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Oral history interview with Sidney B. Felsen, 2009 Oct. 23-Nov. 20

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Sidney Felsen on October 29, 2009. The interview took place in Los Angeles, CA, and was conducted by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Brown Foundation project.

Sidney Felsen has reviewed the transcript. His corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. 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

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm Hunter Drohojowska-Philp. I'm interviewing Sidney Felsen at Gemini G.E.L., the print workshop on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles [CA]. It is October 23, 2009.

Sidney, we're going to start at the very beginning, which is always the best place for an interview. When and where were you born?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I was born in Chicago [IL], on September 3, 1924.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: September 3, 1924. So we're fellow Virgos.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did your parents do?

SIDNEY FELSEN: My father and his two brothers had food markets, or grocery stores, whatever you want to call them, and my mother was a housewife who helped out in the businesses, family business.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is in Chicago?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when did you come to Los Angeles and why?

SIDNEY FELSEN: The first time I came—the family came here in summer of 1932, just to spend the summer at Ocean Park. And then we came back again in, I think, '34 and came back in '35 and came back in '38 and decided to move here.

We started moving here in 1938; I was 13 years old. Then in 1939 we moved here, and I went to Fairfax High School. I lived most of my life right in this area, within a few miles of where we are right now.

Is that loud enough?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, it's good.

And how would you characterize your parents? Would you call them middle class, upper middle class?

SIDNEY FELSEN: —My parents were middle middle class.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And were they American?

SIDNEY FELSEN: My mother was born in Chicago, and my father was born outside of Vienna, Austria.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: When did he come to this country?

SIDNEY FELSEN: In 1918 or something like that—1918 or 1919.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you grew up with one Viennese parent who became a naturalized American and one American—

SIDNEY FELSEN: My mother's parents were born in Austria, so they were of Austrian origin.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you have a family connection to Austria.

SIDNEY FELSEN: I do. I've been to Vienna once. I don't know anybody there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you get here—you get here at 14. Was it a dramatic transition to come from Chicago to Los Angeles?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, it was—again, by having the summers here, we were getting used to Los Angeles, but it was all out at the ocean—almost all at the ocean. But, no, the transition trauma, let's say—as a young boy or girl, I suppose you have all your friends back home, at school. And so you come out here; you don't know anybody.

I don't think it took a long time, but probably several months, before I started to appreciate living here. Actually, it was in the first year, I knew I loved it and have ever since.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, that's interesting. Now, this was then, and still is really, a Jewish neighborhood. Did being Jewish have any impact on your being in this neighborhood; did your family have any involvement with that community? Or does Judaism have any place in your upbringing at all?

SIDNEY FELSEN: It did, yes. From six years old and from 13 years old I had to go to Hebrew school. I was bar mitzvahed, but I'm not a serious practitioner. I'm Jewish, but I very seldom go to temple. So I don't have a strong connection to it at all.

As far as moving here, it likely had something to do with it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean to this neighborhood.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, I suppose there's something of a parents' choice of where they wanted to live. I don't know. I don't remember that. I wasn't involved in it. I never thought about that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, tell me, how about going to Fairfax High School, which, of course, is a well-known school for a number of things, but when you were there, you met Wallace Berman, among other things.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Well, let's see, to follow through on part of your questioning, when I went to Fairfax High School, the expression was that 95 percent of the student body was Jewish and the other 5 percent were liars. [They laugh.] I'm trying to entertain you.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You are.

SIDNEY FELSEN: So I'd say almost—it was very Jewish. So it had terrible football teams, good basketball teams. Then some of my kids went to Fairfax later on, and it was during the era of busing.

We would go to campus and all of a sudden there were a lot of black kids and Latino kids. It looked much better to me, healthier, but it was during the transition when there was a fair amount of turf wars going on. There was always police cars parked out in front.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, what do you remember about Fairfax High School, because this would have been your first high school, right?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Los Angeles has three years of high school. Chicago had four years—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Ninth grade in Chicago is high school. So I went one year to high school there and then I went to Fairfax. Well, look, it was a serious high school as far as good training.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean good academic training.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Good academic training, yes. I took no courses in art. There was always—in those days there was a—we're talking about 1940, '41, '42, and there was an option. You had an elective, and you had to take either music or art and I always took music. I felt lost in art.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you play an instrument?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, I did in school bands. I played a trumpet. And I played piano at home. I took piano lessons for a few years and then I was in—I wasn't in the ROTC, but they let you be in the band, so I was in the ROTC band, playing a bugle.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You were in the ROTC program but in the band part only.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you weren't taking military training; you were playing the bugle.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what years were you actually at Fairfax?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Forty, '41, and '42.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: I graduated in the summer of '42. It would have been a great movie.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Then I graduated and I was 17 years old.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right before we send you away to that, I want to ask—did you have a friendship with Wallace Berman when you were in high school?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, definitely.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, tell me about your friendship with Wallace Berman.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Wallace was Wally. Wally was one year younger than me and he lived a block and a half away from me. I don't remember why or how we were attracted to a friendship, but I was friendly with him.

Wally was—it reminds me, when I started working with Philip Guston, he said, "You know, I went to Manual Arts High School," he said, "and Jackson and I"—Jackson Pollock and he went to high school together. He said, "But the difference between Jackson and me is, he went to class and I never went to class. And I was printing subversive literature and I was passing them out in the hallways of the school."

Wally went to school, but he never went to class. He would hang around [the halls and the school yard]. He was just an interesting, nutty guy. Wally would come over to my house. I was taking piano lessons and was struggling with it. I was just okay. Wally never took a lesson in his life. He would sit down and bang out these great tunes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So he could play well even without studying.

SIDNEY FELSEN: He played great. Wally—in those days there was no rock and roll. It was called rhythm and blues, and there were these rhythm and blues clubs. Wally would write music for a singer named Jimmy Witherspoon, who became fairly well known, a blues singer. Wally wrote tunes for him.

There was this place called the Melody Club, at 2133 West Slauson, and we would go there every weekend—weekends. Wally had a—I remember he had a car—what in those days was called a Flivver. It was a car with a rumble seat—some had a top; some didn't. Sometimes after school we would drive around the neighborhood. We would drive on the sidewalk.

Well, then after—I'm going to jump ahead now, but—well, maybe not. You want to stay in Fairfax then, because there's another part of Wally—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you can go ahead and continue with Wally—Wally Berman—because, of course, he goes on to become L.A.'s most charismatic beat artist in a way, or an artist associated with the beat era.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Well, what happened was, I was 17 when I graduated Fairfax, and then I worked at Lockheed Aircraft for a year because the war was on now. And so you could not enlist. You had to be 18, and could only be drafted. So for a year until I was 18, I worked at Lockheed Aircraft on the assembly line.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did you do there?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I worked on P-38s, which was a fighter plane. It had two booms that came back, and inside of one of the booms was a detonator switch. In those days I weighed about 130 pounds, and so it was a little tiny thing; you had to crawl into this boom and install the detonator switch, which I did. Then I was installing radios in these little tiny compartments.

So I did that, and then at 18 years old, the Army—there was no Air Force. There was an Army air force. It was part of the Army. And so the Army air force came to Lockheed and said, "We're looking for people to volunteer through their program to go to a mild and favorable climate." Well, that sounded interesting to me, so I did volunteer and I was sent to England for a couple of years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's a mild and favorable climate, sending you to England from Los Angeles. [They laugh.]

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, which at that point I thought was pretty humorous.

So anyway, when I got out of the service I came back here and now I was 21. I was somewhat friendly with Wally, but Wally [had] become very friendly with Sammy Davis, Jr.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, what year did you come back to the United States after service?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I was discharged in March—March or April—of 1946.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. And by that time—well, we'll come back to that in just a minute. So you came back to Los Angeles.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. And, again, I picked up on the friendship with Wally, but it wasn't nearly the same. He was already out on his own in the world, and he was very friendly with Sammy Davis, Jr., who was still a young kid who was not the same Sammy Davis, Jr., we knew later on as far as an accomplished performer.

And at the corner of Fairfax and Beverly, where CBS now is, there was a drive-in there called Herbert's Drive-In. It was the hangout. It was where all the kids went. So I was there every night, and Wally was there a fair amount with Sammy Davis, Jr.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is this one of those places where you would literally drive in and sit in your car while the waitresses brought you food?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, but we didn't do that. Cars did drive in, but we all hung around outside. There were a lot of kids from Fairfax [High School].

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, at this point Wallace is very involved in the jazz scene, right?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, definitely.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did that have a draw for you or—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I was always interested in jazz from way, way back, so it probably was one of the connections. I don't remember why we became friends. There were several guys who were in the neighborhood, and we would always play football on the street, or baseball, but Wally was not an athlete. He would hang around and watch, but he didn't play.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, at this point is marijuana a factor in the friendships of you with Wallace Berman or the group of people he was hanging around with, because I know it becomes a factor later.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Say the beginning of that again.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Marijuana, smoking pot.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, no.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Had that started yet?

SIDNEY FELSEN: It had. Listen, I was so innocent; I had no idea that it was really happening. Christine McKenna interviewed me about Wally, and she said something—"Did you know that Wally was running a string of hookers when he was in high school?" And I said, "That is so far" from anything I would imagine, and think it could have happened; I don't know.

Dope in those days—it was such a different time, such a different time. We knew that musicians had dope. That's what we heard. But I never knew anybody that had any marijuana or anything like that. If Wally had it, I didn't know about it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It hadn't become that public yet.

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, even when I went to college, it wasn't anything that was—there was a lot of drinking but no marijuana.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, I just wanted to briefly go back to your time in the war, because while you were in the service, apparently—one thing: what was your position while you were there, your rank?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I ended up being a staff sergeant.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Staff sergeant. During your period there you were stationed in England, France, Germany, and Belgium.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you visit any art museums?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, in Paris I did, yes. I went to the Louvre. I went to several museums in Paris. When I was stationed in England, I was in a desolate place, Lancashire County. The city or town was Warrington, and if there was a museum there, nobody knew about it. [They laugh.] It was very, very—that was lower middle class.

I went over as a mechanic. I was a terrible mechanic, but I was stationed in Base Air Depot No. 1, and so bombers or fighter planes that were damaged or needed servicing would come.

I did that for a while, but I really wasn't—when you work at Lockheed, they give you a formula—enter this or wire this way—and it's a lot different than having a mechanical aptitude. I don't have a mechanical aptitude at all.

So I ended up doing administrative things. I was on the air base and I was around—did some mechanic work, but I probably ended up doing more administrative work.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But that was for three years.

SIDNEY FELSEN: I was in England for about 21 months. Then I was in Paris for about five months. Then I was in Germany for five months. By the time I got to Paris, the war had ended and so I was just doing administrative work there. So altogether I was in the service probably 33 or 34 months.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you didn't have the experience of going to a museum there and thinking, Aha!

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, no, no. No, not at all. No, I did go to some museums—to go one step further, even at USC, it was the same thing. I think it was that same idea but an elective, an option of music or art, and I always took music.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So let's talk about USC, because you come back to Los Angeles and you enroll at the University of Southern California. What year do you start?

SIDNEY FELSEN: September 1946.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: And then I graduated in June 1950.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were you there on the GI Bill?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what did you study—what was your major of study while you were there?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Accounting.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And why did you choose that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Because I grew up knowing I wanted to be an accountant.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You grew up knowing that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, from way back. And I think—even in high school I took bookkeeping courses. I thought that's what I wanted to do.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what about accounting appealed to you?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I'm a Virgo—[they laugh]—and the idea of precision and numbers, and I was good at it. I was a natural as far as numbers and I still am.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were good with the financial aspect of looking at numbers and—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, numbers are—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Tell me about numbers. Tell me about—do you have a mathematical aptitude?

SIDNEY FELSEN: At a low level, meaning I'm not good at logarithms or when you get into whatever these days you would call it, but I did great in basic math and algebra. I was always either the best student in the class or one of the best students. . . . And so in my academic days I still thought that's what I wanted to do. I would get all As in accounting courses, and I suppose something you're good at appeals to you.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's true.

SIDNEY FELSEN: That's my guess.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But while you were at USC, your electives were always in music. Now, what did you take as electives—what music courses did you take there?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't know, some jazz. They were not studio; they were history of music or—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: —things like that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: There weren't that many. I think there were maybe one or two courses I took as electives like that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is it around that time when you started to take the ceramics courses that I've heard you took?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, what happened was, I graduated, again, in June 1950, and then somewhere—it had to be in early 1950s—I had a girlfriend who—I liked her a lot. She lived in Chicago, but she came here for the summers. And so they had an apartment near Robertson and Burton Way.

And when I'd go there, this art was on the walls, and it was very abstract. And I looked at it and it was uninteresting to me, but what interested me was that I liked her and I liked her family, and I think I was sort of saying, Why do they like this?

It was the era of the Great Art Books—*The Moon and Sixpence* and *Lust for Life*—and so I decided I would read these books. I read them and I got interested in finding out more about it. So then I started going to some art galleries, like, in those days, Landau Gallery. Does that mean anything to you? Felix Landau.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Sure, Felix Landau.

SIDNEY FELSEN: O.P. Reed was his partner. He was a silent partner but O.P. had a lot better awareness of art than Felix did. O.P. was an artist. So I would hang—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how do I spell O.P. Reed?

SIDNEY FELSEN: O.P.—you know, the letters, O-period-P-period, Reed, R-E-E-D. His brother John was a fraternity brother of mine, who became an architect.

So I would say Landau Gallery was my first experience with going to galleries. I walked up and down La Cienega, and I went to galleries, but I couldn't even tell you who they were.

But what happened was, when I started looking at art, I decided, Well, that's really interesting; I think I want to paint. I didn't say, I want to be a painter, but, I want to paint. I don't remember how we made this connection, but Arnold Well, Arnold was teaching at a school called the Kann School of Art—K-A-N-N—and it was on Melrose and just off of Doheny. It's now a restaurant.

I don't know; somebody had to refer me to him. So I would walk in, and there's 25 or 35 people, and I was sure I

was the world's worst painter, so I was the guy in the back row. I would put the board up high enough that nobody could see what I was doing. So that started me as far as being interested in doing something.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What year did you do that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I'd say, if I had to guess, 1953.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were you already a practicing accountant?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, I graduated school. I went to work for a small CPA firm on La Cienega.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What was that called?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Trust and George. I worked for them for two years or so. I still thought I wanted to be an accountant, but I was starting to get some questions in my own mind about it. I worked for them probably two or three years, and then I went to work for a national firm called Arthur Young and Company. I was there maybe a year.

I knew I liked the small firm better. It was more personal. Arthur Young sent me to Swift and Company for a month, and there were 20 people doing accounting there. Then I went to General Petroleum. [In] the small office you have clients and you go out and you do things, and you're in businesses and you're involved right away. Those other ones, you're like a rookie.

So anyway, my art classes were nighttime. I don't remember the exact sequence, but I know I went to—let's see, Arnie [Arnold Mesches] was teaching at Kann, and then he was also doing private lessons, and I studied private lessons with him too. And then there was a man named George Chan, who was a painter. He had a studio in the farmer's market, and I would take lessons from George.

I liked him, but my problem with him was he would see what you're doing, and then he would take the brush and paint onto your painting. It looked better than mine, but I'm never going to learn that way. And he kept doing that all the time.

Somehow I ended up—there was a gal name Jean Buckley—I got to know her and her husband. Her husband was a jeweler. They were three blocks away around Melrose—his name was Jay Louthian—L-O-U-T-H-I-A-N.

He was good—he was a good jeweler and they were both very much into art. And Jean said, Well, I'm teaching ceramics at Barnsdall [Art Center]. Why don't you come there? I probably had maybe two or three years of painting and drawing at this point.

Ceramics never entered my mind, but I went there and it was great; I liked it. Again, everything is night or weekend as far as any of these classes. Now we're—if I had to guess, I'm up to 1956 .

I went to Barnsdall for a couple of years, and I thought I did pretty interesting things. Somewhere I had heard about Vivika and Otto Heino teaching at Chouinard [Art Institute]. So I went over there and I enrolled, and I really liked that. That was great. Vivika was teaching and Otto was the helper, in those days.

Elsa Rady was there. She wasn't a classmate of mine because she was a daytime student, and Riko Mizuno was a daytime student. At school I'd hang around at nighttime, so I didn't get to know Riko. I knew who she was, but I got friendly with Elsa.

Ralph Bacerra was still a student, and then Ralph started teaching a class. I didn't take him as a teacher, but there was another gal named Juanita Jimenez, who became Juanita Mizuno. You know Mineo Mizuno—Mineo?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Mineo married Juanita. Then Juanita—who was one of my classmates at Chouinard—she started teaching there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She married Mineo Mizuno?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Juanita Jimenez?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Juanita Jimenez—but they split a long time ago and Mineo got remarried. But Juanita started teaching and I took classes from her.

So I was at Chouinard for several years—five, six, seven, eight years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Just taking courses at night.

SIDNEY FELSEN: At night, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where did you take ceramics with Frank Gehry?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, I didn't take it with Frank.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

SIDNEY FELSEN: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Somehow I had the impression that you and Frank were in school together or did ceramics together.

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, Frank used to hang around Gemini early on because he—well, we're jumping ahead.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, we'll get to that. So that's just misinformation that I have in my—

[Cross talk.]

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, no, no, I didn't know Frank.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: All right.

SIDNEY FELSEN: There were probably other people—if I could—that were around Chouinard in ceramics that—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you're studying at Chouinard, and then weren't you also studying at Otis [College of Art and Design]?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Tell me how that worked out at that time.

SIDNEY FELSEN: But I have to jump ahead to do that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: What happened was I was at Chouinard—besides going to Chouinard I bought a potter's wheel. I had a wheel at home and I was throwing, so I stayed in ceramics for a long time. And then when Gemini started, I got self-conscious about making art when I was around all of these very accomplished artists, and I stopped. I quit. [They laugh.] And then later on I said, Oh, that's nonsense, and so that's when I went back. I went to Otis.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, and there was a teacher there, Henry Takemoto.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

SIDNEY FELSEN: Henry was really—of all of Peter Voulkos's students, I would say he was—from my taste, he was by far the best, and so I was attracted to the work he did. So I went to be a student of Henry's, and I was there for a few years—again, all night classes.

But what you do in those classes—the class hours are seven to 10, but you get there at six and you stay until 11, because between getting ready and cleaning up, it takes forever. And I would go a lot of times on either Saturday or Sunday. They left the ceramic room open during that time.

So I came to the realization that if you take a class on one night a week for three or four or five hours, you never get anywhere. So by the time I would add a weekend to it, I would have 10 or 15 hours a week. Then it really started to feel like you were doing something.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Back up again because we're back in the late '50s now with—and you were taking classes at Chouinard—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, that's in the—I'm sorry. Yes, go on.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —in the '50s, late '50s, and you're still working as a CPA. Where did you go after Arthur Young?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I decided by that time that I didn't want to do accounting, okay, and so I put an ad in the *Los Angeles Times*, a display ad in the sports section, and I said something about a young CPA looking for a position other than public accounting.

So I got these interesting responses. An orchid grower in the valley and Mattel Toy Company and a steel company on Alameda Street. And one guy was a public accountant, and he said, "Why don't you want to be an accountant? Come in and be my partner." And I liked him, so he made me a partner in his firm.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What was his name?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Hilton Byars—B-Y-A-R-S.

I'd say about six months after he and I became partners, he told me he's moving to live in Mexico—[they laugh]—and therefore he—so he was now my partner, but I had to run this office. I figured out that was the plan to begin with.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What year was this?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, it's probably 1953. So I took over the office and I ran it, and I did okay. I was successful. I had a lot of small business clients.

Then I got busy, and so I contacted a friend who was a classmate of mine at USC who was working for a big accounting firm, and I asked him if he wanted to come in and be my partner. And he did, and so we formed this partnership.

Oh, incidentally, somewhere we should add into this time now that Rosamund and I met in 1960, and we got married in December 1960. We probably met in 1959.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But before we get to Rosamund, we have to bring in a very important person who I think you went to college with, Stanley Grinstein.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Okay, all right. Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So to pause for a second, so here you are in the middle of the '50s and you're doing accounting and you're starting the ceramics, but in the background there is this relationship with this fellow, Stanley Grinstein. Tell me about Stanley and your friendship with him.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Okay. When I went to USC, I pledged a fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau, ZBT. I was a 22-year-old freshman and there was this—let me think about this—he must have been like an 18- or 19-year-old sophomore, Stanley Grinstein, who grew up in Seattle, Washington, and came down to Los Angeles to go to college.

I'd say during college days we were friendly, but not close in school. Your own class is usually the group you hang in with, so he was ahead of me as far as class. So I was friendly with him but not—we weren't buddies. But when I graduated and he finished school, we became friends. We became very close friends, Stanley and maybe three or four other guys from the fraternity.

Stanley, in 1952, married Elyse. Where I became interested in studio art, or making art, they became interested in collecting art. Incidentally, Stanley used to go to class with me a lot. He would keep me company. He never did any art, but we did that quite a bit.

He and Elyse got interested in collecting art, and they would take connoisseurship classes and et cetera, et cetera. So they got really interested and involved in the art scene.

I just thought of something I forgot about.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Just go ahead.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Back up. Well, somewhere before Chouinard and beside Arnold Mesches, I took painting classes at UCLA from Martin Lubner.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: L-U-V-N-E-R?

SIDNEY FELSEN: L-U-B-N-E-R. He's still around. He still paints. There were painters and they all painted realistic scenes. And he was good, and I probably had maybe a year, two or three semesters, with him at UCLA.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what year would that have been?

SIDNEY FELSEN: It's got to fit into that middle 1950s. Arnold Schifrin was another teacher; I think it was at UCLA. I took some painting classes from him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you're busy in pursuing studio art, and Stanley and Elyse Grinstein are pursuing collecting art.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you're all socializing together.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And isn't there something—

SIDNEY FELSEN: And the interesting part, with hindsight, is they were very interested and involved in, say, what was going on at either the Ferus Gallery or—I'm not sure if Ferus had even started by then; let's say it had—the Venice Boys or Frank Stella and Andy Warhol.

I wasn't interested in that at all. I was much more involved with these realistic painters. That's what I was doing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you're going along and being interested in art. I know that they were just at the Ferus, but that doesn't start until 1957. But along the way, you meet Rosamund, and how do you meet her?

SIDNEY FELSEN: One of my fraternity brothers married a girl who was a friend of Rosamund's and grew up together with Rosamund, and I just went to a party one night at their house and Rosamund was there. That's all. That was it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you and Rosamund start dating.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How long did you date before you married?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Maybe a year.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, that's right, because she had been married before.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, she was married; she had three kids. When I met Rosamund, she had three kids that were two, four, and six years old. When we got married they were three, five, and seven. And we were married for 15 years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you have one child.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. About a year after we were married, Suzanne Felsen was born.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And she's become quite an accomplished jeweler.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. She's great. She's doing really well.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's your only child with Rosamund.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. Now, do you have children from another—

SIDNEY FELSEN: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is your only marriage, correct? Well, your first marriage, rather.

SIDNEY FELSEN: My second marriage was to my wife, Joni Weyl.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, but your first marriage is to Rosamund.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah. Right. But there's something also—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: If I can help—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, let's just say I'm just thinking about—so we got married in 1960. At that point I had—about '61, I have four kids, three dogs, three cats.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where did you live?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, we bought a house in Woodland Hills, and we lived there about a year and a half, but, again, I had this CPA practice and my clients were in Huntington Park, South Gate, Compton, Lynnwood, a lot of industrial clients, or Beverly Hills or downtown, and that drive every day was just—it was like 40, 50 miles to go in and out every day.

We lived there probably two years at the most, and we bought a house on Fifth and La Jolla, which is in this neighborhood.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right.

SIDNEY FELSEN: So I went back to my roots. But, again, by now I really wasn't happy being an accountant, but I just—I knew that I was stuck with that the rest of my life. There was no question about it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because you had the kids and the wife?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, I had a family, and at this point I was at least 40.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were you successful at the accounting?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, I was successful in a—it was a small practice, and I had enough clients that I was busy all the time, and my partner was busy all the time. So it was a form of success. It wasn't anything great. Success varied.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you weren't happy.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, let's put it this way: I thought I was trapped. I didn't have any thought that I could get out of it, could no longer be an accountant, because I didn't know what else I would do. I could be an accountant for some company, which would probably be worse than having your own private practice, where you have more freedom.

One of the things that was happening in my accounting practice was that it was becoming influenced by the art scene. A lot of my classmates became clients.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Classmates—your art school classmates?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, people that had businesses, and my teachers became clients as far as doing their income tax returns [such as John Altoon, Peter Voulkos, John Mason, and Richards Ruben]. I had a couple of art galleries. One was Ernest Raboff. He had a gallery—and Manny Silverman worked for Ernie.

Ernie had a gallery, and then he started an art auction business. I did a lot of income tax returns for artists, and again, keep in mind we're talking about 1963, '64, '65, '66. There was no money in art. If you were an artist, you probably had to teach to make a living.

It was a different time when I went to high school; it was a different time in the '60s, as far as being in the art world. I used to say that making art was a lot of fun but a terrible way to make a living, and it was.

So anyway, I think through—it must have been Ernie's gallery, some gallery that I was around, that I saw that they were importing prints from artists that were from Europe. They were bringing Picasso prints or Chagall or Miró. And it was interesting to me, the idea of being around the artists, being around the scene.

I went to Stanley one day because he was my client and we were pretty close. So I said, "They have these workshops in Europe, and we should start one in Los Angeles. It would be fun, and we would get to know the artists, and you'd build a print collection."

It wasn't about money—so Stanley said, "Fine; I don't know anything about it, but if you want to do it, I'd certainly do it with you."

Our biggest question was, once we do this, how much money do you have to keep putting into it to keep it going; we figured something like that has got to be a financial drain.

So anyway, we decided, yes, we would do it. And so, in order to start a print shop, you need a printer. [They laugh.] Ken Tyler had a business that he started here in 1965, in the beginning of '65. It was called Gemini Ltd. It

was at 8221 Melrose. Art Services was in the front. It was Manny Silverman and Jerry Solomon. They were partners. And Ken Tyler was in the back with Gemini Ltd.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's pause for a moment, because prior to Gemini Ltd., Ken Tyler was the printer with Tamarind [Lithography Workshop, Los Angeles].

SIDNEY FELSEN: Tamarind, yes. He was the technical director of Tamarind.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And tell me what you would—just right now, let's talk about the difference between what Tamarind was doing and what you wanted to do and what you ultimately did do.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Tamarind is a teaching institution, and it was financed by the Ford Foundation. They gave them a five-year grant in 1960. June Wayne was the person who did it, and she did great, as far as getting that off the ground, and the idea of teaching lithography—I think you would have to consider it a European art—teaching lithography in America.

The idea was that an artist would go there and students would go there, and they would meet and they would learn lithography together. There were some accomplished lithographers teaching, but otherwise they were just students that were learning.

Tyler started there and he became the technical director. He left there to start his Gemini Ltd. At that time, Tamarind was teaching lithography and curating, and his wife, Kay, was studying curating, so they came here and started Gemini Ltd.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then his wife was Kay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Kay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Kay Tyler.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: So we invited Ken and Kay to a Christmas Eve party at the Grinstein house, which was 1965—yeah, December 1965. Yes, what he was doing was—it's called custom printing. It's for hire. You're an artist; you want to make prints. You pay him a fee; he produces the work for you.

What we wanted to do was to become a publishing house, which really means you invite the artist; you pay all the expenses; you own the art; you pay the artist a royalty. There's more than one way to do it. That's what we wanted to do. He was teaching—he was trying to get UCLA, the school, to take over his facility to make a teaching facility out of it.

Are we running out of tape?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, I'm just checking. I'm thinking that we may just pause for a moment here.

[END DISC 1.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, interviewing Sidney Felsen at Gemini G.E.L. on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, on October 23, 2009, and this is disc two.

[END DISC 2 TR01.]

SIDNEY FELSEN: Incidentally, one of the things, again—you said something about two sessions—I'm okay to do three as long as it's spread out somewhat in time, because I enjoy this.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Good. No, we'll do what it takes to get it done. We'll do it until it's finished.

The question I had for you was about Stanley at this point, when you are thinking of going into business together. What is Stanley's business and what is he doing at this time?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Stanley was at college for maybe five years, and he had 173 units, but he never graduated because he never really had a direction as a major. But then he went back in recent times—in the last 10 or 15 years or so, he went back and majored in fine art—in art history—and got a degree.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

SIDNEY FELSEN: You graduated in those days with, I think, 120 or 124 units. He wanted to be an engineer, if I remember right, but he wasn't really working at it, and he went to work for his father.

His father had a business—Alameda Street is a very industrial street, and so they would buy and sell used equipment like marine engines, block and tackle– and so he went to work for his father with the idea that he would not be there long—he would do something else.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: His father sold this equipment?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, yes. He would buy it and sell it. He had a yard on Alameda Street. But then in 1951, I guess, Stanley and Elyse met, and they got married in 1952. And I think it just made him realize that he was going to go into his father's business. So he became partners in his father's business.

These were days when the Army surplus sales was running rampant. The war ended in '45, and so by the early '50s, all the military branches were selling off all this equipment. And so Stanley got attracted to forklift trucks [materiel handling]. He started buying forklift trucks at auction, and he'd bring them to the family business.

And then throughout the years it just completely changed, and it became all about forklift truck—used forklift trucks, repairs, service, sales, and then even handling new forklift trucks. So that was his business.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And was he successful?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, yes. He did that from—if I had to guess, he probably took over the business by the late 1950s and kept it up until a few years ago.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that business—of the two of you, were you both financially sufficiently comfortable to be launching out on this lithography work—publishing?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, let's put it this way: he was a lot more financially comfortable than I was.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: I was okay, but Stanley was actually doing really well.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So at the outset, did you put in equal amounts of money—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —to start the business?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, we put equal amounts of money in.

So Tyler said yes. We then spent all of January of 1966 in my office every night practically. Our first thoughts were—this is probably Stanley, or maybe all three of us, I don't know—that we were looking for the grand old men. We went to Mark Rothko, de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, Edward Hopper, René Magritte.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This was in 1966.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, this would be like January of 1966. And we asked them to come in and—they were primarily Abstract Expressionists, and printmaking wasn't their thing. They didn't say no; they said, Well, we'll take transfer paper and see what we can do. But none of that ever happened.

But Tyler had worked with Josef Albers at Tamarind. Albers must have liked him. Ken asked him if he would help us launch this new—and he said, "Sure." And so he did a very large body of work. He was 78 years old at the time—we thought he was old—and these printing projects take months and months.

So we started with him in February, and by June we finished the first project. There's many stories about that, but the one that I like locally is that we decided—*Artforum* was on La Cienega at the time—we placed a full-page ad in *Artforum* [June 1966]. We reproduced one of Josef Albers's White Line Squares. It was a big yellow image.

I carried the copy over to the office there and I handed it to this kid, the layout person, and it was Ed Ruscha. [They laugh.] So anyway, we put an ad in. Again, I want to just reinforce this. We were born out of innocence. We had no idea what was going on [in the art market], and nothing was going on, except right around the time that we started Gemini, there was becoming a fairly active interest in people buying art.

In those days it was, quote, the New York scene. That's what it was. The New York scene was really starting to explode. Albers was the first one we worked with who wasn't really part of the New York scene. He lived off the

Yale campus, where he was the head of the school of fine art [Yale School of Art], but I think he had retired by the time that he started working with us.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But Rosamund said something about him being ill or too old to travel, I think—too old to travel, and therefore he had to actually mail his—

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, no, we didn't mail—well, what happened was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —some parts of the print to you.

SIDNEY FELSEN: He wasn't ill; he just didn't want to travel.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Well, what he would do is he would take a cardboard, he'd paint a square in the color he wanted, and he would tear it in half, and he would give half to us, and he'd keep half.

Tyler went to see him regularly, I think. I probably went there twice, both times with Rosamund. We'd come back and we'd color-proof—if you make almost any kind of art other than really a very hard edge, you need an artist to be in the shop because there's so much proofing to do. But when you take a square and have three colors, you can do that without the artist being present.

It was like a shuttle going back and forth between Los Angeles and Orange, Connecticut, at the time. So that's how we were getting the approvals on this. So that was the first project.

We put an ad in *Artforum* and got a phenomenal response. "What is this?" We got probably 300 responses.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how large was the edition?

SIDNEY FELSEN: A hundred-and-twenty-five.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how much were those prints?

SIDNEY FELSEN: The print was $125, but we made a pre-publication price of a hundred dollars. The prepublication was the announcement, so people were sending cash, checks, responding to the ad.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So did you sell out your first edition?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, see, of the 125, we offered him a royalty, and he said, no, he would just take 25 of the prints of the 125; so we receive a hundred. I don't think we sold out, but we sold a tremendous amount. There were eight prints in this series and as many as 800 prints.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see. Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: . . . [So we had a hundred of each color, or 800 total. We thought it was a fluke. So the next project was with Bob Rauschenberg.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I want to talk about that. In 1962, of course, and a few times after that, he showed with Virginia Dwan. Had you seen any of the shows that Rauschenberg did at Virginia Dwan?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't know.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how did you attract him to do something with you? What was the connection?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I talked to Stanley about that recently. I didn't know him and they didn't know him, but I think probably by being around the art scene [we became aware of each other].

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, of course—

SIDNEY FELSEN: It could have been Tyler. I don't know how the connection was made with Bob. But he agreed the minute we asked him, and he—

[Cross talk.]

Besides Josef Albers, Man Ray had come to Los Angeles because he had a retrospective at the County Museum [Los Angeles County Museum of Art].

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's right.

SIDNEY FELSEN: He stayed at the Grinstein house.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I was going to ask you about that next. Okay, so Man Ray, who had lived here in Los Angeles for many years—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, he lived on Vine Street between Santa Monica and Sunset. There was a colony there of European artists and musicians. It was post-World War II. Or even the ones that had left Europe during that time, they came and settled a colony. There were a lot of musicians—classical musicians and composers.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, Stravinsky, I think, is in that area. But to pause for a second, Man Ray went back to Paris and then came back to Los Angeles for this retrospective that Maurice Tuchman organized at the L.A. County Museum of Art—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —one of the first big shows at the new museum, which was something else I wanted to mention. In 1965, L.A.'s first real art museum opens.

SIDNEY FELSEN: That came out of Exposition Park.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It moved here from Exposition Park.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I wanted to ask if that also had an effect on the growth of the art world, but momentarily let's talk about Man Ray.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So he was in town for the retrospective, and how did you meet Man Ray?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I think what happened was the County Museum made the arrangement with Man Ray to do the show and to come to Los Angeles. And they—Stanley and Elyse—were [very active on the Contemporary Arts Council, and] it's possible they were on the board of the museum by then, but somehow the museum must have asked them if Man Ray could stay there. And he did, and he was here for a while. He was here for two or three weeks at least.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: With his wife, Juliet.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, Juliet, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I understand you socialized with them.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, a little bit. Stanley and Elyse did more than I because he was at their house. But I remember one day he asked me to drive him to Otis. He was going to talk to the students. He was great. The students loved him. So I drove him over there and stayed while he talked to them.

He was hanging around the shop somewhat—again, I couldn't tell you how that started, but he decided to do three Rayograms, I would say, of which two of them were screen-printed onto Plexiglas, and one was a lithograph onto paper.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Screen-printed on the Plexiglas?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Interesting. Now here's an interesting moment to talk about adventuresome printing.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so when you wanted to print on Plexiglas, did that seem challenging to you?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well—

[Cross talk.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: As printers?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I think screen printing had been done on Plexiglas before, so I don't think that was a breakthrough.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It was challenging, but I don't remember that as being anything that was terribly difficult to do.

And then we went to see Ben Shahn. We were still in the bag of pursuing old-timers.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's pause for a moment and ask—what else do you remember about Man Ray? Do you remember him as a person at all?

SIDNEY FELSEN: He was great. He was very funny. He had a great sense of humor. I remember I had a correspondence with him when he went back to Paris, and I remember one time I just said, "Hi, Man" [Juliet called him Man.] So I said, "Hi, Man, how you doing?" And he wrote back and said, "You asked me how I'm doing." He said, "I'm alive from the waist up." [They laugh.] And somewhere I've still got that letter.

So, yeah, I remember he was a very funny guy. He had a good sense of humor, but I didn't really hang around him that much. Probably Stanley and Elyse would have more to say about him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it's another thing to ask—I don't know if this has quite started yet, but Stanley and Elyse, of course, became known for these parties—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —they threw for the art world. Had that already started?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, definitely. One of the things we used to do there for Gemini, we made brochures. They were loose sheets. Like, say, for Josef Albers, there were eight images plus text, and I think Henry Hopkins wrote a text for it. And there was a price sheet.

So there was probably about 15 sheets, and we used to sit around at a big table at the Grinstein house, sorting—collating these into brochures. It was Stanley and Elyse and Rosamund and me and, I don't know, friends. We would invite friends over to do it. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: To collate the brochures. That's so sweet.

So Man Ray comes and he does his prints and he stays here for a few weeks. And then the next person, is that Ben Shahn?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Well, the next person—we were still chasing the old-timers, so we went to Roosevelt, New Jersey, and he agreed to do one print for us. I don't think it has much significance in Gemini's history. But Rauschenberg, that's where it really started. Bob was the entrance to the New York scene.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's 1966?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, Bob arrived in February 1967. He agreed sometime in '66 to do it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, and tell me about that experience.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I picked him up at the airport and I asked him if he had any idea what he wanted to do. At this point I really didn't know him. We had spent a couple of evenings in his kitchen in New York, sitting around. In those days when you got to visit Bob, you get there at seven, and four in the morning it's still going on.

He said, "Well, I'm thinking about doing a self-portrait of inner-man." I didn't to ask him what that meant. I dropped him off at the hotel and the next morning I picked him up.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where did he stay when he was here?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Chateau Marmont. . . . He always stayed at the Marmont.

So, I picked him up and he said, "Do you have any friends who are X-ray doctors?" And it just so happened that my oldest friend, who I met in Fairfax High School, the first one I met was Jack Waltman, and he was a young roentgenologist.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Waltman?

SIDNEY FELSEN: W-A-L-T-M-A-N, Jack Waltman. He was working at Kaiser Permanente. So I called and I said, Could I bring this artist over? And [he said], "Yeah, sure."

So Bob wanted a six-foot X-ray, head to toe, and we found out very quickly that—all X-ray machines use a one-foot plate, except there was one at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, New York, that would do a six-foot X-ray—"No, I don't want to go back there for that." So we did six one-foot plates.

He came into the workshop and developed this print called *Booster*, and it's the X-ray of his body. It has whatever else he collaged onto it, all kinds of images. It was six feet high and three feet wide, and we're pretty sure that at that time it was the largest hand-print of a lithograph ever made.

Then he developed a series called Booster and 7 Studies 1967. Each of the studies had a piece of something that was on *Booster*, so it was a series that talked to each other, as far as the connections.

We went back to *Artforum*, placed a full-page ad, and smashing success. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how many prints did you make of that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, each edition is different. There were 38 *Boosters*, I know that, but other editions ranged anywhere from 38 to 60 or 70. Generally speaking, there are attitudes about edition sizes, and artists, if they feel it's something really important, they would rather have a bigger edition so more people have an opportunity to have it. . . .

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, when *Booster* came out, how much was it?

SIDNEY FELSEN: A thousand dollars.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how did that price compare to other things that were on the contemporary print market at the time?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, it was more expensive than anything that I know of.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Josef Albers was a hundred.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How much was Man Ray?

SIDNEY FELSEN: If I had to guess, it was maybe 150 or $200. But then Frank Stella came out—I'm going to jump ahead just for this subject. Frank came out next, and he did—the smaller prints, I think, came out at $75, and the bigger ones were probably $150, to give you an idea.

Bob was certainly a well-known artist by then, and Frank had been in the exhibition Dorothy Miller did, and it made him more well-known.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But Rauschenberg was much better known at the time.

SIDNEY FELSEN: I think he was better known, sure.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And, so also it was a huge print.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was a six-foot print—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —nearly a six-foot print for a thousand dollars, but a Rauschenberg painting at the time would have been—

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't know.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —much more—obviously much, much more.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, more, yes, but I don't know what. But they weren't a lot of money. I think you'd be shocked if you knew what something came out then compared to *Booster*; the most I've ever seen it sold for was $250,000.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, that's not bad.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, not bad. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, so Rauschenberg, this was your first time working with him, and of course, you end up working a lot with him.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You just said he was one of your heroes in the art world. Why was he such a hero to you? And I know he was also to Rosamund, your wife at the time.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, let's see, probably, to kick off things, for all the art he did, and what the art was, as well as his brilliance as a person. My theory on Bob was to put a recording device on hi—just let it record for 90 days. You'd have the greatest book of philosophy ever written.

He had pearls of wisdom every hour and one-liners. And he was an exceptionally kind person. He was always interested and willing to help somebody who needed help. If he believed in some cause, he'd do anything to help.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, did he have a partner at this point?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No. At that time I'd say no. No, but—this is getting difficult, sitting like this all the time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm sorry.

SIDNEY FELSEN: No—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You don't actually probably have to. You can sit back.

SIDNEY FELSEN: We had a printer named Bob Peterson. The printers at Gemini in those days were 21, 22, 23 years old, and we had a bunch of handsome guys in the workshop. It wasn't a Central Casting selecting; it's just these guys showed up to work and they were all good-looking guys.

Bob Peterson had a truck. I don't know if Bob Peterson was straight or not at that time. And so Peterson had a truck and he said something to Bob about, "You want a ride in my truck?" Bob said yes. Bob was out there probably 10 days or something like that, and within the next couple of months Peterson moved back to live with Bob.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In Florida?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, Florida. No, wait a minute.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or New York.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It was New York.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In New York. Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So Bob Rauschenberg absconded with your printer. [Laughs.]

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. I hope I got the sequence right. Bob came out every year, and so it may have been the second or third project, I don't remember, but it was somewhere early on that Peterson all of a sudden went to live with Bob Rauschenberg.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, was Rauschenberg already one for the big party? Was he already interested in—it always seemed like he was very much a party person.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, yes. I'll tell you, Bob loved people. When he worked, he would have to have, first of all, a TV that was on all the time. He was the king of the soaps. He watched *Days of Our Lives* or *General Hospital*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was this in the print workshop?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, the next room you were in before, that's the artist studio. Right now those Serras are hanging there. They're breaking up the studio.

But Bob worked in there, so there was a TV against that wall. He would want—whoever came in the studio to visit with him—he loved to work with—and talking to people. He would be doing things and talking to people,

and he'd invite people in. He wanted the printers to come in, whoever came in. And I remember there were times when many, many people [were] in the studio while he was working, but he loved that.

Bob generally would work late into the night, so he would get back here around 11 in the morning. And then we'd bring lunch in, and then dinner, I'd go out—and there would be maybe eight printers and Bob and three other people, so we'd bring back dinner for 15 or 20 people, and we'd all spread it out here. And that went on every night.

Sometimes he'd want to go out, but while he was in the heat of the project, he pretty much wanted to stay here and resolve it. So I would imagine his projects were seven, 10, 12 days, or something like that, where he would be here every day, Saturday and Sunday.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, isn't he known for pushing the boundaries of what printmaking could be?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Well, *Booster* was one thing and—in Bob's case, the first thing he did was *Booster*. The second thing he did was *Bonnie and Clyde*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, what year is that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Sixty-eight.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: The film was made, and he and Warren Beatty knew each other. They were friends. I don't know if they were close friends but—Bob asked Warren Beatty if he could have stills and things like that, and all kind of literature and information from the movie. And a lot of materials came here so Bob picked and made six prints. He called it *Reels*, R-E-E-L-S, and then in parentheses [*B+C*], or *Bonnie and Clyde*.

That was 1968. And then in 1969—I'm not answering the question you asked because I'm working my way to it—in 1969, NASA invited Bob to observe the launching of *Apollo 11*. They said that they felt that he was the American artist who was most interested in space travel. And so he went to Cape Canaveral or Cape Kennedy, whatever it was called at that time, and he filmed it. . . .

So he came here and he developed this huge series called Stoned Moon, and ended up being 33 prints, of which one was a fundraiser for Merce Cunningham. There were so many prints, it went on for a couple of years. But we broke it up—we published it in groups. There were just too many at one time to handle, so we published 10 and then 10 and then 10, or something like that.

But it was still relatively traditional printmaking. He made a print in Stoned Moon that was bigger than *Booster*. It was called *Sky Garden* [1969], and it was 89 inches. Oh, and incidentally, Rosamund's father was an armament manufacturer, making things for the military, and he became interested in what we were doing. And we talked about needing a press that was bigger, so he built a press for us. And it's the one back in the corner there.

It has a bed 89 inches long and 36 inches wide. In hindsight, it should have been wider. It's too long and narrow. But anyway, *Sky Garden* was made on that press. The press was made for the project, and Bob made the print for the press.

In 1971, he came back and he decided he wanted to work on cardboard. They were called Card Birds. It was the idea of reality and illusion—some of it was cardboard, and some of it was not cardboard, but printed as cardboard.

Then, in 1972, he did a project called Horsefeathers, where every print had a collaging on it, every one, and there were hundreds of them.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So they were each unique?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, each one was unique.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So he personally collaged each one?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, no. No, he gave us material to cut. See, he cut the material out and we collaged them on.

Then in 1973, we arranged for him to go to a paper mill in France, in Ambert—A-M-B-E-R-T—to work with a very established and famous paper mill. The idea was that the paper became the object, and then he would put dyes in it. He had us print on a very thin skin of imagery, and they were fused into each piece.

In 1974, we did a project with him called [Hoarfrost], printing onto fabrics—silks, chiffons, nylons. Bob loved to go to fabric stores. We bought all the materials that he liked, and we printed all these different things.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Here in Los Angeles.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Would he—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Home Silk Shop used to be on La Cienega. I don't think it's there anymore.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Home Silk Shop.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Home Silk Shop, then later to International Silk Shop, which is on Beverly.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And he would go there and buy fabrics, samples?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, I would go with him. We had to buy something that had enough material that we could do an edition. But he spent hours there studying them. We would come back with a truck full of fabrics.

[Tyler went to France with Bob in 1973] and in 1975, Rosamund, Suzanne, and I went with Bob to India. We worked in a Gandhi ashram. It was created by Gandhi for handicapped people, or people that had problems, and there was a leather shop and a bookbinding shop and a hand-making paper shop. So we worked—he worked with the Indian nationals.

He always likes to deal with the locale, so he found there was a lot of bamboo there and cane and rope and certain kind of twines. They made their houses or huts out of mud, and it was called rag mud. So he did a few things that were traditional. They were paper with fabric into the paper. And then he started using all these other things to build objects as editions.

But as the years went on, every year there was something else. Sometimes we used metal, sometimes steel.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's pause for a second and talk about India. What was it like traveling through India with Rauschenberg with your family?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, we didn't travel through India. We went to a certain city—the city was Ahmadabad, which I'd never heard of before, but it had, at that time, two million people. Now there are six million. We flew to Bombay—we went on Air India, landed in Beirut, and then flew to Bombay.

And then we got a flight to Ahmadabad. One of the things Ahmadabad was famous for was the University of Ahmadabad; Louis Kahn designed the campus.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: And so we lived at—there was this family called the Sarabhai. Anand is the son, the older son—A-N-A-N-D. Sarabhai is S-A-R-R-A-B-H-A-I [sic].

[Cross talk.]

Anand now lives with Lynda Benglis.

Oh, it's 12 o'clock. We'll finish this story, but—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But basically—

SIDNEY FELSEN: And so we stayed at their house. They were very wealthy—very wealthy. They had the Max Factor concession for all of India. They had these huge fabric mills. And so we lived inside of what was called the compound, with walls around it and guards. Most everybody in India was poor, and you'd go outside in the street and all these oxen were walking by along with the people.

We had a rough time with that after a while. They had six cars with six drivers, and they would drive us to the ashram every day for work. It became a little uncomfortable, living this rich life inside this country where these poor people that worked in the ashram—they were terrific people. They loved Bob. All they knew was he was a famous artist. They didn't know who Rauschenberg was, but they would look at him with adoration.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They loved him.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, they loved him. And he was great. He was great as far as relating to people and especially

somebody like that who would have some problems. We were there, I think, 23 days.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wow, a long time.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah. And the Sarabhais were Hindus, so they were vegetarians. Every day we had vegetarian food. Finally one day Bob said, "I want to sink my teeth into some meat." [They laugh.] And so we sent out one of our guys to town to get a bunch of tandoori chicken and we brought it back. We had this feast and everybody got ill, except Suzanne.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Everybody got sick? [They laugh.]

SIDNEY FELSEN: Anyway, I think we should end.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are you running out of time?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, it's 12 o'clock and I do have to do some things.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: All right. Well, thank you for this.

[END DISC 2.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, this is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, interviewing Sidney Felsen at Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles, California, on November 20, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card three.

So Sidney, I think we last ended in the '60s after you'd started Gemini G.E.L., and you were doing the work with Robert Rauschenberg, which was a great success. You had done *Booster*, and after that you were off and running. And you talked about, after that, all the artists that came to work with you. I wondered if you could talk a little bit about that process. How did you choose artists after the success of Rauschenberg?

SIDNEY FELSEN: In the '60s and into the early '70s, the ownership, or partnership, was Stanley Grinstein, Ken Tyler, and me. It was a vote—two-thirds would win. Names were presented, and we talked about it a lot, and we kept looking, going to museums, asking people that we respected as far as their opinions and made our decisions.

Tyler left in 1973 and so, for the last 35 or 36 years, Stanley and I decided who will be invited. And the principle we work under is that we both have to agree, or if one chooses an artist that he would like us to work with and the other one doesn't object to it, then we say yes. If one of us says no—"I don't want to work with that artist"—then we don't.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So if you say, "I want so and so" and Stanley says, "Absolutely not," that's it?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You don't have a fight about it.

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, no, no. I might bring the name back again a year later and say, "I really think you should reconsider." And if one says, "I really want this artist," and the other one says, "Well, that isn't really one I'd chose, but I don't object to it," then we would say yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, this is a good time to talk about the sort of family focus of Gemini in the early years. Rosamund, your wife at the time, she said that originally she was packing the prints and mailing them for Gemini, and so she was actually working on site, and then she sort of became the de facto registrar-curator person. Did Elyse also work for Gemini?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, not here. The answer is no, except in the early years we were making brochures and they were loose sheets of paper and they needed a lot of collating, so we had several—you might call them parties or gatherings, usually at the Grinstein house, where we would sit around a table and do that work. And so she was involved in that.

But as far as physically at Gemini, no. Rosamund was what I would call a curator. It would be packing and shipping, but it had other handling-the-art parts of it, and somewhat involved in the registration and storing things.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where was the first location of Gemini?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, two blocks east of here is 8221 Melrose, which started with Art Services. Art Services was

in the front and we, the print shop, were in the back. It was sort of a traditional framing print shop arrangement, and it's now Paul Smith, haberdasher. We were there two years and we needed more space, so we found this location. And we bought this and moved here in 1969. We've been here ever since.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, was this an existing building?

SIDNEY FELSEN: This building was the glamorous Melrose Plumbing Supply Company, and we just bought it from an older man who wanted to retire, sold the building to us, and then sold off his inventory. We gutted this building out completely and made it into what it is now. [Architect Craig Elwood re-designed the front.]

We functioned like that from 1969 until the late 1970s, and we just needed more space. So then we asked Frank Gehry to design the building that's next door.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see.

SIDNEY FELSEN: That was designed in probably '76 or '77, and it was finished in 1979. We moved in the year 1979.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Tell me about working with Frank and the conceptualization of that space, because it's really quite radical, with plywood fronts and plywood sides and open staircase—a lot of unfinished aspects to it—and an open staircase leading into the building. How did you two collaborate—did you collaborate on the design, or did you just let him have at it?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Frank spent many, many hours here. He asked everybody here to make a list of what they wanted—any thoughts they had about the building, what it should be—and then he was very hands-on as far as working with them to try to make that happen.

The design of the building was purely his. I can't imagine we, in any way, told them how to design the building. We told them what we needed [and the Frank Gehry organization did it all].

[One important addition here was Elyse Grinstein. She went to architecture school (UCLA) late in life and became a licensed architect. Elyse began working in Frank Gehry's office—I'm not sure if she had already graduated or was still in school. She was very much involved in working with Frank and played an important part in much of the details.] . . . What I say is Frank Gehry wasn't Frank Gehry yet. He had been around for a while. He started coming here the day we started, practically. Frank was interested in art and being around artists. He had friendships with Bob Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Ron Davis, Jasper Johns, as well as others.

He was always sort of like a member of the family, you might say. By being around here, he had a feel for what this place is—what it was and what it is. And I think that, plus coupled with all the input of people that worked here, it was a guide for him, but I think other than that, it was strictly his ideas.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's go back in time now to, again, the origins of establishing Gemini. I want to finish a little bit on the idea of it being a family affair, because at the beginning I understand you were still working as an accountant?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Stanley was still running the forklift company.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Rosamund was pitching in as the packing, shipping, registrar person.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, look, again, it was created Christmas Eve 1965, and by the beginning of February 1966, Gemini was up and running. It was a workshop. It was small.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are you saying three months?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, it really took less than two months. I don't remember what we talked about last time, but prior to Gemini G.E.L., Ken Tyler had Gemini Ltd.—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

SIDNEY FELSEN: —and it was—we've already talked about that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. So, the shop there, where he was a for-hire shop, we wanted to be a publisher, so we just had to figure out which artists we wanted to work with and how to go about changing whatever was going to be changed on the administrative side of it.

So within two months we became Gemini G.E.L. And we had two presses and two printers and Tyler.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It seemed to me, from what you said last time, that it really sort of took off after the Rauschenberg *Booster* print, that it had a—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, the first thing that took off was Josef Albers. In the earlier days, in the very beginning days, we were primarily—what should I say—interested in the old-timers, the Abstract Expressionists. We wanted Edward Hopper and Hans Hofmann and de Kooning and Rothko.

There were efforts made in all those cases, but realistically they were, number one, much older; two, they were Abstract Expressionist; they weren't that interested in printmaking or just couldn't get themselves to do it. It didn't happen.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But the Rauschenberg contribution really seems to have brought a lot of other—like the new generation of contemporary artists and helped make them available to you. Is that correct?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. In those days, again, the New York art scene was the expression, and Bob Rauschenberg was the symbol of the New York art scene. So when Bob came here, it all of a sudden opened the doors to that.

There were two things happening. One was the New York art scene was coming to Gemini within a very short period of time. From 1966 to '68 it was Bob Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, and Roy Lichtenstein.

But that was coupled with—from the Los Angeles scene, Sam Francis, Ed Ruscha, Ken Price, and Joe Goode. They all worked here. Within a period of three years, all these really great artists were working with us. And then shortly after that—I would say within the next year or year and a half—Ellsworth Kelly and Ron Davis started working with us.

That pretty well created a roster. I would say, historically, in most cases the artist would come back and come back and come back. Bob Rauschenberg came back once a year for as many years as he could. And Roy Lichtenstein came here every two years. Frank Stella and Oldenburg came here a lot in the early days.

It happened quickly. And again, with history in mind—I'll speak for myself—I didn't understand how important it all was in those days. It was interesting and it was fun and it was exciting, but when you think about it now, to have all those great artists here in such a short period of time was really fabulous.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Extraordinary. Now, to attract them, how did you attract them to come here and do this? Did you pay them or offer to take care of them or—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, we'd pay them royalty. Artists are invited, and when they come, they're given completely free access to do works on paper or sculpture, do etchings, lithography, screen printing, woodblock printing, work on any fabric—any material they want.

And then they go from there. They create the imagery—Gemini is all about collaboration, so they create the imagery, make the art, and we are the collaborators who help them get where they want to be. And once they arrive at the finished print or sculpture, we do the editioning.

Once they arrive at the image, they sign RTP, which means "right to print," which is like a license to us to go ahead and make an edition. So the artists are not involved with the editioning. We do all the production part of it, and then the artists come back and sign.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, how long are the artists typically allowed to come here and work?

SIDNEY FELSEN: "Allowed" wouldn't be the word. They're invited to come stay as long as they want. And it's more—the ball's in their court. [They can do any process and use any materials they choose, and stay as long as they want.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you pay for their lodging while they're here?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where did they stay?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, in the earlier days everybody stayed at the Chateau Marmont. It was glorious. Rock stars were there. Movie stars were there. Artists were there. So I'd say it still is Chateau Marmont, but now some artists have different places they want to stay. It's up to them. They stay where they want to stay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But can they stay, say, two weeks or—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —a month? Or how long is an average stay?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I'd say the average stay is probably between one and two weeks, so maybe 10 days. Roy Lichtenstein traditionally stayed a month. He would come out here—he always came in February, for some unknown reason, and I'd say Bob Rauschenberg would stay maybe seven to 10 days. Jasper Johns would stay a week, and if he didn't resolve where he was at, he would leave and then come back again and open up all the information and start working where he left off.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And would you give them a per diem to pay for their meals and their gas or their car, whatever?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I like to say we provide them with a lifestyle that they're accustomed to, so, yes, an automobile is rented for them and it's theirs to use. Everything is paid for that can be. We don't give them a per diem as such for food or stuff, but it's a closeness, and they're here every day, and as many times as can be, if they want to, we would take them to dinner, or some people invite them over to dinner, things like that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So it's really, obviously—it seems to me you were trying to create a very—not just comfortable but really enticing arrangement for them.

SIDNEY FELSEN: We want them to be as comfortable as can be. The ability to make art has to do a lot with your own feeling like you belong. Say they came out of their own studios and they had maybe one assistant, but they had a great privacy. And they come in here, and all of a sudden there's eight printers and three curators and me and the people up in front in administration.

So it takes an adjustment. Like Bob Rauschenberg once said to me, "You guys think that I'm an accomplished printmaker and artist, but I walk in and I see eight people standing there with rollers in their hands saying, 'Okay, Bud, what are you going to do now?'" [They laugh.]

It's always a matter of how to make them feel at home and comfortable and want to do something. So I always felt that one of the things working for us, as far as with East Coast artists, was that we had—whatever month of the year—we had palm trees and sunshine. And like I say, Roy always came in February.

If you look at the schedule or calendar, as far as artists coming here and what days or what months, it's phenomenal. January and February is always loaded with artists from the East Coast, and it's great. We offer them the opportunity to be in the sunshine. The ocean is right there. The mountains are over there and all that. I think it's a lure, but the reality of it is they never get out of the studio. [They laugh.]

The artists that work here are so dedicated to what they're doing that—it was an early awakening for me of how hard these people work. They're all bright, intelligent, great abilities, and they want to come in here and work eight or 10 hours a day.

They get phone calls all the time from people that say, "Oh, come on over to have dinner with us," or something like that. And they may like the people but they don't want to be tied down socially—it upsets the way they perform. They get here at eight or nine or 10 in the morning and they want to stay here until six or seven or eight or nine or 10 at night. It's an amazing dedication and it's pretty consistent.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I think Irving Blum talks about how important it was that the New York artists came out and interacted with the L.A. artists, that a lot of friendships were born out of the fact that they came here repeatedly and they developed friendships with a lot of the West Coast people.

Can you talk a little bit about the social aspect of how this happened, during the early Gemini years especially. For example, maybe you could talk a little bit about the Grinsteins and their function of always having parties in their big house.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, let's see. Some of the associations that I remember were Bob Rauschenberg, Jasper, Frank Stella, I think Claes Oldenburg. Their friendships were with maybe Laddie—Laddie [Guy] Dill, somewhat Guy but probably more Laddie in those early years—as well as Chuck Arnold.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, wasn't Laddie Dill working here as a—

SIDNEY FELSEN: He worked here a little bit. He worked here for a short time. I think he worked—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: As a printer?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Not as a printer. We had a Jasper Johns project where he was doing lead reliefs, and Laddie worked on that. But Laddie was the only one that worked here.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That would be Charles Arnoldi.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, Charles Arnoldi, Ron Cooper, Jim Ganzer, Tom Wudl [ph]. Ed Ruscha was older than the ones I just named, but he had a really good friendship with Bob Rauschenberg and with other artists, too, some of the—I'll call them the "Venice boys"—but the Venice boys would come here to visit with some of the artists.

Bob Rauschenberg stood out as an artist who loved to have people around him while he was working, where some artists would need the privacy of not having people around. So the artists would be invited to come here during the day. A lot of times where we worked into the night, we would go out and get take-out food and bring it back here, and some of the artists would be invited to be here.

But even then, beyond that I would say dinners outside, whether it was in a restaurant or at the Grinstein house—and the Grinsteins would have parties that were great and became a known aspect as part of the Gemini scene.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Can you remember any of the grander parties the Grinsteins had? Or the not-grander parties the Grinsteins had. I know that Elyse and Stanley Grinstein talk about how they used to just invite—informally invite—so many people because they had bought a large house in Brentwood and they could have a lot of people in it. And, of course, they considered this a big part of their contribution to the art world at that time.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Specifically I can't remember, but there were many, many parties, they had big parties with—certainly with the artists from the local scene and whoever might be visiting here.

Some of the parties were, I think, directed at or dedicated to a certain artist who may be here working, but a lot of them were just big, open parties.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, do you think any relationships—friendships—evolved out of this that endured after, or were these just brief things? Did any of these West Coast-New York artists have enduring friendships?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, the one that stands out for me was Ed Ruscha and Bob Rauschenberg. They really seemed to appreciate each other. But I don't know exactly how to answer that. I'd say when the artists from the East Coast would come here, they would ask about, you know, "How is Laddie," or, "How is Guy," or, "How is Chuck," or something like that. [It's a big picture to portray, and I believe many lasting friendships were born.]

They would get together sometimes, but I don't know if there was—I'll tell you, what comes to mind more for me is the printers that are here are all artists. They all come out of art school. It's amazing; they all graduated college. Not by any requirement, but anybody that comes to apply here went to college.

So they have a close friendship. They work with somebody for eight or nine or 10 days in a row, for maybe 10 hours a day; they develop a friendship. And so there's been several of those where artists went back—Bob Peterson was a printer, went back and lived with Bob Rauschenberg.

I was thinking—well, Ed Henderson was a printer here and he went to work for Jasper Johns. Tony Zepeda—Anthony Zepeda, who was here 10 years—he's a teacher now—he's an artist and he's a teacher at Art Center College of Design; he's very friendly with Jasper Johns and they talk on the phone and he visits once in a while. There's a lot of that. [Frank Gehry developed friendships with several artists that sustained.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, because I wondered if, on the other side of this question, you sensed a certain animosity that Gemini was asking so many East Coast artists to make prints and not very many West Coast artists, by comparison.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Is that a question or—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, I'm asking—

SIDNEY FELSEN: —is there an animosity?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —did you feel an animosity from the—for example, you never printed work by

Billy Al Bengston or, for that matter, I don't think, Ed Moses.

SIDNEY FELSEN: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I wondered if—and probably many others. So I wondered if you then felt that sort of cold shoulder, because, of course, around the late '60s, one of the issues in L.A. that I have come up against is that L.A. artists had very strong feelings about the number of New York artists that were showing with Irving Blum, and now the New York artists are being printed by Gemini. And certainly they're very vocal about this, but were they vocal about it to you?

[It's a difficult subject. Gemini is in its 46th year and we have worked with only 65 artists. Most of the projects have been in depth, meaning there are six or eight or 10 editions that are created all at once. Each project takes a long time, and this is encouraged by us. We feel the longer an artist works, the more likely that the quality of the work will be better. We also like it when artists repeatedly work with us, as it builds a familiarity between us, and leads to a range of different imagery from the same artist over a period of time.

The only way we could have worked with more artists would have been to enlarge the workshop, add more presses and more printers, which would have changed the whole atmosphere. It would have made it more like a factory.

The Los Angeles area artists we've worked with include John Baldessari, Larry Bell, Vija Celmins, William Crutchfield, Ron Davis, Richard Diebenkorn, Sam Francis, Frank Gehry, Joe Goode, Robert Graham, David Hockney, Ed and Nancy Kienholz, Bruce Nauman, Ken Price, and Ed Ruscha, which totals 15. We've invited Mike Kelley, Charlie Ray, Andrea Zittel, and Bob Irwin, which have not resulted in collaborations, at least as of yet—but we're still hopeful! And Allen Ruppersberg is about to start his first work with us very soon.

You ask the question, Do you feel animosity from some of the Los Angeles artists? The answer is, not directly, and there's never been any confrontations. With all of that said, there's been a touch of uncomfortable feelings about it all.] . . .

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [At] what point are you able to leave accounting altogether and come to work for Gemini full-time? What year is that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, by March of 1968—so it was in two years. Rosamund worked here as what I call a curator, but I had my own accounting practice. I was a CPA and I had a partner. I was spending every Saturday and Sunday, probably every evening, at Gemini from the day it started.

When Ken Tyler was running the workshop, I was doing sales and administrative work. There wasn't any administrative staff—it was too small. There was one girl working up in front and that was it.

During that whole period I probably worked every Saturday and Sunday. Gemini consumed us because it was fun and active and demanding.

So once it happened, all of a sudden this was really neat. And when we started the Albers project and it was so successful, I just thought it was like a one-shot deal. Then we did the Rauschenberg and it was successful again. You say, What is this? You start to wonder. But the perspective of now compared to then, it wasn't anything anyone expected or even believed it would happen. But within less than two years I did come in full-time.

But also, the other thing—I don't know whether we talked about me and art schools and all that—

[Cross talk.]

All right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I wanted to ask about the amount of money. Stanley couldn't quite remember. He said he thought it wasn't more than $10,000 that he put in to start Gemini.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you remember exactly how much you put in to start Gemini?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, we each put in 12,500, so it was $25,000.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: To start it altogether?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. How soon were you able to recoup your investment?

SIDNEY FELSEN: For years we didn't take a dime out of here. Stanley and I have pretty good grounds in business, and so we felt that this was the kind of thing that you let it raise itself up.

An example, we practically—we weren't borrowing money. We paid for everything and then we bought this property. We were just constantly building—buying equipment. Just the idea of making—how do I say this—of creating a business that had its own assets without obligations—financial obligations. So we were just putting the profits back in.

I don't remember. I don't remember when I started taking any money out, but it was several years later. And even then it was almost nothing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because you were just constantly reinvesting your property back into the business.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, definitely.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, Rosamund says at a certain point she had a falling out with Ken Tyler. Would you talk about that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: The shop was in the back and Ken ran that, and I was up in front running whatever the administration was. He wanted everything about his workshop his way, and he wanted to have complete control—he didn't want any static, so to speak.

Rosamund was friendly with the printers, and if he did things that she didn't believe in, she was either mouthing off to him in front of the people working—honestly, I don't remember the specifics, but it was little in-fighting things about a guy who was wanting full control of everything within his own realm back there.

And she didn't agree with some of the things he did. Ken Tyler's wife was working here too. Her name was Kay Tyler. She was the curator. She was a trained curator from Tamarind, and Rosamund really worked with her.

Ken Tyler made an announcement one day that he didn't want the wives there anymore, that wives had to go. And so that was his wife and my wife, so that's what happened.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then a few years later, I think in 1973, Ken Tyler leaves, and there is kind of a messy lawsuit of some sort. Could you please explain that? . . .

[END DISC 3 TR01.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I know there was some sort of lawsuit between you and—Gemini and Ken Tyler, and I'm not quite sure of the circumstances. Could you explain that for us?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, sure. We had meetings every Wednesday night—Stanley, Ken, and I. If I had to guess, this was in springtime, March or April, of '73; we had been functioning going on seven years.

Ken came in with a bottle of champagne, a can of smoked oysters, some crackers and poured us each a glass of champagne and handed us a letter saying that he's leaving and that he's going to take a third of the equipment and a third of the inventory and leave.

Well, as far as speaking the law, Gemini was and is a corporation, and so, as a corporation, a shareholder is a shareholder, who only owns shares of the stock, has no ownership of any individual piece of equipment or property or anything like that. We said, "Ken, you can't do that. We'll negotiate with you." No, no, he was going to take it.

So he hired a lawyer and it became very ugly. He filed a lawsuit. He claimed that there were 700 prints missing and that I stole them. He hired Arthur Andersen and Co., which was a major CPA firm, to come in and do an audit. He hired a law firm that had 150 lawyers. It was—Irell & Manella.

They hired Arthur Andersen to come in and do this audit. And they wrote a report saying there were 700 prints missing—the system that had been created here of how to do things, which came from Tamarind, was you write things in pencil and then when there are changes, you erase them and change them.

Our daughter Ellen was working here at that time, too, and so in the lawsuit they claim that Ellen falsified the records, that I falsified the records. It was pretty ugly. So we had a lawyer who was a one-man firm. It was a fraternity brother, Stanley's and mine. [His name is Irwin Osher.]

He said to me, "Are you pissed off at Tyler?" I said, "Look, I don't know if I'm pissed off. I think the guy is a jerk for doing this." He said, "Oh, do you realize that if he prevails, you can go to jail?" All of a sudden my palms started to sweat. Again, I was a CPA, so I certainly understood record keeping. There was nothing missing. I asked these auditors if they wanted help and I'd show them. No, no, no, they didn't want me to help in any way.

So they wrote this list, 702 pieces missing. I started working day and night to go through—to prove where all these prints were. This was a place where you loan things out. There's things in back. They're up here. Some record keeping may not be 100 percent [and the Tylers were in charge of where the inventory was kept].

So anyway, there was pre-trial hearing in the morning. His attorneys had the morning and they presented their case.

Well, it was noontime and then in the afternoon, our attorney presented our case. At the end of the day—four or five o'clock—the judge called the three or four lawyers that were representing Tyler and—[inaudible]—and he said to Tyler's lawyers, "This is purely a case of someone who wants to leave a company and wants to take the assets of a corporation, which you know can't be done, and this case never should have been brought to court. You shouldn't have wasted the court's time." He really scolded the attorneys and he threw the case out.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: All right.

SIDNEY FELSEN: So Stanley and I bought a case of champagne and came back here and we had a party.

So anyway, that was it. Tyler came in one morning after that, and I said, "You don't belong here. You've been fired. You have no business being here." So he's never been back since. That was in November. I don't want you to think that I remember these things, but November 15, 1973, was the last day he set foot in this place.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where did he go then?

SIDNEY FELSEN: He went back East with the idea that he would—but keep in mind that nothing was settled. He still—he was an owner, and so he went back East with the idea of starting his own workshop. I would say the legal aspects went on for quite a while. And finally Lee Eastman, an attorney, who was Linda Eastman McCarthy's father—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right, Linda McCartney's father.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Linda McCartney. Well, Linda Eastman—her father was Lee Eastman. He was great. He was an artist's manager—he was an attorney who was really interested in the art scene, so he was managing Josef Albers, Philip Guston, Dorothea Rockburne, Richard Lindner, de Kooning.

And so he was a friend. I knew him and I liked him. I think we all knew him and we all liked him, and so one day he said to me something about, "Did you guys ever settle that thing?" I said, "No, it's still going on." He said, "Well, why don't you all come back into my office and"—meaning come back East to his office—and maybe we could settle it.

So something was set up for a Saturday in 1979—Tyler and his attorney and Stanley and I and our attorney—and we went and it was like the Three Stooges—knock heads together. I'd say in about six hours an agreement was hammered out—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: —that ended it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So he acted as a sort of arbitrator and put it to an end. But that took six years of hanging around, right, from the original lawsuit.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, six years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Goodness, that's a long time.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, I wanted to ask you about working with a couple of artists specifically. I know you did a print with John Altoon. Can you remember what that was like at all?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, it's called *A Christmas Rose*. That was done with the idea of John wanted to affectionately give Christmas presents and we wanted to give Christmas presents, so we asked John if he would make an edition and we would just give them all away.

[Cross talk.]

Should I say it over again?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's okay. So you did the John Altoon as a Christmas present edition.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes—it was all given away. The edition size, it was half to him, half one to us, and we just gave them to [inaudible] people, either artists or people that were somewhat involved.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Compared to the sort of wild and wooly way that Rauschenberg was known to work, what was it like working with Jasper Johns? I guess he did the Numerals series here—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —which is a different sort of approach, I would think.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Robert Hughes said one time that "Bob Rauschenberg breathes out and Jasper Jones breathes in." Jasper is a fantastic gentleman, a very kind guy—great to work with—but Jasper would want privacy, compared to where Bob wanted a TV going on and six people hanging around talking to him while he was talking to them and things like that. I think Jasper was great.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, Claes Oldenburg had been here earlier. He had been here in 1962. Well, so had Rauschenberg. But did you know him when he exhibited with Virginia Dwan?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I didn't know him. I was aware of him, but no. No, Bob helped us get Claes in the sense of, oh, we were talking to Claes on the phone one day. This was before he came out here to work with us.

It was in the workshop and Bob sort of grabbed the phone and said, "Hey, you've got to come out here. It's great. It's a fun place to work and these people are very nice," et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So I presumed that helped bring Claes out here.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did Rauschenberg do anything else like that with anyone else?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I don't know if I explained that Frank Stella came out to teach at U.C. Irvine.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Frank Stella was teaching at U.C. Irvine? Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Frank Stella and his then-wife Barbara Rose were invited by the U.C. system to come out to teach at U.C. Irvine. Barbara would teach art history and art criticism. Frank would teach painting. This was 1967.

They have two children. And when they got here, you had to sign a loyalty oath in the state of California.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's right, you did say this. Go ahead.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Okay, and so Barbara signed it and she started teaching, and Frank wouldn't sign it. So he was just sitting out at Irvine with nothing to do. So he came in to visit Bob. He came in, I would say, somewhat regularly, and one day—as we had just purchased a whole collection of limestones that were fairly small, 17 by 23 inches, and very thin, from some print shop in England. Bob picked up one of these stones and handed it to Frank and said, "Why don't you go back there in the corner and draw?" Frank was 29 at the time. He started drawing Black Series. So Bob was certainly instrumental in that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then around that time, Stella did a print—must have been the same period—called *Irving Blum Memorial Edition* [*(Star of Persia)*, 1967], and it looks as though it has silver ink, geometric shape. Could you tell me about the title of the *Irving Blum Memorial Edition*?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Irving would come in the shop regularly, and Frank was drawing an image called *Star of Persia*, and it had a silver base. The first layer of ink laid down was silver. And then on top of the silver were these several colors that made up the Star of Persia. Irving walked in the shop one day when the silver [only] was on the paper, and looked at it. "Oh, God, that's beautiful. Oh!" You know, "Oh, my God, that's beautiful."

So Frank said to Tyler or one of the printers, "Maybe we should just print a small edition." And we did and he named it *Irving Blum Memorial*. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that's the *Irving Blum Memorial Edition*. Fantastic.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that was quite a relationship with you. You did a number of prints with Stella, correct?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Stella. Yes, he did a lot of prints in a short time; I would say from 1967 to 1973. Incidentally, when Ken Tyler left, Frank went to work with him and didn't work with us anymore. It was the only case where that happened.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, while we're in that sort of time frame—we're back into the early '60s again—I wanted to ask about your move into doing multiples. What is your first multiple, your first use of three-dimensional printing?

SIDNEY FELSEN: First of all, you have to define "multiple" because, realistically, if you have a hundred prints—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Go ahead.

SIDNEY FELSEN: If you have a hundred prints, it's a multiple, but the word "multiple" in those days was really talking about sculpture editions.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's the way I've always thought of the term.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I think of it, too, but I got away from it because a lot of people use the word "multiple" as an edition of prints.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I see.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It's a multiple.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what would we call a three-dimensional?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Sculpture edition.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Sculptural edition. Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. We we started out as a print studio—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right.

SIDNEY FELSEN: —and that's what we intended to do. And then in 1968, Claes Oldenburg came along and said, "Are you interested in doing a multiple"—[they laugh]—a sculpture edition. And we said, "Sure." We didn't know what we were getting into.

So he said he wanted to do a Chrysler Airflow, which was an automobile that was from 1934 to '39. It was a beautiful, air-streamed-looking car. And, sure, fine. So it was almost like the way we started Gemini. We had no idea what we were doing, but we said, "Sure."

The piece was a lithograph, a sheet of paper, with a line drawing of a Chrysler Airflow, but then over that, Claes wanted a formed sculptural—as he used the word—he wanted it to be elastomeric, in swimming pool green and translucent.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Elastomeric?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Elastomeric really means flexible. It's soft and it moves. We started getting into that and we realized that's a demanding world. First of all, we had to get somebody to make a mold. We had to find somebody who knew enough about the material that was chosen.

So we went through a lot of mold-makers, but the one we found that was great worked for Disney Studios. He was a Disney mold-maker, and so he moonlighted with us and made this mold. I blanked out on the material. [Urethane]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But it's like a soft plastic—some sort of soft plastic or—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —polymer.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It's a rubber material, actually.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Rubber.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It's in the rubber family.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: So anyway, it had an interesting history. It was an edition of 75 and they were beautiful. It took a long time. It took probably one or two years—at least a year and a half—to get it to the point where it was right for Claes and he liked it. So we made 75 of them. We offered them for sale and we sold them all.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, how much were they at the time?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Thirty-five-hundred dollars.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, would that have been a considerable amount in 1968 for a three-dimensional print?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, first of all, there weren't many three-dimensional prints as far as comparison, but—this was six feet wide, six feet horizontal, and urethane. It was six feet horizontal and probably at least 30 to 36 inches vertical. It was big. It was beautiful.

The answer to the question is, everybody wanted to buy it, so it must not have been overpriced. They were all out. I think at least 73 of them were sold. Then about a year later somebody called and said, "The *Airflow* I've got is starting to turn brown."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Uh-oh.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Gulp. So I think somebody else called and said, "My *Airflow* is starting to turn color." So we went back and looked at some of ours—besides an edition, you always make exhibition proofs and some artist's proofs. So we looked, and some of ours were turning brown. Yipe. So what have we got here?

We had a chemist analyze the material—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, keep going.

SIDNEY FELSEN: —and told us that there was something missing from the formula that was called aliphatic isocyanate, which I had never heard of. Because of that, the material wasn't stable. The color wasn't stable.

So we called them all back. We did our Detroit thing. Wantonly, one person refused to send it back. . . .

So we spent another year or so remaking them and then sending them back out again. We filed a lawsuit against the company that sold us the original material and we won, but we didn't get a lot of money out of it. But we won the case.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So all the *Airflow*s that are out there today, except for one—

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, she finally sent hers back.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She finally did. So they've all essentially become—they're reconditioned *Airflow*s.

SIDNEY FELSEN: They were remade.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, Oldenburg must have been very happy.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, yeah, he loved it, the whole involvement. I think it brought a smile to his face.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, let's pause here and change discs.

[END DISC 3.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, interviewing Sidney Felsen at Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles, California, on November 20, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number four.

We were talking, Sid, about sculptural editions, and let's also talk now about working with Ed Kienholz on a very famous edition you did called *Sawdy* [1971].

SIDNEY FELSEN: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I believe that's in the early '70s?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. I'd say yes, but—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's in the early '70s.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But tell me about that, because it's as complex in its way as the *Airflow*, it seems to me.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Well, *Sawdy*, it's a story about a black man found in a truck with a white woman. It's in the South. And the truck had the word "Sawdy" on the door. It was a big Kienholz piece. [It came out of his major sculpture titled *Five Car Stud*.]

He installed the piece in the parking lot. It was huge. He had sawed-off cars and the truck. We filled the whole parking lot with dirt—brought trucks of sand—it would be like a dirt road. It took days to do it.

The whole construction was his. He brought it all in. Before Gehry building this building, next door was a parking lot, which was completely filled with sand/dirt. If I had to guess, it had four or five different vehicles that he brought in, and then whatever else made up the scene.

The idea was, we photographed the scene, and then this piece, *Sawdy*, that he made with us was a Datsun door, the door of a Datsun truck. The edition size was 56. We ordered 56 doors from the company in Japan. And they sent them here, disassembled, so we had to assemble them.

Incidentally, after the Oldenburg—I'm backing up now—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: After the Oldenburg *Airflow*, it sort of opened the door for us to get into multiples. Roy Lichtenstein did several; Ellsworth did; Rauschenberg did. We hired a person full-time—his name was Jeff Sanders [ph] He was our sculpture person.

He had graduated from some college up in north-central California, and I remember his professor recommended him to us. Jeff is still around. He lives in Ojai. And so it became a division of Gemini to do sculpture editions, and we did a lot of them.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So here you have these Datsun doors, and then isn't there a silk-screened image on the window or something?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes. So what happened is we had the doors—the doors came here, we assembled them, and then the idea is, when you roll the window up, I think you just see it as a window, and then on the inside there is this photograph of *Sawdy*, of the—no, it was called—sorry; the piece was called *Five Car Stud* [1969-72] and *Sawdy* was the truck and therefore the door from the truck.

Five Car Stud I think became a Kienholz piece, period, that's out there somewhere.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: An installation.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. It's owned by a museum in Japan.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

SIDNEY FELSEN: And so—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *Sawdy* was the edition of the single door with the image of—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, the inside of the window was the image of *Five Car Stud* that was photographed out in the parking lot.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But isn't there some image of a man being castrated or something—am I confusing two pieces?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, no—yeah, yeah, that's it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Correct.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, the truck was there, but he was being castrated.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the picture that's on the inside of the Datsun door window, if I remember correctly, has to do with this gruesome scene.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, a black man being castrated—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you can roll it up and down, can't you?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You can roll the window up and down.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, yes, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, why I think of this is because I've always thought that was such an extraordinarily complicated sculptural edition, and was it?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. But most of them are. All sculpture editions are very demanding. We'd do an edition, 10, 15, 20, 25. You go out into industry and say, Can you make this for us? And, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah." They say, "How many do you want?" And we say, "Well, 10, 15, 20." "What?" You know, they want 10,000. It's the set-up time.

And so we found out that what you have to do is—in Southern California there are a lot of—they're called prototype shops, for aerospace industry, shipbuilding, movie industry. You go out in the Hollywood area there, Santa Monica and Highland and—these little shops. And if you want a license plate from 1908 from Arizona, they make it for you. If you want to reproduce this chair that was done in 1789—they make anything. And so we've had to learn who did what and therefore who to go to.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, this was—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Let me just—

[END DISC 4 TR01.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What Ed went through—

SIDNEY FELSEN: What Ed went through to put the *Five Car Stud* out in the parking lot, that was complicated.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But did you pay for that whole installation to take place in the parking lot?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I'm going to guess yes. We did.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And at that point, I don't know who he would have been represented by, because Virginia Dwan had gone back to New York. Do you think he had a—maybe he didn't have a dealer here.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Gee, I don't remember.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: One thing I wanted to ask is, were you selling these prints at first, or were you always working through a group of dealers across the United States?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Everything. We would sell to dealers. We would sell directly to the public, out of the gallery. We would sell to museums. So it was a full program of selling.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you have a subscriber base?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, we started one in—if I had to guess, it was 1968 or '69. We did that for a few years, but then we discontinued it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. I was looking for the date of *Sawdy,* but it's not even on the website.

So essentially—to get back to three-dimensional printmaking, or sculptural printmaking—is this something that became sort of a special quality of Gemini G.E.L., something that might have separated you from printmakers elsewhere in the world?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I'd say yes. Most print shops are about works on paper, and very few stuck their toe in the water as far as making sculptural editions. So it certainly—it added a big dimension to it. And we could say to an artist, "Look, come on out and do something, and you can do this or that or that." Several times an artist would

do the work-on-paper project and sculpture at the same time. [It was and is an attitude that we'll do anything the artist wants done.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Can you give me an example of that?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Roy Lichtenstein did it fairly regularly, and Claes, when Claes did the *Airflow*, he also did a book called *Notes* at the same time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what did Lichtenstein do?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Roy did a brass head, a wooden head, a sculpture—a relief, or a wall relief. A *Peace through Chemistry Bronze*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then he would do print pieces that related to those.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Sometimes, yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, being in Los Angeles, one of our advantages, we believe, is that we have these prototype shops, and it certainly has contributed to the evolution of contemporary art in Los Angeles.

This is something you might want to talk about a little bit. It seems to me like you were among the first to discover these prototype shops.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, yes, we were one of the first ones doing sculpture, so I say yes. We still use them. We still do sculpture editions. Just recently, we did three editions with John Chamberlain, and they were bronze, but he didn't like the look of bronze, so we coated them with chrome plating.

We've done things recently with Ann Hamilton where we had to use outside services for a wooden box. Ann did a coat here—what happened was—working on a press bed, there's a felt—it's a blanket that serves as a cushion between the—to help for the pressure of the press, and she saw the fabric and she liked it and she designed a coat.

But we had to find a seamstress—first of all, a designer—and so the girl who was doing *Deadwood* for TV and now does *Mad Men*—her name is Janie Bryant and she was a friend of my daughter, Suzanne's. We called Janie in to help us, and she referred us to a seamstress, Joanna Bradway [ph]. She made the Ann Hamilton coats.

But it's always noodling around to find somebody who will do something. Ann Hamilton did spoons—they were metal spoons—and we had to find someone who could do it. They had a very Giacometti, pinched feeling to them, and they were recently done in a local small shop.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So Gemini is a success; it's up and running. You don't have to be an accountant anymore except in terms of being the accountant here at Gemini. And you're—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, no, no, I'm not that at all.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, you're not the accountant at Gemini.

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, definitely not.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Definitely not. So as an accountant, you hired another accountant to do the accounting?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, we have a lady who is our full-time financial person. She's a bookkeeper, and we have a CPA who comes in once a month. He's the one coming in today that I have to meet with.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so essentially you just were able to transition into a much more creative side of your life. Is that correct?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. I run the workshop. I'm the administrative manager of the works and have the relationship with artists. As far as the financial part, Stanley and I co-manage it, but Carmelita does most of the work.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, in 1976, you and Rosamund divorced.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And could you talk about that a little bit?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, you ask me questions.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Why did you and Rosamund divorce in 1976?

SIDNEY FELSEN: We were an unsuccessful married couple, as far as marriage goes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. So at that point, she was no longer involved with Gemini. And did it have any effect on Gemini in terms—

SIDNEY FELSEN: She wasn't involved with Gemini after that day that Tyler said she had to leave.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So did the divorce have any effect on Gemini?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't think so. Well, she became an owner, but I don't think it affected the operation.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is she still one of the four owners?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Yes. Well, there's Stanley and Elyse, Rosamund, and Joni and I.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So five owners.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. And then, carrying on, could you just repeat for me the names of the four children—the three by Rosamund—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Tony, Ellen, and Jimmy.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is it T-O-N-Y?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, it's Anthony.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Anthony.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Anthony, Ellen—

SIDNEY FELSEN: James and Ellen.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —and James with Rosamund.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then Suzanne.

SIDNEY FELSEN: And then Suzanne.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And do the four children still live in Los Angeles?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Anthony lived in Texas for many years, but he's back in Los Angeles.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so was Gemini affected by its own success in any way, and if so, how?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I certainly don't think it was affected negatively. Positively, by success it probably gave us encouragement to go on and invite other artists to work here. But it's a business that you don't want to make bigger. If you make it bigger, it becomes like a production mill. Right now, it's like a cathedral. It's quiet. It's meditative. Artists need that to—in most cases—to do their work. And the printers need to do their work. It's a very demanding, very sensitive, high-quality work.

We have four presses and eight printers in the shop. That's it. At one time we reached out and had five presses and 10 printers. And I just felt it started to make a change, and we just backed up.

So we have no desire to get any bigger, as far as the facility. I think sometimes it would be nice to have a conservator here full-time or things like that, but as far as production itself, I wouldn't want it to be any bigger than it is.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How many editions do you typically do each year now?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I'll make a guess for you: 40, or something like that. We've done 2,200 editions in 43 years, which comes down to around 50 a year. But I'd say we probably do less now than we did at one time. And the

edition sizes are smaller. Right now the edition sizes average 38, 39, 40, 41, or something like that. They used to be probably more around 50 to 55.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And each edition is one—when the artist comes here, they don't do just one edition. How many editions do they usually do per visit?

SIDNEY FELSEN: We encourage them to do a body of work. An artist comes here and they have to rehabilitate—they have to adjust to being in this surrounding, around our people. And I think in the very beginning there is still an uncomfortableness; even if they've been here before, some of the personnel have changed. [It's a period of adjustment.]

So I always think it takes a couple of days to unwind. I encourage them to stay as long as they will, and it pretty much works out that they'll do—probably an average number of prints is a series is eight. Edition size is—say, if edition size is 40, eight different editions. Right now we're about to install a Joel Shapiro project that—since we started talking they brought in the frame prints, and there's nine Joel Shapiro prints. [And the edition sizes are 45.]

Richard Tuttle is the next artist that will be showing in the gallery, and there are eight prints.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I noticed before that you had the Sophie Calle edition up.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Sophie Calle is different. It's a book, and so—yeah, Sophie Calle is up now and it's about to come down for Joel's. Sophie's is 28 pages as a book, plus three separate pages, but we rarely do books.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, an artist who was always very interested in printmaking, with whom you worked a certain amount, is David Hockney. Could you talk to me about working with him?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Sure. Well, David, who is British, came here in the early-middle '60s to live here. He came to teach at UCLA. If I remember right, that was the reason. And he fell in love with Los Angeles and its palm trees and the sunshine and et cetera, and just, practically speaking, moved here.

And so he lived here—he kept his apartment in London throughout all the years. A place, so to speak, with a little work studio. And he would go back there occasionally. He has a house here in Los Angeles—he bought Anthony Perkins's house up in Hollywood Hills.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: On Woodrow Wilson, yes.

SIDNEY FELSEN: On Woodrow Wilson, right. And then David's most recent companion is John [Fitzherbert], and John is British.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What is John's last name?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I know but I couldn't come up with it right now.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

SIDNEY FELSEN: John had some visa problems. I don't know what it is, but he is not allowed back in the United States. And David really loves John and needs John, in a sense. David is becoming more and more deaf as the years go by. But I think it's really a great relationship between the two of them.

And so because John couldn't come back into the States, David really moved to England. His base, you might say, isn't London but Bridlington, which is up in the northeast corner of Yorkshire; David has pretty well settled down there in the last, I would say, three or four years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Has he done any prints with you in recent years?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because I'm thinking more of the prints that he did with you early on.

SIDNEY FELSEN: He did a lot of prints with us. The recent prints that he's done are on either copy machines or computer driven. Like right now he's got new prints that were just introduced at Pace in New York the last couple weeks, and they were really computer driven and then digitally printed in his own studio.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So when he worked here with you, being English, was his approach different to printmaking from your American artists?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't think that. David draws beautifully. He did several things here, but the one that stands out in my mind was called *Friends*, where he invited 22 or 23 of his friends to come and sit for him here in 1976 in the artist studio. It was usually two or three days. And they were beautifully rendered drawings of Michael Crichton, Billy Wilder, Nicholas Wilder, Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy, Henry Geldzhaler, et cetera—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then you had them printed as an edition.

SIDNEY FELSEN: —me. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, everyone has done Sidney Felsen.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, they were all editions. They were all black and white, beautiful drawings. I'm sorry, John just received a visa for one year to come back into the United States. So they did come here two weeks ago for David's opening in New York, and they came to Los Angeles for eight or nine or 10 days. And they talked about how they would like to come back now that John is able to come back in the country.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, good.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, good, because we miss him.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And the other question I had was about—in terms of the choices—I was looking at the list of people and I wrote down here, in 1970 you did Joe Goode, Ed Ruscha, James Rosenquist, John Chamberlain; in 1971, Donald Judd and Kitaj, and the following year Mark di Suvero and Andy Warhol, then Robert Motherwell and Wallace Berman.

So it's a catholic sort of selection there. And these aren't people you started out with. So in a way, how did the selection process go at the beginning?

SIDNEY FELSEN: At the beginning?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP : Well, this is all—even throughout the '70s.

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't think there's any attitude about it has to be a certain kind of art. It's our looking at an artist and what they're doing and who they are, looking at who is out there.

It was a lot easier in the '60s and '70s than it is now because, I still say, the whole scene, whether it was artists, collectors, museums, dealers—it was so small compared to the scope of the art world now. But it was a matter of looking and looking and looking, and asking and talking and deciding who we were interested in.

You want an artist that you think relates to graphics. I'm a believer—it's like if I see an artist that I think is really good, even though he or she may have never done graphics, I sort of equate it to sports when professional teams draft. I like to draft for the athlete instead of somebody that you think was a great first baseman or a great forward or a guard, just somebody who you think is a good artist. And if you feel that they could relate to graphics, you talk about inviting them.

But I don't think there's any formula. It's very open. Like right now, this is the first time we've ever worked with Joel Shapiro, but I've probably talked to Joel for 25 years. "We should work together." "Yeah, we should work together." But it never happened until now.

Richard Tuttle was a recent thing. I've looked at his work for a long time, and I've always thought it was sort of nutty and interesting, and very interesting, and then finally we decided, Why don't we invite him?

Sophie Calle, we always thought she was interesting, and then about three or four years ago we decided, Why don't we invite her? And then two years ago we went to the Venice Biennale, and when we saw the French pavilion, we went, "Wow, that was great." But it was a constant courtship in our minds.

The artists that I'm talking to now are Andrea Zittel, Julie Mehretu, Bill Viola, and Franz West. Whether it happens or not, we've stated our interest in them, and it's a matter of, Can we work it out?

But Franz West is a good example of where we've been looking at his work and it looks interesting, and then one day John Baldessari said to me, "You know, Franz West is great. You guys should really think about him." It was like a push that we needed to just extend the invitation.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's interesting.

So I wanted to talk to you about your personal life a little bit. Where and when did you meet Joni Weyl? Is her last name pronounced Weyl?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, W-E-Y-L is Weyl. Well, she says that I found my bride in the want ads of the *Los Angeles Times*. It was 1977 and we needed someone to work in the front in sales. Gemini put an ad in the *Los Angeles Times* and she answered. She had just recently graduated from Stanford, worked for a few months with some some business management firm. And so she took the job here.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Had she been involved in the art world before?

SIDNEY FELSEN: She majored in art history at Stanford. Like most other college educations—your recording machine won't be able to pick this up, but you've got this much classical and then you get this much contemporary art. So she got the sliver of contemporary art.

When I interviewed her, there was an Ellsworth Kelly print on the wall and I said, "Do you know who that artist was?" And she said, "No." I said, "It's okay, don't worry about it." But she—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So she started working in the front office, and even though she's not—you're not supposed to have relations within the office—the rules were broken.

SIDNEY FELSEN: But you mean the rules of the company or the nation?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At what point—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Because in those days I don't think there was an issue nationally about—maybe "over the water cooler."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm kind of joking, but—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But when did you become romantically involved?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I'd say at least a year. Yeah, it was fun. In those days Gemini was smaller. The whole scene was smaller. Now I concentrate all my time in the workshop and the artists, but in those days—Stanley ran his materiel-handling equipment company called Mifran-Boman. He'd only come here in the evenings.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What is the name of Stanley's company?

SIDNEY FELSEN: It was called—it's Mifran—M-I-F-R-A-N—dash—Boman—B-O-M-A-N. And so that was his business, his occupation. But he was always close to me in the sense that we'd talk all the time on the telephone, then we'd have a meeting one night a week.

But he sold Mifran-Boman in the last several years, and Stanley has become more physically active. He comes here on Wednesdays and he runs sales and curating. And so in those days I was doing sales, so I worked with Joni a fair amount.

Yeah, I would say it took maybe a year to a year and a few months or something like that before we actually started going out.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then when did you get married?

SIDNEY FELSEN: [Laughs.] Eight years later, in 1986.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you have any children by that marriage?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then Joni opened a gallery—

SIDNEY FELSEN: We went together for probably five or six years. Joni wanted to get married and I thought it wasn't a good idea. I thought I was too old for her. I'm 30 years older than her. I thought she should have kids. I was worried about being a millstone around some young girl's neck as I got older.

And I didn't have a good marriage before and so I didn't have a good attitude about marriage. So she picked up and moved to New York in 1984. She started her gallery called Gemini G.E.L. at Joni Weyl.

I certainly missed her from the very beginning and I think she missed me. I probably went to New York once every month or so during that time, and she came out here a few times. By the summer of 1986 I decided, yes, I wanted to get married. So we got married at the Grinstein house on the front lawn.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Ah, that's good.

SIDNEY FELSEN: November 30, 1986. Next week is our 23rd anniversary.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, that's lovely.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is she still as involved with the business as she was at the beginning?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Probably more so. She started out in a loft that Chuck Arnoldi owned and rented to her on Crosby Street, and then she moved to West Broadway and had a gallery. She was there 10 years, and then the SoHo rent surge hit her like every other art dealer and she had to move. So she moved into an apartment for a while until she could figure out what to do.

For the last few years she's been in this 980 Madison building within the Larry Gagosian Gallery, so to speak. You have to go through Larry's gallery to get to Joni's gallery. You have to go in the front door of Larry's gallery. She was worried that people would think that she was part of the Larry Gagosian Gallery, but it's fine.

Joni is my wife and I think she's great, but she's compulsive-obsessive about work and she works all the time. She works eight, 10, 12 hours a day. She really is dedicated to what she's doing. She's a little bit involved here. The reality of Stanley and me—I'm 85 and he's going to be 82 next week.

We're not going to be here forever, and so the reality of the next wave would be Stanley's daughters, Joni, Suzanne if she wants to be, and I don't know what Rosamund's situation is. So, the place is closer as far as all the people.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Will some of the children, the Grinstein children and your own children, be interested in being involved in Gemini?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, the Grinstein girls have absolutely stated they want to be, and Joni certainly would want to be, and Suzanne shows pretty strong interest that she—she's got her jewelry business that I love and I think she's doing great, but she shows a strong interest in wanting to be part of this. So I don't know exactly how it will all work out.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And is Joni only involved in sales, or does she also work with the artists who are here?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, she—no, she really—none of those other people have anything to do directly with Gemini, but they're around more. They have no duties, but—look, Joni is closer to the artists in the sense of my social life is a lot with the artists, and so therefore—and my social life is her social life, so there's friendships.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But I'm saying, her gallery represents Gemini prints—does her gallery represent Gemini prints?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes. Only.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Only.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It's called Gemini G.E.L. at Joni Weyl, and she only shows Gemini things.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That was my impression.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So she has that part of the business and she's very active in it, and then—

SIDNEY FELSEN: It's her own business. Her ownership has nothing to do with Gemini. Joni is a dealer.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, yes.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It has to be that way because of Rosamund and Stanley and Elyse—I have to treat her like a dealer. She's by far the most important dealer because she has the New York area and somewhat around the Atlantic seaboard there, so she's very important to Gemini.

Joni had an opening for Joel Shapiro last week and he was at her gallery. And she's going to have an opening for Tuttle in January and so he'll be at her gallery, and she had an opening for Ann Hamilton recently. So she's certainly very close to a lot of the artists.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, looking at it now—we've really talked a lot about the '60s and the '70s. Can you pinpoint any particular change or evolution that happened in the '80s and the '90s at Gemini? We've really talked more about the beginning evolution of Gemini. How did things escalate or change as the business became stable and successful?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I think I move it up a little later. I have to think about your question. But I'd say what's happened in recent years is Roy Lichtenstein isn't around anymore; Bob Rauschenberg isn't around anymore; Ellsworth is 86 and hasn't been active in printmaking. Ed Kienholz isn't around. Diebenkorn isn't around. And I think 24 artists have died that have worked at Gemini, so that's kind of shocking.

If you looked at Gemini in sort of the middle '60s on through probably into at least the '90s, Bob Rauschenberg came out every year; Roy came out every other year; Ellsworth was always doing something. Diebenkorn was a sometime thing; Kienholz was pretty active.

Since those no longer exist, we had to begin to reinvent ourselves. With Julie and Joel there and Tuttle next and Sophie coming down after a while, they're all first projects with us—and talking to Andrea and Franz West.

So I think the reality of the whole early roster of Gemini is no longer active with us. Right now Richard Serra and John Baldessari are the the most active artists as far as regularly producing something. And they're great for us. . . . [I'm hoping Ellsworth will become active again in printmaking.]

Bruce Nauman and Susan Rothenberg are not regular printmen. If they have an idea, they will come in and do something with us. So you can certainly feel the reinvention of Gemini as far as artists.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, also, the larger direction of contemporary art has shifted so much that now artists seem to regularly make not large editions of sculpture, per se, but like, for example, Doug Aitken might make a light piece and it's an edition of five, or Charlie Ray might make something that's a small edition. Has that affected the way people think of sculptural editions at all?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't think so. The definition of sculpture, the classical edition, was either nine or 10. It was unique, and if it was more than that, then it became an edition.

So it depends who—I suppose as the scene changes, maybe attitudes change; I don't know of those things meaning anything as far as changing our life. Actually, I think Doug Aitken and Charley Ray are great artists.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Gosh, as I was just sort of thinking about the idea of—well, anyway, let's move on to something else.

We were talking before about the experimental nature of what you were doing in the '60s and '70s, but I know you just did a very experimental sculptural edition with John Baldessari when you did *God's Nose* . I know that was extremely complex because I talked to you about it at the time.

So maybe you could review that with me. *God's Nose* was something that you did, I think, in 2008, correct, or 2009?

SIDNEY FELSEN: No, no, no, I'd say '07.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Two-thousand-and-seven?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Probably '07, would be my guess.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. Can you tell me about that process?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well it's aluminum. *God Nose*—it's *God*—N-O-S-E—*Nose*. John said he wanted to make something for the ceiling.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Correct.

SIDNEY FELSEN: It's a formation of white clouds on a blue sky and a skin- or flesh-colored nose. It's God's nose coming down out of the sky looking down. And it's very sculptural. I'd say the thickness of the sculpture is probably one and a half inches.

It's an aluminum plate, flat plate, and then John created these sculptural forms of the clouds, and we had to

have molds made to pour the aluminum to make the forms and then—he painted one, and the lady who works for him is a painter who came to work for us and painted our God noses.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think it was—again, as you said, they were all challenging. It seems to me, if I remember, it didn't work the first time and—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Oh, yes, yes. No, we had to make several different clouds, present them to John, and he selects the ones he likes. You had to please John.

I still think all sculpture editions are very demanding. Jim Reid, who runs the shop, has been here 30 years. He's a printer, but fortunately for us he has a great sensibility for all kinds of materials and processes. He's the one that really gets in the trenches with these projects, and I'm the administrator.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I also wanted to mention one other person—Peter—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Peter?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —Carlson.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Carlson, okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Peter Carlson. Tell me about how you found Peter Carlson, and his involvement.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Peter was this nice young kid that worked there for a while in curating.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What years—when did he start here?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Boy, I'd say early '70s—the late '60s or early '70s. There was something special about him from the very beginning. There were two. One was Ron McPherson, and Peter Carlson. They're both blonde. They both live up in Tujunga. They've lived up in that area. They were nature boys.

They both have great, fantastic work ethics, both very creative. Ron worked here for 10 years. Peter worked here for just a short time. They both have their own businesses. Peter's is called Peter Carlson Enterprises and Ron's is called La Paloma.

All they do—a hundred percent of their work is for artists. Peter works with Ellsworth Kelly, Jeff Koons, Claes Oldenburg—and more. Ron works primarily with Jonathan Borofsky, who was such a prevalent name in the art scene who has, you might say, withdrawn from the art scene that we think of as the studio art scene, and he devotes his life to monumental sculpture, 60-, 80-, 100-feet-high pieces that Ron builds and installs them.

Ron can't stand to do anything ordinary. The only thing he wants is a challenge. He also works with Niki de Saint Phalle's sculptures, plus a few other artists.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How many years did Peter Carlson work here?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, I'd say a year maybe.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, okay. I thought—

SIDNEY FELSEN: A very short time. Okay, so let's talk about Peter and Gemini. . . . [He did our Isamu Noguchi and Mark Di Suvero editions, and has helped us with others. These were done by Peter Carlson Enterprises.]

If we had to make metal pieces, I would go to Peter and ask him what he thought about it and explore possibilities of working together.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you did to a piece with Mark di Suvero back in—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes, '71.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —'72.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Seventy-two, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was that like?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, they were complicated, demanding. They were called Puzzle Pieces. It's like a piece of metal that's cut out into a jigsaw puzzle and then you—so it ends up being five or six or seven pieces. And then he invites you—it's a participation piece. You're supposed to take this and make what you want out of it.

But Peter is great and Ron's great. They're amazing as far as the things they do.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is it true what my impression is, that Los Angeles has been, historically, a very strong place for printmaking? I mean not historically since the 19th century, but in the modern era.

SIDNEY FELSEN: The 1960s.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We have Tamarind, then we have you; we have Cirrus, and then more come along. We have Hamilton Press—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We have—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, Mixografia.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mixografia, yes, exactly.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Tamarind started in 1960 and has a Ford Foundation grant for 10 years. So you would have to say that Tamarind, led by June Wayne, would be the spur that started it all.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Absolutely.

SIDNEY FELSEN: So Gemini came off of that, because Tyler was the technical director of Tamarind.

And the ones you named are the best known—but there's more. There's more workshops around, but Los Angeles has definitely been a hotbed for printmaking.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: More so than the East Coast or New York, say?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't know how to judge it now.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean originally, like in the '60s and '70s.

SIDNEY FELSEN: I think so. In the early '60s or possibly late '50s, Tanya Grossman started ULAE [Universal Limited Art Editions]. So she was definitely first. I don't know enough about the small print shops. . . . [Multiples was a publisher in New York—but they didn't have their own workshop.] . . . I don't know who their producers were, but they were a publisher that would commission an artist to do an edition and then send the artist out to some shop to make their art. There's still a lot of that happening, of workshops that do that—publishers that do that.

I'm just thinking of one in London, Alan Cristea. He's a major publisher, but he has no workshop. He doesn't want one. He doesn't want what he thinks of as the "grief" of it. We like the workshop because you control everything you do. Everything that's happened is by our people. We train them.

If an artist goes into a shop for hire, one of the concerns can be, Hey, this is taking eight days; hey, this is taking 20 days; hey, this is using up so much material. We don't even begin to think like that. What you want is an artist to come in and have them do something they want to do and walk away and be satisfied with it. So we don't care how long it takes. It's more important that the work gets done, and done the way the artist wants it.

And you cannot think of it from the standpoint of money. If you do, you're going to stub your toe. You always have to just approach it as the best way it can be done. And if you do it right, then you'll be okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did this ultimately affect you as a person, this—

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, mostly by just being around the artists. Two things. One of them, my life was liberated. I mean, I throw in my crutches. Having a professional life I thought was very sort of controlling, narrow. Here I deal with advertising—maybe not at this moment, but sales, advertising, travel, relationships with artists, production. So it just is a whole different, open thing.

That's one, but probably more important is the experience of being around these artists. They're amazing people. They're all bright. Everybody that works here, I figure they could be a U.S. senator if they wanted to be, or a brain surgeon or a rocket scientist.

They're all—they're extremely bright people and they're all very kind, giving. I've learned a lot from just being around them as far as how to live my life. And they were very influential, like as the kids were growing up. It was great for them to be around these people.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They had their education in art history directly from the artists.

SIDNEY FELSEN: That was very good—I still have a vision of one morning at the old Pasadena Art Museum—I went with Suzanne, or Suzy, and she was probably six or seven years old. And we walked in this room and she said, "Oh, there's a Frank Stella and a Jasper Johns."

I couldn't help but look at people, and they were looking at this kid, and saying, "Wow."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She knew all these contemporary artists just because she had already met them.

SIDNEY FELSEN: She was around them. She grew up around them—and learned their painting styles. It got me and my life way beyond anything I could have imagined as far as the excitement, rewards. I feel like I'm a part of it. I didn't make the art, but I still feel I'm part of this.

And we were instrumental in the fact that the National Gallery created an archive for us, and they've had three major exhibitions for us. That photo book is interesting for me to have; it all changed my life dramatically.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you wanted to be an artist and here you have become an artist.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Of sorts. I never felt I was an artist as far as a working artist. I always said something—you know, It would be fun to make art, but I can't imagine myself being an artist.

I got to the point where, in ceramics, I thought the things I made were pretty good, but I think I may have mentioned it. When Gemini started, I quit going to art school because I got self-conscious about being around all these characters that were so good. And then, I don't know, later on, What am I doing? So I went back to Otis and I studied with Henry Takemoto and Ralph Bacerra. I was okay—decent, but not great.

I look at some of the pieces I made—and some around the house—and I'm proud of them, but I wouldn't—I'm not an artist as such, but it certainly gave me a foundation for what's here. And I think I have a good sensibility about how to work with artists.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, clearly, you're quite sensitive. And when did you take up the photography?

SIDNEY FELSEN: Well, as a kid, I remember when I was 13 years old, for my bar mitzvah I was given a camera that I wanted, and it was really a good camera in those days. So I always took pictures.

And then I stopped it, and then in World War II, I was a GI. I was stationed in Europe, and so I picked up a Contax camera there. There were these places where you trade cigarettes for something, or chocolate or field jackets, and so I got a really good camera.

And I came back home and—but I wasn't really taking many pictures. Even when Gemini started, Tyler ran the workshop and he hired a photographer named Malcolm Lubliner, who is very good. Malcolm took a lot of pictures during the first seven years of Gemini—it's getting tough to sit here like this.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, we're almost finished.

SIDNEY FELSEN: One of the golden eras of Gemini was from '65 to '70. So in those days I wasn't in the workshop taking pictures because Tyler ran the workshop and chose to use Malcolm's photographs—it was his lair, but when he left, I started taking some pictures.

I realized I had the access to the artists in a friendly way, so then I started buying better cameras—I bought some Leicas. And so here it is 35 years later, and I have about 30,000 photographs—[laughs]—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Thirty-thousand, wow.

SIDNEY FELSEN: —of artists [at work, at play, travelling, et cetera]. . . .

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are you going to give these photographs to the National Gallery?

SIDNEY FELSEN: I don't know. I don't know. The Getty has mentioned they were interested. I don't know. I may just give them to Suzy and Joni, and let them keep them. They may work in the Getty. I don't know. I really didn't want to make any decision at this time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, there's time left.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're still taking pictures.

SIDNEY FELSEN: Yeah, oh, yeah. Listen, I took those two weeks ago. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is there anything you would like to tell me that I haven't asked in this interview?

SIDNEY FELSEN: . . . [What comes to mind as you ask the question is what I called the "Rodney Dangerfield": Prints don't get no respect. My favorite example is two people come into our booth at an art fair. One says, "Look at the beautiful image," or "that beautiful Baldessari," or Serra, and the other one says, "Yes, but that's only a print." They both turn around and walk out.

When I think of the reasons artists make prints, the number one answer is because it's such a challenge to them. I also think it affords the opportunity to collaborate with others who have an expertise other than their own, and they're able to merge the two talents to make special works of art.

Printmaking is very demanding. If you spend a part of a day here, you very quickly see what these demands are, particularly during a proofing session when an artist is here. It's a give-and-take, experimental, passionate, exhausting time. The artists have only so many hours to accomplish what they need to get done, and it's an exciting period. The artists are rewarded by the art they've created, and the printers are rewarded by the fact they've just collaborated with a great artist and they feel their own involvement with the artwork that resulted.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]