

And that's my first beginning to coming. I come for a week, then for two weeks, then for three weeks, then I have to stay a month because the production for overlooking, and longer and longer and longer. Then I decided, okay, so if I'm already — but I have to have a place. I built it myself — family have a home building in center of the town. I took attic, I create myself very beautiful loft there. I bought a car.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is in the town where you grew up, right? Kielce.

MR. CECULA: Yes. Yes. In Kielce.

MS. RIEDEL: And you moved there again in 2000, 2001, something like that?

MR. CECULA: Yes, '03 I think. 2004. It moves gradually. It wasn't a move. Till now I'm just moving little bit by little bit still. Books and things I'm shipping. But I'm still here and I want to be part of that, but I do have the better system of operation there. And I'm getting engaged more and more with many different things they would like for me to do that. So it's a challenge, you know, different levels of, to be there and do things there.

So I starting to be longer and longer times in Poland. I quit Parsons School of Design. I need the freedom to do my other things, so I quit the school. They really want me to continue, but they just have enough, it was enough. But I didn't want to stop with education. You know, with the idea to be connected to the students and work with students was very attractive and I loved that. And I thought it was important for me.

And then I took on the job of being professor too in Bergen in Norway which is KHiB — [Kunsthøgskolen (Bergen

National Academy of Arts)] the school, this academy of art and design in Bergen. I got a position of professor tuit [ph], mean that I teach two semester a year which is wonderful opportunity to come with a project, make a project four weeks, go home, come back after six months, make another project for another four weeks.

MS. RIEDEL: Perfect.

MR. CECULA: That's it. No administration, no on everything. I have a contact with students, I have some salary, I have a good contact with young, and I can contribute my own experience further.

MS. RIEDEL: And when did that start — the position in Norway?

MR. CECULA: Now it's 2009. 2006; six, seven, eight, nine: Right. I got to second cadencia [ph], now I'm into second cadencia. It's a three-years contract usually. And so wonderful place, wonderful school, wonderful students. All speak English, international school, lot of artists — the teachers are artists from different countries. So it's a very nice environment.

And so I am more and more important. Teaching there, I teach also in Austria. I teach also in Israel. So I start to teach in Europe more often, giving courses and projects. I teach permanently in Bergen. And that, keeping me in Europe for a longer time. And that's the reason.

So here's my condition. I have a studio now in Poland, small studio. I have industry which I work with. And I have a home and I have a car and I have some life also out there. And there I also participate in the cultural life of my city, Kielce, producing certain things, public commissions.

And I am on the beginning of new adventure. I am opening up a design center — ceramic design center in Kielce. A large project, money from the UE, from united Europe [European Union], for development. And the city giving me an old Russian prison which is in wonderful location of Kielce which is old, huge.

MS. RIEDEL: An old Russian prison?

Mr. CECULA: I mean, it's fantastic building with walls and windows. Turning into contemporary building with — they're leaving some of the prison in the way [laughs] but it's going to be contemporary building for creative and for freedom and thinking. From prison to this. So it's a wonderful transformation.

And I have to run this. I do the business plan and the concept project. I wroted all these things. It will be design center. We call it De-Center [Design Centrum Kielce]. [Laughs.] Different from the center. And it's also design center, De-Center. And we will concentrate on ceramic because it will have ceramic studio on industrial scale.

MS. RIEDEL: Extraordinary.

MR. CECULA: Yes. And it's starting to build up just this month, some of the renovations starting. The whole architectural project is done. It's all banked. The money is there even. And it will be place for residency, like a [inaudible], like the European Ceramic Work Centre — but for ceramic design, where we accept students and designers and artists and ceramists who wants to execute interesting design ceramic projects. They will get grant from us to come, three-months residency, two-months residency, and materials, technical support, and all that will come from the center. And we have six galleries, we have project rooms, we have a library, library of design, library of materials.

MS. RIEDEL: Classes as well? Or strictly residency and exhibition?

MR. CECULA: Classes already are there. I already establish in a place in Kielce, a place where the ceramic studio is there already for people from Kielce to study and we learn ceramic hobby. But they're becoming very much professional. We're doing project for the city. So it's interesting multifaceted operation going on, where actually ceramic becoming the central part of that.

But the center of the design will be larger than just ceramic. This center will also take care of the city — I mean, from the design point of view — to actually modernize the city by implementing all different changes in the behavior or in the structure of the city or elements like bus stops, garbage containers, the passage of crossing the streets, telephone booths, events — art events, kind of situations in the street to change the monotony of life. All different aspect which is design can implementing on the city will be part of the project.

MS. RIEDEL: How extraordinary.

MR. CECULA: Yes. Architecture also. We will deal with architecture and architecture of the city. You see, urban design and the idea of the design is affecting not only the object in our personal life, but also the society and complex of our living and all that. It's becoming more and more part of the design field. Design is spreading on every aspect of our life today. And this center will reflect that. And in two years it will be ready.

MS. RIEDEL: And will you teach there? Are you heading up the entire center? How is it working?

MR. CECULA: I will be there. You see, I'm not the institutional person. But I'm good in organization. I'm good at director, so probably I will be something like that. It is my baby; I create it and I will run it. And I will run it in my own way. I don't know — I don't want to become the city official, but it is city-supported project, so I have to deal with that. And I'm learning how to be effective and how to deal with the politics and all that. It's not easy things for me. But I think it's a challenge for me and I want to do that.

MS. RIEDEL: How big is the city now? How many people?

MR. CECULA: It's a city of 400,000 people.

MS. RIEDEL: A hundred thousand?

MR. CECULA: Of 400 [thousand].

MS. RIEDEL: Of 400,000. So it's a good-sized place.

MR. CECULA: Yes. It's the capital of religion and it's between Krakow and Warsaw, exactly in the middle, so it's a nice strategy place. We have major fairs in the city — one of the biggest in Poland from all over the world, producer are coming. There is exhibitions and all that. So we designed, we will be very much connected to that. We will introduce kind of project which is called "Link" — Link project where we connect designers and the producers to the exhibitions and to the exposures of different subject of exhibitions in the fair. And we have an exhibition of the design relating.

MS. RIEDEL: So it's very much a cultural design overlay for the entire city.

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes. But the focus is ceramic because we're going to have a ceramic studio which physically can produce actually the work and designs.

MS. RIEDEL: Very interesting.

MR. CECULA: So, yes. And we have industry around us which is also graphic industry of porcelain which we want to revitalize it. So it's a broad area of engagement. Through ceramic, through design, you know, operation like that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. In some ways it reminds me of the early kibbutz days, where you had this whole group of creative people coming together and —

MR. CECULA: Just coming back. [Laughs.] Just coming back. I in the kibbutz, then the commune and now — it's a city. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Here we go, the next version. The next phase.

MR. CECULA: Yes, it's a different stage. But I guess it's a part of personality. I am always social person. I deal with things. You know, I organize and I involve and engage. I take challenges and I take positions. So that's part of that. And I also make major structures in the city as urban design — not sculpture, but it's like — we call it urban design.

MS. RIEDEL: And what are those — because you said you were making — starting to work on steel sculpture? Is this that?

MR. CECULA: Yes. That's that. I could bring you example to show you or it's — you want to —

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. CECULA: Because it's — just have to be seen. Well, with this renovation of the — oh, gracious, let me find it how it's looked like — you see, this is the plaza of the city. My house is here. I'm actually facing that. [Laughs.] And they made it just in plain thing like that. And the architect comes in and looks and, well, that's desert. Let's do something to do that.

But on this plateau, on this place, there was a mark of the first municipal house — 16th century — in the city, which is burned and nobody know how it's look like. There's no documentation. But there is the — how it looks, the foundation of it. So they making the mark here — see the brown spot here, it's like a foundation.

So I say, wonderful, if nobody know how it's look like, let me create a structure which can be improvised on the architectural — looks like. So all these pipes are moving, they're rotating. So, see — in one condition could be

like that, but if you turn it, it's 10 meter high — that thick of different thickness. Stainless steel. And they're rotating. So you can actually re-create this —

MS. RIEDEL: You can change the shape of the structure.

MR. CECULA: And then also you utilize it for different events because it becomes central plaza of the plaza. And it's environment of its own which is under this kind of —

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. So it can be used for a performance, it can be used for events, it can be used for weddings.

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Interesting. The interactive space is the design.

MR. CECULA: Exactly. It's architecture without walls. And also it's interactive to the degree that people actually can — oh, this is the [inaudible] house now. My house is here. So it's — [laughs] I can, hey, don't touch this. [Laughs.] But look, you can utilize it. This is my way to do things. I do things that they are participate in the life.

So this is the second project. I did in Norway another project like similar to that. But this — you see, you can make exhibition of that.

MS. RIEDEL: So they can be used as frames. Sure.

MR. CECULA: System, yes. So it's work in many different — and look, all the time the structure look differently. And you see, this is different combination of the structures. That each one looks different from the other. They set up — by moving them around, one is very much like a church. One is completely dissolved. This is the technical aspect, how it is going to be rotating. That's the positions of it.

MS. RIEDEL: When did you start these?

MR. CECULA: This has been going on for a while already because it's a long project, so it's a — what's really I can say about it is that the city — when they saw me, I came back to the town and I'm starting to be there and work there. They say, okay, now here's somebody come from world and he's a thinker and help us to modernize the city. So that's why I got a lot of privileges to work on projects like that.

But also I'm from Jewish family. I also have this place where it was the pogrom and it was the Jewish which is not there any more. There's no Jewish in this town. There is old synagogue which is empty. There is different things and there's a cemetery. There was a ghetto, so I made the sculpture for the ghetto. Very interesting now. You didn't see that one?

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. CECULA: On this website.

MS. RIEDEL: What is this called, that — what is that's —

MR. CECULA: *Menorah*. .

MS. RIEDEL: No. I didn't see that.

MR. CECULA: Maybe would you come here? Oh, no, we're recording.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, let me bring this over here.

MR. CECULA: I bring it here. I bring it there. No problem. I bring it there.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CECULA: This is —

MS. RIEDEL: Want to set it —

MR. CECULA: I'll just have to gather things together. Put that there. I didn't thought we were going to go through that.

[Audio Break.]

MR. CECULA: … operation, now, for me. And — okay, not here. But you see, this is the — I show you this. Just show you this, this prison for a second, this is really very interesting.

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe we can put these images, too, on a disc, and then we can have —once this is up online, we can have the images too.

MR.CECULA: Yes, yes, yes. I do have it.

MS. RIEDEL: Good. That'd be perfect.

MR. CECULA: Yes, just let me on the portfolio.

The portfolio. And this is a technical thing. Let me just find it — this is so complicated here because I have so much material.

[Audio Break.]

MR. CECULA: … architectural — this is concept, concept, concept, concept, concept. Oh, here, you see, this is something like that.

Oh no. It's Photoshop. Okay.

But this is — two years ago, the mayor of the city came to me and said, "Listen, Marek, we have this prison here, standing up, and we just got money from Europe to renovate it. What we should do with that?" "Design studio." And [he] say, "Right! That's a great idea." I say, "Ceramic?" He said, "Yes!" So here it is.

So you see, this is the situation. This isn't renovated because it's architectural plan now. See, but this is the ceramic studio, and this is the center and this would be the museum because it is still the place where repression of all that and political prisoner was there and all that. So it is going to be looking museum here and that will be the —

So it is a whole thing becoming now, and this is the art of the prison, you know?

MS. RIEDEL: That is really extraordinary.

MR. CECULA: Yes. So it's really, really — this view on the — they don't have that. But this is the studio and this is the center. There's a lot of money in the development of that, you know.

And this is how this will look from the other side. And there's a passage to the park; there's a beautiful park here behind. It's a whole complex of the city getting developed now.

MS. RIEDEL: So it will be a wonderful resource for the local residents, but it will also —

MR. CECULA: International. Totally international.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MR. CECULA: It is about international position. It is about bringing international people to the town and it is to make the town to be window to the outside. It's all about that.

MS. RIEDEL: It's really — that's the focus. Is it going to match a place like this?

MR. CECULA: Of course, we will support all the education around Kielce from the schools, academies which don't have ceramic studios, and students who design but just want to do some big project, ceramic artist. But we are mainly looking for the designers to come and executing their projects. This is it.

MS. RIEDEL: And so residents will be invited from all over the world.

MR. CECULA: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And when will it be up and functioning? Any idea?

MR. CECULA: I think in two years, we will be probably in the — we'll have that.

MS. RIEDEL: Two years? That's quick.

MR. CECULA: Yes. So here's the *Menorah* and I don't know how this is made, but we can look in that. Okay, so here it is.

This is the place where there was ghettoes. This area is a park and the street is here. But this was the ghetto during the wartime. So I created from stainless steel metal menorah; it's high, 160 meters, 60 here, the height of men, and it is going down like that. And the idea is to actually to create the condition that it is unclear if it's sinking or if it's raising.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CECULA: And give people their own interpretation because in Poland, it's like that — some people like that, some people like that. Some people think it is down with the culture and culture disappear; some people say new culture, Jewish culture in Poland is growing — and actually it is. So it is representing both parts of that feeling and giving people kind of a neutral interpretation of that.

MS. RIEDEL: And where is this located? This is where the ghetto was, so it's right in town?

MR. CECULA: Yes. Here was the building and here was the ghetto and here is the little — I don't still — cast iron with the text in English, Jewish — Yiddish and Polish.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's the text about? About the location of the ghetto?

MR. CECULA: It's about how many people died there and, yes, you know, these things. But if you can see here — maybe other picture; I have a better one; just one second.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's the material? Is it stainless?

MR. CECULA: Stainless steel. Stainless steel.

Oh. You see, here, I entered in this area around it actual authentic cobblestones from the ghetto, from the streets of the ghetto. So I brought authentic stones which is remembers.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: And they are around the steps.

MS. RIEDEL: So the stones are inset.

MR. CECULA: Yes. And there is a little text — map of this ghetto and how it was. So this — I created this work just not long ago —

MS. RIEDEL: 2008? 2007?

MR. CECULA: Yes, '07.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's the title? Is this titled *Menorah*?

MR. CECULA: *Menorah*. Because it is — you know —

But anyway, this is the —

MS. RIEDEL: Beautiful, with the light on it.

MR. CECULA: Yes. This, I want to show you. This was the inauguration. This is the opening of that. This is the mayor of the city; they are planting here. [Laughs.] But you see, here is the, some of that — it was ceremonial opening, but this, the nicest one with the light, they put a candle on, you see?

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. CECULA: There was a lot of lights and candles. It was a big ceremony of that, you know. They made it —

That's the stones.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And I see the stones.

MR. CECULA: So this is the *Menorah*, so you see, already a second project.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is completed, and the plans for the plaza are still in process, right? That hasn't actually begun yet?

MR. CECULA: They're just digging now. They discovered the foundations of that, so the archeologists digging

now and digging and what they found, I don't know, but they just have to document this, I guess.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CECULA: But here is this, the first project, public project, in Norway, which is actually started with this whole thing. Maybe I just saw it different.

You see, this is interesting.

Okay. You see, this is also stainless steel, and it's called *Six Stations* in the city of Porsgrunn, in Norway. They asked me to make a project. Because the city has a porcelain factory, so I created porcelain project. They have a porcelain festival so I created these cylinders, you see — the picture — these cylinders, like that, which were — and they have a decal image, ceramic decal. It's porcelain. And they're rotating.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CECULA: So it can go like this, drrrrrrrrr! And they're turning.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh my goodness.

MR. CECULA: And so it's changed. The image changed. It's interactive. All my work is interactive.

MS. RIEDEL: And what is this material?

MR. CECULA: This is ceramic porcelain.

MS. RIEDEL: It is? That's porcelain?

MR. CECULA: Yes. Cylinders like that, 45 centimeters, and decal is ceramic decal of the images of the town 200 years ago, from the archive. This is from the city theater. They have a lot of street performers, so the image is from the theater.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is the same kiosk?

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

MS. RIEDEL: So as you hit the ceramic columns, it rotates?

MR. CECULA: Yes. Yes. Yes. It's rotating. They are [inaudible] system here instead of the stainless steel that you actually go like that. And I like the Buddhist prayer —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, of course. Like the Buddhist prayer rugs, right. Yes.

MR. CECULA: Right. Right. Mantra. [Laughs.] I call it [inaudible] mantra, I call this. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: And that's ceramic with details. That is so interesting.

MR. CECULA: So it's ceramic and stainless steel. But I'll show you this because I have also one with decoration. Because —

MS. RIEDEL: And what is that, what is that called, that series? Does it have a title?

MR. CECULA: *Stations. Stations. Porsgrunn Stations.*

Look, you see? This is also — so, because this factory is a ceramic — porcelain factory, it has a pattern. Very famous pattern which is on their dishes. So I took their pattern and made it in three different colors and — because it is beautifully rotating and the image is then changing. But compositions change, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Yes.

MR. CECULA: So I allowed people to play with that, and not just that. There's a new festival this year in the city and I allowed one artist, I've given one artist to change the event, put his own images into that. So it's changing after some years. So it's leaving not always the same images. It's a kind of work which is becoming, you know —

MS. RIEDEL: Evolving.

MR. CECULA: Evolving, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And the images of the city, 200 years ago — when those spin, does that composition rotate as well?

MR. CECULA: Yes — wonderful! Because it's changing, it's different — you see the city in a different perspective all the time.

MS. RIEDEL: It just completely — it could be completely unaligned.

MR. CECULA: Yes. It's —

MS. RIEDEL: Very interesting.

MR. CECULA: And arbitrary. It's a different —

MS. RIEDEL: Very interesting. A whole other aspect of fragmentation.

MR. CECULA: Yes, I guess so it's part of that. But here — *Menorah*, okay, we saw that. I show you this piece because it's interesting from the other aspect.

We are also — well, we're doing other things. Look at this, is beautiful project. We made this project here for the ministry of foreign affairs in Poland.

MS. RIEDEL: These are all recent, within the past three or four years?

MR. CECULA: Very recent work, yes. Very recent work. Look. We made this for the Polish ministry, consulate and diplomatics. They wanted service for representing —

MS. RIEDEL: The town.

MR. CECULA: — R. P., Republic of Poland, and the platinum and the kind of formal — you see the design. But this is the design — we made the design.

MS. RIEDEL: Beautiful.

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And so this is functional work and this is —

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: — this is actually produced then in Kielce? Or nearby?

MR. CECULA: It's got to be produced for the — this is a competition, to be a proposition —

MS. RIEDEL: Oh. I see.

MR. CECULA: — right now, this is computer drawing everything, it's not produced yet. But you see, today on the computer, we can make it really look like real.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. That looks just like a photo.

MR. CECULA: Yes. So we see this is a soup and [inaudible] plate and all the others. It's in design, you know — that's what I say, between the —

MS. RIEDEL: Beautiful, minimal, very straightforward.

MR. CECULA: Yes. It's official. But it's in line, it's interesting, contemporary. So this is what we do on the design level. But then, also, because the place is Poland and the place which is we are living, you know, it's full of Jewish memories, so it is becoming part of my inspiration also because I am affected by it.

You know, in New York, I am international, but when I come there, I'm local, and the local things affect me as well. So, here it is something —

Well, we were there when the cemetery, Jewish cemetery, was discovered in one little town next to Kielce, was abandoned. Nobody knew about it because there was no road. It was in the middle of the fields and was all — so they cleaned it up and they want to do something to it. So they ask us to make a gate to it. So here is our project for the gate of the cemetery, for the Jewish cemetery. This is the one, here you take —

MS. RIEDEL: So this is all work that's going on through the design center now, in Kielce?

MR. CECULA: Well, it will be. Right now, it's still from — it's before. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MR. CECULA: So it's in the early stage of that center. But that's what center we'll be doing, more and more, of course. Now it's my work because I'm engaged and I don't have a clue yet. But I will get people to work on this [inaudible].

MS. RIEDEL: And this is ceramic as well, some of it? And stainless?

MR. CECULA: No. This is stone, by — we brought. But you see, this is basically how it will look like. This is how it looked like in background, to see the other place. So this is just idea that you enter in one gate, you go out through the other. It's symbolical, the way of entering the life and getting out of it. It's a project — again, I'm just showing you the engagement which is happening in Poland with me being there. And that's what it is.

And also this. We are doing something for the city — this was a proposition, we just didn't get it. But we got very nice — hmm. You see, like entry to the city, and they say, welcome to the Kielce, so we're making this electronic —

MS. RIEDEL: Is it is a sign? Or a billboard? Or a wall? Or —

MR. CECULA: It's a — no, it will be an element. It's a structure. [Laughs.] If I can explain it, maybe. It's a structure which is just the beam. Beautiful beam of eight meters high, very thin. I don't know if you saw the movie *Odyssey in Space*? Long time ago?

MR. CECULA: There is a structure, like a metal things.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CECULA: Anyway, it's a simple form, but it would have an electronic screen, lead [ph, LED] lights, and then it would be all information about Kielce — what's going on, a picture about it. So it's a beautiful little structure.

So it's a design of the needs for the city, you know, in the way — sorry, I didn't get it — but basically, it is something which the city kind of offered to get incorporated, get into it, let's see, we need that, we need that.

So I'm there, but I want to create a team. I want this design center to do that, but it is now before that, so with this project that is already coming up. But that will be the job for the center as well.

MS. RIEDEL: That's exciting.

MR. CECULA: Yes. So that is why I am in Poland, because this kind of process is going on constantly, and it's a nice engagement. And it is, for me, new territory in a way to be involved.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's designing on a whole different scale.

MR. CECULA: Right. Right. And also, dealing with how design is operated in the requests from the city. In a way, it is something that responds to the need of the city, so it's a design in the sense, really, you understand, because it's a goal of the city. You have to get incorporated with the public, with the system, and all that, so you take under the consideration a lot of things. And it's a great satisfaction to work and actually create things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: I would imagine.

MR. CECULA: Yes. It's a new stage for me. I never did things like that, so it's an exciting period. Yes, ceramic sometime, but not ceramic. Now it's just — the idea of design shifting into different directions.

But nevertheless, I'm in the process of making another new exhibition now. And next I will show you more pictures about the fragmentation, next time —

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CECULA: So you will have a better view on that last exhibition.

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe *Klepisko* — we'll talk about that too.

MR. CECULA: Yes. *Klepisko* also [inaudible]. But now I'm already engaged in other new exhibitions, and I'm creating also new curatorial work for the *Łódź* [Design] Festival. But I'm coming up with a new exhibition which is going to come up in the fall, which is all about the environmental — design, ceramic to environmental, link to it.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. CECULA: Yes, it is a new product which is coming from part of the *Klepisko*, for example.

MS. RIEDEL: And your early interest in land art, too.

MR. CECULA: Yes, it is. For example a product which is coming up is this one: It is one kilo of earth. It's a beautiful cube like this: small, compressed clay, very hard, not fired. And it's really earth and one kilo on top of it and it's buy "kilo of earth."

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. CECULA: As a value.

MS. RIEDEL: But not fired?

MR. CECULA: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. CECULA: I just want people to buy a piece of earth and see that they paid for buying earth! You're buying —

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Investing in earth.

MR. CECULA: Investing in earth.

MS. RIEDEL: That's a nice concept.

MR. CECULA: A nice concept, a new principle. And it's going to be a beautiful box, it's going to stand up on a stand covered with wooden box, and it's going to say, precious items inside, take care of it — something like that. Then you open this up and you have this.

MS. RIEDEL: And where will this be?

MR. CECULA: It will be sold — I'm going to sell them in MoMA and other design stores; it's going to be product. It's a product. And it's going to be from different places in the planet, not only from one. And also you will have it in the text, a little information, because I want to create value — because it's not value, not great value. By information, where this — what the minerals of it and the latitude and longitude —

MS. RIEDEL: Latitude and longitude. Where it's from.

MR. CECULA: So you can go to Google and you can see, ah, my piece is from here!

MS. RIEDEL: That's wonderful. Are they under production right now?

MR. CECULA: Its mold is now produced. I'm coming back to Poland — exhibition is in fall, and exhibition is a very important design center in Poland, in different places, where I want to launch this design, ecological design.

MS. RIEDEL: Fantastic.

MR. CECULA: All group based on that.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's the design center called? Or where is it?

MR. CECULA: This will be — it's in Cieszyn. The Polish name for it — but it's a *zamek* [castle], it's Zamek Cieszyn. It's a design center in Cieszyn [the Silesian Castle of Art and Enterprise]. Very interesting one and it's existing a long time ago. And it's going to be my whole new series of work, which is coming up, to design like this, which is coming from the unfired and then also in porcelain, which is another concept which I am developing: teapot and sets, which is not designed but found. Let's say like, found on the tree. That part of the tree is the teapot.

Want to see it?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I do. [Laughs.]

MR. CECULA: We should — we should stop and then we should —

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, we'll continue tomorrow.

[END DISC 2.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel for the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art with Marek Cecula in the artist's studio in New York on May 20, 2009. This is disc number three.

Good morning. When we left off yesterday, we decided to stop right before *Klepisko*.

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And I was saying just before we turned on the tape, that that seems an interesting return to an environmental theme that we saw earlier in your work in 1979 in Brazil. And then it seemed to not surface quite or — it seemed to take second shift to other concerns for a period time. But it seems to be circling back around.

MR. CECULA: Yes. It was always there — the idea of the ecology and working with some ideology of things. It was always with my creative process, inside of my creative process — but not always it become evident in the design area. And in this sculpture, ceramic sculpture, was not really subject which is that point was kind of critical to touch through the work.

But of course, as the environmental issues becoming more public and becoming more obvious and becoming more on the surface of what is going on today, that become also part of my interest, deeper interest. And I start to look how to plug my own creativity into this area. And not so much that *Klepisko* is the, maybe, earlier stage of thinking of that but the issues in *Klepisko* was more the psychology of the future than actual the environmental concern.

Now, with planning the new line for Modus Design, as a new line for 2010, 2009-2010, new line of my product, my collection, I have decided to look into the aspect of environmental applications or somehow be on the green side of this story, let's say. And try to invoke through design some issues which relate into the environment. And there is several projects in mind and several projects which is will come up this summer, will be created for the new collection.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it changing materials or changing forms? Changing content?

MR. CECULA: It's all. It's on all the aspect. It's spread over the whole process of ceramic, from thinking to making. And surely in certain areas, the material or how material is presented will be very critical to the idea of the environment. And, for example, working with unfired clay, for example, will be one of them. For two reasons: First of all, trying to fire less, trying to use economy energy, less pollution, less things which is hard to break and dissolve by nature.

So the idea of working with clay which is dissolve and becoming earth again is interesting. So here's the whole aspect of thinking, what you do with that kind of situation when you don't want to fire? And what kind of product you can create by not firing ceramic? [Laughs.] It's a whole issue of how you dealing with this idea that it is ceramic but, maybe, not to be fired. So it's required lot of research and development to come to this kind of point of what do I want to do? But several things, already, are planned and several things, already in the process.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And are these, will this be functional pieces for Modus?

MR. CECULA: Well, functional is a very large title because in functional, I don't see only the thing which is really typically functional, serving something. For me, functional is also education. For me, functional is also the looking into something and having something aesthetical at home. The function of object at home is that, all that. If it's on the table to eat from it or it is there to remind us something or it there to has to satisfy us visually, aesthetically or through the information. So the function, it's for me, everything. So I don't like to call work non-functional because even if I'm making non-functional work, it is functional in other way.

MS. RIEDEL: Utilitarian, perhaps, then?

MR. CECULA: Utilitarian, yes, yes. Another word for that.

MS. RIEDEL: So then the cube that we were discussing yesterday, the earth cube, that's not a Modus product?

MR. CECULA: It is Modus product.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, it is Modus product?

MR. CECULA: Of course. Of course.

All that line will be Modus product. I'm going through to my design firm to create the collection of environmental

work for that exhibition in Cieszyn, which is I told you yesterday, this is will be the starting point for this exhibition and for the distribution of presentation or launching of that line.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And what changes have there been in your working process in moving your studio to Poland? Or is it very similar?

MR. CECULA: Similar but I work with different materials there, I have a different porcelain — but not much different because I have my own kilns, the same kilns what I have it here and the molds and the process is the same. It's just the environment change and this physical space change but not really. And also the subject matter is changing a little bit with the time now because I'm in Europe and I'm producing that. So that has maybe become effective but not in the production, process of making things.

MS. RIEDEL: How is it affecting the content?

MR. CECULA: The content of the work is affected by dealing with the Polish market, for example. When I was here in the States, I deal with the New York attitude, New York style and New Yorker mind and I made work in that context. There, I am more open, I have more flexibility, I am dealing with European market and the Polish market, which is becoming very much European market as well in this time. So my ideas about new collection, for example, changed little bit.

And that's why maybe, now, this idea of environmental work is part of that thinking, that there is much more kind of looking — the people looking for this kind of product. So I think maybe that is influence on me, to be more about that. Above that, I don't make it any promise in sense of design. I do the same thing what I did to this standard in New York, I do the same standard in Europe. So there is not much change. It's just new ideas, new thing which is coming up and continuing to be developed.

MS. RIEDEL: Did *Klepisko* precede or follow *Fragmentation*?

MR. CECULA: *Klepisko* —

MS. RIEDEL: Does it precede or follow the piece *Fragmentation*?

MR. CECULA: Ah, yes, *Klepisko* was earlier. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: *Klepisko*, it's a work which is I carry it in my sketchbook for a long time and I never have occasion to really approach anybody to do that because it's a big operation. I needed the special condition for that.

MS. RIEDEL: It's 20 tons of clay or something.

MR. CECULA: Ten ton, 10 tons of clay. When I received proposition to create installation in the Katonah Museum by the curator, Ursula Ilse-Neuman, from Museum of Arts and Design, she was a curator and she approached me to come with proposition. I immediately jump on the idea, hey, this is the time and occasion to make this *Klepisko*. And then, so I proposed this to the museum. I come with the material, I propose it to the museum. And for my surprise, it was accepted right away. [Laughs.]

Considering that we have to, that's messed up the whole museum and bring 10 ton of clay to put on the floor. So that was kind of daring condition and I think they've been brave enough to accept my proposition and — wonderful support and I got lot of help and money to be paid for it and all that. So it was great arrangement, so it worked beautifully, and *Klepisko* just manifest himself in that period.

MS. RIEDEL: That's an extraordinary piece. All the components were assembled right outside the museum, isn't that correct?

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes. We worked it because this is site-specific and we have to actually receive the clay, which is the museum order from brickyard, 10 ton of clay. A tent was put up on front of the museum. And I got help from school around the area to come and help me to press the molds to this element because the elements which is incorporated in *Klepisko* are the same clay just pressed in the mold, in the plaster molds, to receive the shapes and then assembled into this floor.

So, yes, it was very collaborative work and between the museum, me and the assistants which work with me, this took two weeks before the exhibition. So two weeks before the exhibition, I was already there working, making preparations for the exhibition and then they set up the whole installation and it worked wonderful and everybody was impressed.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was the first site-specific installation since Brazil, correct?

MR. CECULA: Yeah, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: But it preceded a lot of the site-specific work you're working on now in Poland and Europe.

MR. CECULA: Yes. That, kind of, open up new period of installations where actually I am thinking more in not as a singular object but, I think, thinking as a group of work which is creating environment or dealing with the environment and that duplication and combination, and then how it's set up in the space and the relationship to the space, and how the work is actually presented to the people — through not singular object on the pedestal but in the other way.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting, too, because that piece, *Klepisko,* also is so much about disintegration and fragmentation, which we were discussing yesterday. And the audience, simply by arriving, aided in its further destruction and breaking down.

MR. CECULA: Yes. This is something about the mood of our time, I think. I think the climate in our 21st century is, to some degree, full of very danger conditions, very about disintegration of the systems we know, and we knew it. And without really clear future. And all that condition creating point of orientation on our balance, on our security about this environment which is we living in life, which is culture, environment, politics, and economic.

All of these elements are in question today or are in certain position of limbo, or unsecurity or in disintegration or in other stage of not the positive but more the negative aspect of it. Seeing that way, hard to be totally optimistic. Of course, we believe that things improve. But meantime, the condition on us is like that. It reflects in my work — the idea of danger, the idea of disintegration, the idea of the world which is falling, little bit, apart, the need for correction, the need for improvement. This is the subjects which is entering my orientation and my creativities link very closely to that feeling.

I am not completely neutral about what's going on — opposite. I am very much reactist. I am a membrane of what's going on. Actually, I am amplifying the conditions even in transforming them into the art as information, as experience, as a message. And of course, my subject matter become like that. So of course, my work which is — that one, *Klepisko*, the *Fragmentation*, the new line for Modus Design, all of them reflecting on my way, how I view in this condition today and how I respond to that through my work.

MS. RIEDEL: Fragmentation feels like the most direct address of religion that I've seen in your work yet.

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: What prompted that?

MR. CECULA: You see, religions are very much part of my thinking about what I want to do and how I want to do and what aspect of I'm using into my work. I touch religion on several times in my work. But specifically now, by returning to Poland, where I come from — and I come from the family, mixed family, Jewish and Christian.

So I have both. I have both in myself. I have the Catholic growing up and then Jewish raising me up again in Israel, as I said, and maintaining my Jewish connection more now. But that, being in Israel, being in touch with Islam as well, even in certain period I was involved in Buddhism and meditations, of course, as many other people.

So I touched religions in my different way and I felt it would be interesting for me to make some kind of connection between them. And idea come after I have this made piece which is called *Last Supper*, which is 13 industrial dinner plates on which there is a print of Leonardo's *Last Supper* fresco. And these plates are laying down freely on the table but the picture becoming clear distributed, and we see the image very nicely of the whole *Last Supper*.

By having a desire to show this work in Poland, I have to complete that with other works — not just one work. I have to create an exhibition with several works. And that was looking what I can add it to work like this, which is I wouldn't show it. And of course, I couldn't show this banal other aspect next to that. So I thought to follow the line of the religious interpretations of religions to ceramic and that how the Fragmentation born.

The idea was, actually, to take elements which is fragments, I can say, in many different ways and work to disfragment, to create something solid, structural, beautiful, meaningful from the element which is nobody really wanted and discarded almost like a garbage. So to take something like garbage and created something like *Mandala*, which is becoming the beauty and aesthetic and spiritual source of meditation, it's a very nice transition — or utilization, let's say — of things which is worth nothing into something which is worth a lot.

And that is the main thinking behind that aspect of work, the *Mandala* example. But then, all other work which is come to play in that installation also have been made it from fragment or from small elements to put together.

That's why the work about Judaism, the *Lamentations* made like that — that the plate was broken into fragments and then fragments representing the meanings in free form which can be put together in different ways because it's just letters, just small pieces of letters.

Then the *Islam*, which is just fragment of letters of calligraphy and so this — all aspect of taking small elements to complete full subject about religion was very interesting process for me. Also, philosophically thinking, that religions are made from fragments — a fragment of stories, of inspiration, of wars, of gods, of information of different aspect of religious meanings put together in a book, put together in one form to create the substance of that religion.

So the idea, to use this kind of element very much relating to how religions are constructed, in a way. That was a part of the kind of metaphor of that work for me — elements into the — from fragment into some solid meanings. I obviously didn't want to be liturgical exhibition. I didn't want to make it any religious symbols or improve the religious symbols. I just want to use the meanings, which the different religions have in themselves, inside of the religion as elements which is they using in the religion system or sense of it. And through that, reassemble the meaning about certain different religions.

For example, the *Mandala,* it's becoming the real subject on which Buddhists, actually, constructing for some purpose and meditated and then destroying. *Islam* was created from fragments of letters, which had different meanings in the interpretations. That's why the shadow become the kind of meaning of the interpretation, from the calligraphy which is hanging above. The Jewish aspect was also part of this kind of interpretation of the text becoming fragment and fragment make solid meanings.

So the all aspect of that was created, that I didn't create cross or Star of David or any of this element which is very symbolic as a religious thing. It was not meaning to becoming symbols of religions. It was about how can religion be viewed in different way through interpretation of certain aspect of that religion?

It was like, I would like to say, like nobody saw *Last Supper* in that form, on the plates. But it *Last Supper*, is the plates. It's a supper. It's a table and the plates and ceramic.

But nobody really assembled that this way to show — which is what all we know of, we all know this picture. But we did never see it in that way. So this was my meaning — to take something which is exist, ready-made, not only as a ready-made plate but ready-made as idea, which is the fresco of Leonardo because everybody knows it.

So I take something which is ready-made, and ready-made, and put this together and show it new arrangement of all that what we know. So it is about playing with what we know but we never saw it like that. Here I'm coming in the picture as an artist to make that transformation. And show that public things which they already know in the full way.

MS. RIEDEL: It makes me think of a general aspect of your way of working, which is that interplay and that back-and-forth between — well, ceramics is such a wonderful medium to use because of its long history and its plastic sensibility over, really, millennia. So you've got the ceramic history but then you're working with all the images and the content that have passed through ceramic. And then you bring in other ones that you're juxtaposing based on a theme you've chosen, but it seems an extraordinarily rich medium to add to the ideas that you're interested in working on.

MR. CECULA: I am exploiting the ceramics totally. Yes, of course. I am taking advantage of this wide spectrum of ceramic and possibilities which is existing. Yes, so surely I'm taking up the consideration — maybe not the conventional aspects of how ceramic are presenting themselves or what it's talking about — these live through clay. I'm taking issue which is social, historical, political and cultural and do find a way to, using ceramic, to representing that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. It seems especially well suited to exploring the social and the psychological aspects of humanity, values, biases, history.

MR. CECULA: Yes, very much so. Do you know, I'm looking for deeper meaning in presentation of something to the society as art. I do design, so I can make work which has not so much meaning conceptually but becoming really beautiful and functional. So I have satisfied that part of being external, just nice and good and practical and all that.

So when I work, I do art. Then I don't have to — I already did — this is already done on my left side of the brain. The right side of my brain will make more completely free and liberated from all that aspect. And I don't have to be aesthetical — which I think I do, but I do not have to really consider the same level of aesthetic I do in design.

I don't have to be practical. I don't have to be physically standing right — all that aspect which belongs to the,

how work should be corrected and correct-looking. I don't have to do that because I — in my personal satisfaction, I'm doing that in the design area. So when I jump to the — make projects which is dealing with art — I am completely — I can fly. I'm really allowed myself to be liberated from all that aspect.

And it's nice for me to time to time to bounce back to the practical work what I'm doing in design and using all the skills which is I learn and applying them. Then when I go to the art, I'm unskillful actually. [Laughs.] I don't really have to be skillful. I don't have to be practical. I don't have to be kind of a traditional about things, which I have to do in the pottery or in design. So it is a kind of duality. Could be schizophrenia a little bit, you know — but it's a nice way. It's a nice way because it's allowed me to kind of fulfill both sides of my brain.

MS. RIEDEL: We've talked at length, it seems, about the strengths of clay and its extraordinary flexibility and what it's enabled you to do. Do you see any limitations to the medium?

MR. CECULA: Well, yes, of course. The limitations only that — that this is one medium. Very much material-based medium. But I try to be light about this. And I try to escape from it as much as I can. But I'm always coming back to clay because for me the challenge is: how to do that in clay. And not how to give up clay and doing something other material because it is more appropriate.

Of course, when I'm making public work in the center of the town in the 10-meter-high things, I am not thinking about ceramics. That's natural. But with everything else which I'm dealing with, first aspect is how to resolve that to ceramic. So the ceramic comes first. And I'm very happy to apply on my own process of thinking and making that kind of discipline of trying to stay in ceramics.

Not that I cannot go out. I have this ability and freedom and potentials. But that's not what I really want. I want to challenge — challenge ceramic. To serve all that other aspect which could be done in other materials, perhaps, and in other mediums. And I take advantage of the ceramic through the material, through the form, through the history, through the culture of this material, of this medium. And there is enough, enough, enough material. There are enough ammunition to really take that farther and really making many, many, many interpretation of it. It's endless.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And the medium itself seems to lend itself — both plastically, technically, and also in terms of metaphor and figuration — it's really well-suited to that range that you're interested in exploring.

MR. CECULA: Very much so. Very much so. And I have to say that this medium has such a wonderful history and such a rich and powerful tradition and past, with all the aspect of it, of its transformation from China to Europe, on the affecting the European culture to develop the aesthetics of the Western culture — how to eat and what to eat from, the elegance of the form which is using for food, decoration — all that aspect, enrichment of our culture through ceramic was incredible. And I respected very much the role ceramic play in development of our culture.

And here is the place to take advantage of it without going away from that. So you know, as I think about just 300 years of porcelain in Europe, of that tradition, of the white fever [ph], of that idea that it was — the gold, white gold once. That it was precious and you can buy the service of the porcelain, you could buy three villages, the values was — so this incredible, powerful entity which is so much rich in all that — so then I play with all that.

So it is for me — it's not like painting. Painting was all the time and it was one they taught you in the second method [ph] But painting never really shift and change in one's culture so much as ceramic did, because painting was slowly all the time affecting and being there with us from the painting in the caves, from the moment of that.

But ceramic developed a design, decoration, decorative art, practicality, and then whole aspect of aesthetic regarding our domestic life. And we aren't talking about architecture, another thing where ceramic taking place. So between all these aspects —

MS. RIEDEL: And the entire industrial realm as well.

MR. CECULA: Yes — the place of ceramic or clay in human life is so big that it's one of the wonderful mediums to work with and the closest to us from the beginning.

I always tell the story how piece of clay affect and how design became design because it must be understood that one day where people actually look for solutions and they need to bring water. And they found a piece of clay which fire was on it. And they made fire and then they after fire this piece of clay became a bowl, naturally curving himself. And they discover that you can take this to the water and bring water in it. And then discovered that if you make a lid, the water's not going to spill. And then if you make a handle, you can handle —

That whole process of developing through the clay the practicality and design. Thinking about object, improving it and then decorated it — was the beginning of everything. Starting from the first machine, which is the pottery wheel, the first one. So we have a very, very long history where the whole other aspect about civilization and progress begin in ceramic or based on ceramic.

MS. RIEDEL: And there's that whole cellular knowledge in the material itself.

MR. CECULA: Yes. And it's wonderful to know about it and take respect of it, you know, when you work in clay, the meanings of that.

MS. RIEDEL: You've worked on a number of commissions. We talked yesterday about the work that you did — the tableware for Tiffany and for Barneys, I think. Have you done many commissions?

MR. CECULA: Not that much. No, I work in certain period as a designer and I have a company, Modus Design, which has produced tremendous amount of projects for the bathroom accessories which is in [films/themes] [ph] which is dealing with the bathrooms and the accessories because they commissioned me to create designs of objects for bathrooms. And I did this for many years, so there is a lot of work which is kind of commissioned, but it is a design work.

MS. RIEDEL: And who commissioned this?

MR. CECULA: The films [ph], which is like a creative bath or other film [ph] which is, let's say, making towels and shower curtains and they need accessories to bathroom.

MS. RIEDEL: So Modus. Through Modus, you designed this for years.

MR. CECULA: Modus was producing, yes. And we were designing that on computer and the drawing was sent to China and then this Chinese was producing the objects, so it was this typical design process. Visualization.

MS. RIEDEL: And over the years, how has that design process changed? Did it start originally on computer or were you —

MR. CECULA: No, no, of course not. It start to making models. You know, first, I used to make it a mock-up models. And models were sent to China. Then as computer entered the part of the process, then it became more and more drawing and computer drawings and then illustration and visualization, cut drawings and technical drawings. That really improved this whole process. And since then, we're just doing drawings, beautiful presentation of ceramic as it look like three-dimensional and then technical drawings and that was sent to China for model-making.

MS. RIEDEL: And the molds are made there and they're produced there.

MR. CECULA: All the mold and production was also made there.

MS. RIEDEL: And is that still true now that Modus is in Poland? Or is the production more of your —

MR. CECULA: Right now it's stopped a little bit because I left to Poland and that part, it's kind of fall apart. But it's not what I'm missing the most, you know, this just was a period which was very good period and it was nice salary from that. And it was part of the work — we did less production, we did more design. Now we're doing more production and less design.

MS. RIEDEL: You've had an extraordinarily multicultural life — from Poland to Israel to Brazil to New York and now back in Poland, a lot of time in — well, traveling in general. How has that affected your work? We were talking about that briefly, I think a couple days ago, but I think we should discuss that on tape.

MR. CECULA: I think — yes, it's affect definitely something. I can't put a finger exactly on what, but that idea of being international, that idea of being multicultural — it was helpful. And probably it allowed me to shift from one aspect of idea to other, regardless the culture or regardless the differences of language and meanings of other cultures. And I like to actually combine these multicultural conditions in my work.

I think globalization is also the positive aspect of that, that we know we are citizens of the world and as I feel myself — I eat today, I'm able to use Chinese decoration on Western-designed plate; or use some calligraphy, of Islamic calligraphy to incorporate it into my work. So I kind of feel free to do whatever I want, knowing a bit more about this culture by being there and having some contact with them and having some feeling for them as well.

So you can look into my work and you can see many of them, that they are not regional work. They're not like local or something. They're global. They are actually talking about globalization. They're talking about global society, about our environment. So I'm dealing with the open borders situation.

I don't make folklore, although I suspect many aspect of folklore — for example, today in Poland I'm looking into folklore and I'm very much interesting about the traditional craft of Poland and how to connecting that to the contemporary design, for example. So there is a new layers which is coming up from that transition where I'm in Poland to introducing that deeper into my process of creativity and my thinking about what I want to do.

Yes. So under this condition, yes, it's more direct now because I'm in Poland, so, for example, the subject of Judaism in Poland and Polish culture as it is, and the Slavic interpretation of aesthetic and folk and what's urban coming with that; becoming a more concrete part of my work today.

MS. RIEDEL: How do you see American ceramics and craft and design on an international scale? Where do you see that ranking?

MR. CECULA: Well, I have to admit that there is distance between how United States — the progress of this — and I'm talking about just ceramic —

MS. RIEDEL: So you are or are not talking about just ceramics?

MR. CECULA: I am talking about ceramics. So ceramics in this country — it still suffer from that — no, suffering isn't the word — but it is under the still influence of the kind of older master tradition where the pottery is pottery, where the clay is representing through the material. But it's changing slowly, but not changing so fast like in Europe.

In Europe, because of this connection to the porcelain industry and ceramic industry and the contact with industry within the schools, artists and the creative people there, designers — it's much more integral. And the people are using the industry and working with industry, taking advantage of it. In the United States, it's not. There isn't industry anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: We used to see that more, I think, 50 years ago.

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: With Harrison McIntosh and doing designs for industry, but we don't see that very much anymore.

MR. CECULA: It's behind now. But since technology entering the field very much, the technology will take a place here. And it's nothing to do with the production or system of production because technology today actually allowed people to produce objects without factories. So that become industrial, technological, it's okay today. We starting to see in the States a beginning of taking advantage of that — by ceramists, I'm talking about. But the progress is really in Europe.

And in the United States in the schools, if I go to the departments here of the ceramic departments, which is usually in some kind of end of this courtyard [laughs], somewhere in the end of the school, with the kilns and all that — I see the same thing I saw 10 years and the same thing what I saw 15 years ago. And the idea that people come to throw pot or making this jugs or mugs and the pottery, which looks influenced — of the Oriental influence all the time with Oriental glazes, I think didn't change much in this last 20 years.

And I think it's a lack of this kind of improvement and upgrading the departments with young teachers, with the new method of production, and with the technology. It is a little bit, I could say, the [inaudible] of our culture [laughs]. Big and strong and stayed the same way as it was before.

But I hope the young people, young generation which is today exposed to what's going around the world, will have impact, will ask for or will need or demand different change in the curriculums and in the process how education is here constructed. And I'm sure that in Europe, too, we will see similar level of — because America is very fast and there's a lot of creative people here.

It's already popping up. You're already starting to see interpretations in a very nice way. What I'm talking about is this contemporary meaning of ceramics, which can — ceramics is so wide, as I say all the time. And of course, it will be all the time the pottery probably will be maintained and the throwing on the wheel and handmade work will maintain.

But we're talking about progressive thinking and we're talking about how people challenge this medium. And I don't see it here so much in this country as I see it in Europe. The pool is much more there. The search is much more there. The development is much more there. The kind of breaking the rules is much more there. And that how good ceramic is about.

We still continue to making large-scale. It's really still effective here to be scaled to large, to create something big in clay as a challenge, which is not so much in Europe. It is not about the scale; it's about the concept, idea, and the interpretation of the material and meanings. And that I don't see so much in the States. With hope that

it will come very soon.

MS. RIEDEL: So does the art-craft division feel more pronounced in the States than in Europe?

MR. CECULA: Yes, it does. Yes, I think still the craft have here the place which has it for a long time, considering the media, ceramic art and craft magazines, the *Ceramics Monthly* magazine — it's really boring. It's really not attractive. It's really nothing to considering new to what's existing, what's going on, without proportion, what's really how ceramic is today on that level in Europe. Because there is tremendous amount of new situations in ceramic intellectually and physically — so in the thinking and in the making.

Where in the States, the [inaudible] suffer to some degree because there is not based on local material. Most of the writings are about things what's happening in Europe in fact. So it is something which is set to change and it's set to change very soon. Your American ceramic have to kind of exist in relationship to what's happening in our contemporary culture.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Are there writers or periodicals in particular that you read that you find especially interesting or valuable?

MR. CECULA: Not in the States.

MS. RIEDEL: Any place.

MR. CECULA: Yes, there is very interesting publications coming up in Europe. There is a think tank which is gathering once or twice a year and producing a volume of paper, magazine, which is called *THINKTANK,* the papers.

MS. RIEDEL: Where does that come out of?

MR. CECULA: It's a European initiative. It's an international group of European critics and writers dealing with craft and ceramic — not only ceramic, the craft in general, contemporary craft. And this paper producing, researching, discussing, and considering new ideas and putting them in the form of intellectual writing, critical writing — which I think is very valuable.

MS. RIEDEL: Any writers in particular that you follow?

MR. CECULA: Yes, we can say, Edmund de Waal. Jorunn Veiteberg. And some others. But we have it here in the States too, important and critical writers, like Garth Clark, for example. Can I excuse myself?

MS. RIEDEL: Sure, sure.

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: So you were mentioning Garth Clark. Anyone else come to mind?

MR. CECULA: Yes. Moment. Janet — Koplos, Koplos.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, Janet Koplos.

MR. CECULA: Janet Koplos, yes. Janet Koplos definitely very important personality and very important writer contributing tremendous amount of text for crafts — ceramics, particularly. And very much high level of thinking about this medium. But again, it's the source of the information which is coming from the States are not exciting.

There is a magazine which is called *Ceramic: Art & Perception*, which is coming from Australia. And now, it's actually based here [in the United States]. But it is one of the more kind of interesting magazines which has lately also lost a little bit of some of its edge. But that's probably what exists today. There isn't much going on in the, unfortunately —

MS. RIEDEL: Do you see more in the design realm?

MR. CECULA: Of course, yes. Design is really full of new theories, full of new meanings and concepts regarding the position of design, and ceramic doesn't really do much of that except this magazine, which is, I told you about the *THINKTANK*, European initiative of this. So basically, there isn't much going on above that. There is the craft magazines and there is *Ceramic Review* from London, which is having, sometime, interesting material. But that's all that I can say.

MS. RIEDEL: What do you read?

MR. CECULA: I do, for example, I do a lot of art material. I read a lot of *Parkett*, for example, which is the Swiss magazine about art. I like to read art magazines more often, specifically one which has good critical writing. I'm very much interesting in the language describing art, analytical meanings and how art is reviewed and how the language is used to translate art into the meanings of language and thought.

So yes, *Parkett, Artforum,* and art magazines in general. But also design magazines, *i-D* and others are also interesting. And there's plenty of information on the Internet now, which is like blogs and magazines popping up all the time, which is — you just go through it, you see new things coming up, you read interesting material there.

MS. RIEDEL: The continuation of the impact of technology.

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: How have you seen the market change for ceramics in your lifetime?

MR. CECULA: That's a hard question. I definitely see one aspect of it, that the design is in and pottery is out. I mean, there is that idea that we have enough of brown and glazed mugs, which is you can find it in every country house or city house as well. And I think there is an interest in the new upcoming ideas.

We're living in a society which is — I can describe it — it's a desire society, that we must build up or being — kind of adjust to expect what's next. The media suddenly provided amount of information about what will be the next. The technology changing from day to day, that idea of expectation of new things is there and will all kind of look at what this — the next — if you open the magazine, look how many pages is next things to come.

What is the next? In — what's in? What's out? All these things which is we are kind of incorporated of the shifting all the time for the new things to come. That we can point in the market as well. And the idea of looking for new ideas, for new and fresh interpretations of things that we need or want or need at home.

It's becoming very evident in that way. What else is that because of the production of such an amount — new amount of interesting objects, which is like changing the objects which is we have it at home before. I go to the stores and I see fantastic new paper-holders [laughs] or new cup.

MS. RIEDEL: You're right.

MR. CECULA: Not that I need new cup at home. I have enough cups and I have enough paper-holders as well. But I see something so attractive, such a nicely, well-presented, as idea, that my desire is to buy it — is motivated not because I need this product, but because it's so new and have so much fresh ideas.

So we're willing to purchase objects, not because of the necessity of that object, but because it's attracting us. That's the desire consumer. This is the consumer — new consumer, which desires things above the physical need of that object. Like you didn't broke the cup and you go to the store to buy new one.

You just pass by this design store and say, whoa, look at this cup. I never saw one like that. I want to have that. The desire is the one, not the need. So this is big shift in economy. And I think ceramic is [laughs] we are somewhere there. And that's why we are so much stressed to produce new things because we want to keep up with economy and we don't want to produce mugs which is already exist, or rather, you go to buy them just because you broke mugs before. We want to produce mugs that it will be purchased extra to that which you have at home. And that create a whole new challenge for the design. That's new economy.

MS. RIEDEL: And *Klepisko* seems like the opposite side of that. [Laughs.]

MR. CECULA: Totally, totally. That's why I say I'm schizophrenic. I brought in two different sides of my brain, you know. [Laughs.] I produce things to create desire and to create the kind of substance to wanting something, and purchasing for that reason.

And then I make things which is completely I know I want it and I need it and then they are just to be experienced. So it's both, you know? So I feel that I'm fulfilling both the elements of what ceramic can offer.

I did practical and utility on one hand and the other ones completely conceptual and experience direction. But that it is why I'm doing ceramics, because I really — I am both. I am practical. I like to sit down and technically resolve problems and create something which works. And then I'm very much happy to do something which doesn't work at all.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: And just provide meanings or experience. So I fulfill both sides of ceramics and I'm quite satisfied

with — I'm not missing that because I have ability to do that. I can jump from one section to the other.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting, because I've read, you're well-described as living very successfully in that space, that interplay between utilitarian and art, between the mass-produced and the unique, between industry and studio pottery. It's all about that space between, and all the tension between the two.

MR. CECULA: Yes, you know, I think about it, but I like to work the parts which is not yet well-established, not like everybody welcome them. I always choose some kind of situation when it's not covered by many other artists. And many times, I feel like I sit between two chairs, not one chair or another chair. I sit in between them. And not comfortable position, but definitely it is there.

So many times, my work is like not here or not there. It belongs not really here, not really there. And many times, the people, they cannot locate me in the right category because I sneak out of the categories. [Laughs.] I don't allow it. I mean, it's somehow in my own character, I guess, personality is like that.

And I'm locating myself, I'm in a position which is I'm actually creating that position. It's not like it existed there before. I actually create many things for myself, which is then, they become position. And that is harder, but it is challenging and that is actually [inaudible] idea and I get probably respect, also, for doing that, to some degree. So this is my road.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. I think that segues nicely into new role — a new venue you've moved into the in that past, probably five years, which is curating. And was the first exhibition that you curated the 2004 exhibition in Israel?

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did that — how did this transition come about?

MR. CECULA: First of all, it's like this. I'm insider. I know the field very well. I lived in Israel. I know many ceramists. I know the Israeli ceramists. I know this whole aspect of who is who and doing what and what is need to be done.

That's why, when I was chosen to curator of this Third Israeli Biennale for Ceramic, I was very pleased to be able to apply all the knowledge and all that — what I know about Israeli ceramic in that case into that project and create project which was totally new for the Israeli Ceramic Society.

And I challenged the Israeli ceramists by taking to the exhibition new designers, which is not ceramist. And the Association of Ceramic of Israel was quite angry that I'm choosing not-ceramist to be part of the ceramic exhibition. I said, excuse me, there's no monopoly on who doing what. And if the work is ceramic is better by the designer than the ceramist and it's more contemporary and more fresh and more updated, I definitely will choose that.

And I don't have obligation. That's because you have idea of being — belongs to the ceramic society and you pay your dues, that you have to have a place in exhibition. So that kind of thing's happening. But it's nothing what I have to be concerned.

That was my position as a new curator that established new rules for myself that if I do curating ceramic, I'm not only looking the traditional people who have ceramic training. I'm looking where the fresh expression and newest ideas about ceramics to incorporate that into the new project of curatorial work.

So after the Israeli one — was successful exhibition. Many, many of the Israeli people who was in that biennale today have launched their designs all over the world. They are becoming international. They considered to making more design than pottery, for example. The shift is there.

So the exhibition actually helped many people and was to give them the security and assurance that what they're doing is right and noticed by the institutions like museums and organizations. So I legitimize certain things by making that exhibition.

That's what biennale is for, is the biennale is to create new map of existing condition and it is not something to show what was before. It is something to show what is now and what will be. And that's why this is interesting for people to go and see biennale and that's what the nature of biennale is about, I think. I describe this to myself that as a principle and I'm carrying that to the all curatorial work up to now.

MS. RIEDEL: And then that sounds like that was very much a springboard for the *Object Factory* exhibition in Toronto.

MR. CECULA: Yes, definitely because it's continued this same trend of thinking about contemporary ceramic, not the ceramic-based ceramist, but new links to the technology, new applications and new interpretation of this

traditional medium.

So after the Israeli biennale, I was called by the Gardiner Museum in Toronto, which has asked me to put together this exhibition. I call it later *Object Factory*. They have something else in mind, probably, when they asked me to make industrial ceramic project, but I provide them with new material, which is I thought it was more appropriate and they agreed.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you propose the global survey?

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes, yes, of course. You see, I think they have the mind to create the exhibition by several artists doing work like Steve Montgomery, if you know, in making the mechanical ceramic, big object like old rusted factories, something like that, industrial landscapes and things like that.

And I'm providing them with the whole new industrial interpretation in contemporary design, which is a little bit — was kind of open-eye for them, but they accept the fact, giving the curator the green light to do whatever he want. And that was wonderful. And I created the subject, actually, which has now carried on.

And this type of exhibition, which is I created now for Toronto and then later to Museum of Arts and Design in New York, is now asked to be many other places, and we continue with that. And to this new festival in Poland, in Łódź, and later I have another consideration job with Israeli Design Museum, which is building up in Holon, fantastic new building, one of the advanced museums of design in the world, creating —

MS. RIEDEL: In Cologne?

MR. CECULA: In Holon.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, Holon.

MR. CECULA: Created by Ron Arad. And this museum is ready to open up in couple of months and I'm invited to take part in the proposing exhibition for the 2010-2011. So the curatorial work is going on. I became more effective and more active in that field. I'm not the professional curator, but I am on the field for long time.

I'm educating and I'm seeing and exhibiting and knowing tremendous amount of people. And through these exhibitions, which as I made, I encountered totally new group of people which is I'm in contact and I'm using them to show the new material.

MS. RIEDEL: And this exhibition is reframing the context of ceramics, historically and in contemporary applications, from industrial to studio, the overlap, the collaboration. It's a complete reexamination of the medium in all its different guises, as it exists today.

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes. I just then took pottery into consideration and then I took this typical sculpture clay into consideration because I based on the idea of coming from the design point of view. What really is interesting for me is to show how the phenomena of design which is happening today, affecting our medium.

Ceramic responding to that condition. God, it is something which is next to us, which is not on top of us. It is nothing we can just ignore it. And I think by ignoring that, we're simply thinking into the past and we're not becoming contemporary. And if anybody have meaning or willingness to be contemporary, contemporary person, he has to adapt himself to that.

So this medium itself has to reform itself to accept and absorb the limit of what's happening in the design, philosophically, conceptually, technically, all that, absorb it into the medium to kind of reform itself into — bring itself to the contemporary time, to the 21st century.

MS. RIEDEL: Because the medium today reflects an extremely unusual dynamic, intense fusion of art and craft and design.

MR. CECULA: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Unlike anything else I can really think of.

MR. CECULA: Yes. It's very important to realize that ceramic is just material and designers who work in plastic, wood, and metal and electricity and whatever they want to do suddenly have idea and say, oh, I'll use ceramic. For them, it's just another material. And we have to understand it that we don't have a monopoly on this material.

The ceramic people, the potters, the clay people don't have a monopoly on the material. We are trained to do things in that material, but this material is here for everybody. So we see addition to what accepted this field,

which is professionally trained to make things in clay doing, plus the people who not trained in doing with clay.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, the way you're talking about those people, too, I think you're talking specifically about craftsmen, trained in a certain way and this exhibition stretches it to industry and to fine art, as opposed to applied arts.

MR. CECULA: Correct, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And blurs the boundaries in between so it changes the entire conversation.

MR. CECULA: Garth Clark tried to use the term "applied art" again and saying there's new contemporary applied art, which is that's what the design is today. Because it's like passé word, applied art. But it is today, in context, it's new meaning because we're seeing today kind of new situations. We see new generation of craftsmen, craftspeople, they just don't call themselves craftspeople, they call themselves designer-maker.

Designer-maker, who's this designer-maker? It's contemporary craftsmen. That is craftsmen is diverse, he can work in plastic, he can mix ceramic with glass, he mix ceramic with silicone or he can do ceramic-ceramic, or he can do rapid prototypes or he can do computer-related product to ceramic.

So we see that the element of craftsmanship changing. The tools which is the craftsman using, changing. Not so much the material, much, but the tools and application and processes changing. Of course, concept as well. But that have to be recognized that there is a craftsman of that past and there is a new craftsman coming out today.

There is a contemporary craft and there is a craft which is we knew it from before. New craft, contemporary craft, is different from craft of today — craft which is existing on that level. And I think contemporary craft will maintain and become strong, but not in the same form.

MS. RIEDEL: And a lot of that is due to collaboration, don't you think?

MR. CECULA: Yes, of course.

MS. RIEDEL: The collaborations between factories, yes, and designers.

MR. CECULA: Yes, exactly. Exactly. See, like in the craft, for example, the industry is a taboo. For a lot of craftsmen, industry is like, ugh, what? They're not interesting them. New technology, also not interesting them. So it is that they are to stay in the studio with the pottery and materials which is we have it.

Of course, I'm generalizing. There is people which are contemporary, thinking in different way, but I'm saying on this whole gray mass of that. And that gray mass is like that. It's not interested in changing. It's interested in maintaining. And the new design operation is all about changing. It's all about updating, changing, transforming itself farther and farther and farther and expanding the envelope as it exists today.

We're into clay, if you're looking through *Ceramics Monthly* or *American Craft* magazine. You don't see a lot of innovations. You see good quality of work, beautifully maintained traditional processes, interesting new ideas maybe. But it stays in the realm of that kind of fuzzy, nice, warm, comfortable area which is already going with that for long time.

New things demand changes in our own adaptation to it — and it's more difficult. And we require more understanding and more preparation to contemporary view of aesthetic design and meanings and understanding irony and understanding the humor in the design, for example, and that kind of blinking of eye about things. It's a new material demanding little different reaction from us, where the traditional, oh, how beautiful this is, oh, how nice because it's made by hand, oh, look how much time it was considered to make that object. Look how beautifully it represent the nature.

Which is valuable elements. I just think that the saturation of that exists somewhere and we are hungry for new and that new is coming. So we just have to balance these things, I think. And I don't think that the exhibition which is I produce for *Object Factory*, it's like something new. I think it's just addition to existing. It's just one branch of that tree which is grow faster or different — mutated and grow that way. And that's interesting in ceramic today. That's why I'm showing that.

But I do believe that it will change and I know — who knows if we don't return very soon again to the revival of craft, for example. And who knows if we're not going to, very soon, reach the point again of handmade is very valuable and that handmade should be visible. So you know, we don't — I'm not saying this is dumb, this is passé, this is out, this is in. I'm just saying this has appeared and this is now on the surface. Let's consider that, because that's just addition.

MS. RIEDEL: Stretching the conversation.

MR. CECULA: Yes, stretching the envelope. So the ceramic is bigger today, more diversified today and it has different flavors that have to be accepted by all, its society, culture and traditional people who still work in clay. That's an exhibition of that — going to the schools, going to the NCECA, going to the places, and produce this kind of exhibition or bring this material forward to be part of the new thinking, adjustment.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you done any work with NCECA over the years?

MR. CECULA: I'm a little bit not connected to that so much. I am, surely, I'm going next year just because I have an idea which I want to introduce. But the forum is also a forum which is satisfying certain needs which is not that high.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CECULA: And many time, I feel that NCECA is kind of gathering of reunion of friends which is knew one each other in schools and now each one is on different countryside and just getting together once a year to say, how, what you work with stoneware? I work with temperature, the [inaudible].

A lot of that is going on. The exchange of that level of information. I've been trying to upgrade it with new technology, but I don't think it's sinking down to the degree that has become visible or something.

So I think NCECA have a lot of improvement have to be done to be updated and more contemporary and more enriching for whatever exists all over the world and just — but this is education, so you know, it's again, the same aspect, who coming? Coming the people who are educator already and who having the positions already established in their own universities.

And they're just maintaining their own place and position instead of just searching for a new and advance which is challenging their own position. They don't like that, I guess. And it's natural, perhaps, but that's the handicap.

MS. RIEDEL: You're preparing to curate an exhibition later this year in Łódź, is that correct?

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes. This would be my first curatorial work for Polish country, for Polish cultural institution. It is very interesting place in Łódź. This is already the third festival, designs, the best work in Poland today and it's everywhere, everybody using it.

But the festival is very interesting in several aspects. There is a general design exhibition. There is a ceramic exhibition which I'm taking care of. There is also education, which is the school side, representing themselves to show the different places and positions between education. And it's attended by tremendous amount of people and it's big media event and it's really worth to see it, so I'm —

MS. RIEDEL: Will that be similar to *Object Factory* or is it specific to Poland?

MR. CECULA: It will be very much like *Object Factory*. In fact, it's just going to be supported with the Polish designers, which is not so much here in that exhibition. And Eastern European designers, also I will consider. But there's almost 30 artists from this exhibition will be going to Poland. So it is big, and big chunk of this exhibition will transform into the Lødz festival.

MS. RIEDEL: We were talking about China earlier. Did you see any work in any of the schools you were visiting that you will include as well?

MR. CECULA: In China?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CECULA: Not really. There is not much, at least I didn't see much design there. But now, it's starting up. Now, you starting to see some element of design coming from the Chinese culture. You see, the problem with China culture is this, that Chinese was for 300 years or more, trained just to copy, not to create, but to copy, to copy master, to copy Western artist, to copy this, to copy that.

And they became fantastic at copying and by copying, you're not so much creating. So then there is a need for the birth of the creativity, which will be based on the new fresh creativity and not on the copying other artists and being perfect by copying somebody else and that. Many time in China, you are successful if you can copy well. The degree of success is if you copy the master in such a way that you get the prize. [Laughs.] That you copy the master well.

So it's all that. So China has a problem with this new, but I see tremendous amount of creativity going from China and I see in fine arts, specifically, I see tremendous amount of good work, which is many ceramic is involved into that. Not necessarily as a ceramic, but as a fine art, but clay, which is very familiar material to the

Chinese artist, become incorporated. And that, I see, yes, it's wonderful to see that, that ceramic became intermediate material and — just [laughs] — but is incorporated into art. And they're doing that very well.

MS. RIEDEL: I would imagine.

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: You were saying —

MR. CECULA: I'm really looking forward for the fusion becoming bigger and more wider, including larger volume of things.

MS. RIEDEL: The fusion of —

MR. CECULA: The fusion —

MS. RIEDEL: — of art and craft?

MR. CECULA: — fusion as a word, fusion as a word in general because fusion is not only between art and design, fusion is between everything. It's idea that willingness of to incorporated with things. We see that in cuisine, in gourmet, in food, for example. What it's mean? It means that something globalization allowed us to meet other cultures — their flavor, their taste — and incorporate it and mix.

What is sampling in music? This is the again the idea, incorporation of element which is exist. People take bits of music which is already exist and make it in — they not composers. They don't have to learn how to key notes and all that. They'd able to provide it mixture from the existing materials. That's —

MS. RIEDEL: Appropriation, postmodern —

MR. CECULA: Yes. Postmodern. That's fusion. I am looking forward that the fusion of the cultures and inside of the cultures, the divisions which is inside of the cultures, which is rapidly losing their walls, their borders, creating new kind of product, creating new kind of cultural product. I feel and I perceive interesting things to come in the future. As an art form, becoming — break down into much more elements would be considered to be art before.

MS. RIEDEL: So a broader of understanding of art?

MR. CECULA: Broader understanding and art taking broader position in what it is giving to the society in the physical or conceptual form. I do believe that, for example, they find out in high art becoming much more mass-produced, for the masses, more and more. An egalitarian [ph], I think, collection of art will slowly get lower. Probably just for economic reason, people will collect art and [inaudible].

But I think the idea to buy something as art, it's not necessarily going to be to buy painting. That idea to buy artful object, will be as much valuable possession for the society or for person to have at home — like to have a beautiful bronze sculpture of somebody or beautiful oil painting. I think that is changing.

MS. RIEDEL: You're really interested in redefining the whole concept of object, yes?

MR. CECULA: Oh, of course, of course. Many times here — I'm about object and I lose the object worth of the object many, many time. And *Object Factory* is also one of them because it is a definition of what the object is. Object today is an object — but specifically not this typical object which is we use it because that [inaudible] will always be to use. But then, the value of this normal, functional object start to expanding into the realm of art. And many of this object became art object. And we started to see more and more and we see more and more of that. It will be of that.

That's what I'm saying — the format of what is art or what was considered great art, huge art, it's coming, sinking down, now, to the product, to the object and to the place at home. Not only the people who can really afford it, the rich people, but to the normal people which buy artful object because they love art. They like novelty. They like modern thinking and they able to purchase.

You can purchase art object today in the *store* of the Museum of Modern Art instead of in the museum of art. So the store, many time, will be also the producer or provider of very interesting level of culture in the modern culture where it is break down into the elements instead of to be one entity.

But then art going to take another form. Am I — Nostradamus predictions. [Laughs.] That art going to take the huge role in our society by creating huge products, mega-products.

And we see that today. Great artists today like James Turrell who's working on the canyon, who's working with the sky. Not working with object. So I see that that the place for art will be there. Future art will be there. That will be there. You can't purchase that. Artists will be the director, the stenographs [sic] of the events. That's why installation is moving forward more and more and more because it is not object-orientated. So I see that this kind of thinking idea for the object from the physical outlook — painting and sculpture, becoming more into the object area and the art as art, making art will be probably more into that mega-events.

MS. RIEDEL: Concept event? Site-specific?

MR. CECULA: Site-specific and staging like what is name — I forget the names now. But the contemporary artist who creating events like big football stadium of things. Or the whole museum is incorporated into that. Installation on the outside of the museum —

MS. RIEDEL: Like the Christo *Gates* in Central Park not too long ago.

MR. CECULA: Yes, yes, yes. So things like that. I believe that this is how art expanding. One way it's going down into becoming fragmenting into object and mix between the divisions become broken and then art becoming completely not called sculpture or painting or other, it become art in the process of making it and creation of that kind of thing, situations.

So I feel that there is things to look forward and I think we're living in very interesting time where fusion, that's what I just saying, is happening and its borders are completely become broken down and the walls between the mediums and divisions; and a good example's schools, schools where I teach.

Most of the schools are completely breaking the walls between the divisions. We are seeing integrated curriculum where it is not called ceramic, textile, and art — it's called new medium or it's called, whatever, creative process. And the students are shift from medium to medium, willing to take advantage of different medium in different way by creating new type of product.

So we are entering this kind of field, which we don't clearly yet know how it going to look like but it is very exciting and very dynamic and changing daily.

And we have to be prepared for it. That culture is not stable condition. Culture is a very dynamic and moving force which is changing as we growing up. As the progress and technology growing and changing our life, art also is taking part in that complete liberation which art today provided, that you can do whatever you want. There's no restriction anymore. There's no brushes to paint the painting. But there is anything else you want, use it to make your painting. It could be computer, it could be spray paint.

So that breakdown, multiple [sic] the possibilities. So the volume of art is growing. There is more and more creative people. And never was so many creative people who just have tools at home to be creative. Wherever was a time when you could create your own business card or your own portfolio on your own desk in your computer? Or create graphics when you are not a graphic person? Or create three-dimensional drawing even, not being trained to do that? So the creativity is in our possession. In the tools —

MS. RIEDEL: And the technology has really advanced that.

MR. CECULA: The tools are there. And kids today, creative kids, drawing on computer today and the creativity is just by using different systems and how to get involved so there is a tremendous amount of energy which is going to help us to be creative and creativity is growing, which is very beneficial for the society and very beneficial for the human being to be creative. I think it is one of the element which is we missed that element that people are creative. And as much as we giving that more to people, by it'll becoming, maybe, better society, better human being.

I have it like focus on that and I think from my position I can smell that. And I'm acting according to that. This is my blueprints to the next, to the next, and to the next.

MS. RIEDEL: To evolve it to that stage?

MR. CECULA: I'm plugged into that. And I wish everybody else who wants to be modern and contemporary person should do that as well. There's many way to do that.

MS. RIEDEL: And so what next for your own artwork?

MR. CECULA: Hard for me to say because I'm always looking for unexpected.

MS. RIEDEL: Aha.

MR. CECULA: So I always look, I hear, I see just to this corner but I don't know — [laughs] — what's out of over the corner and I'm sure that things will appear as it's always appeared before of me and I will pick up most challenge as I did and I still have an urging to do that. So between the curatorial work, education and my own art and design, I think I have plenty things to do and I still feel that I have things to offer and I'm looking forward to do that.

MS. RIEDEL: Thank you very much.

MR. CECULA: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]