Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Valerie Jaudon, 2009 Oct. 8-Dec. 22

Funding for this interview was provided by the U.S. General Services Administration, Design Excellence and the Arts. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Valerie Jaudon on 2009 October 8-December 22. The interview took place in New York, NY at the artist's studio, and was conducted by Avis Berman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's U.S. General Services Administration, Design Excellence and the Arts oral history project.

Valerie Jaudon reviewed the transcript in 2016. Many of her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been heavily edited. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing Valerie Jaudon for the Archives of American Art GSA Oral History Project on October 8, 2009, in her studio in New York City.

I always start the same way with everyone. Would you please state your full name and date of birth?

VALERIE JAUDON: Valerie Jaudon, August 6, 1945.

AVIS BERMAN: And you have no middle name?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was Jean. I haven't used it in—

AVIS BERMAN: That's all right. And how would that be spelled? With one N or ends in N-E?

VALERIE JAUDON: J-E-A-N.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. That's a very unusual last name. I mean maybe I'm provincial, and I haven't heard it. Is it French, or where does it—

VALERIE JAUDON: It's French. They originally came from the Ile de Re on the west coast of France, 16—they probably left in 1682. That was the year they kicked out all the Huguenots.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: So they either swam out or took a boat to England and then went to South Carolina. From South Carolina to Georgia and then Mississippi.

AVIS BERMAN: So the name has really come down from there on your father's side?

VALERIE JAUDON: It's my father's side.

AVIS BERMAN: And most of your relatives that you know of are from the South?

VALERIE JAUDON: Absolutely. Yes, they are.

AVIS BERMAN: But you have no accent.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, I've been in New York a long time. I left a long time ago.

AVIS BERMAN: When you came here, did you have a Southern accent?

VALERIE JAUDON: I'm sure I must have had a little bit. I really didn't like the way it sounded.

AVIS BERMAN: So you chose not to have one on some level? Even as a kid?

VALERIE JAUDON: I liked the way they sounded on the radio and television. It sounded better than "Hi y'all." [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. So you attempted to emulate that.

VALERIE JAUDON: Not really. It just happened that way. When I left Mississippi, I traveled a lot. I've lived in New York for 40 years.

AVIS BERMAN: One picks it up. No, it's true. I'm from New England, and I had a different New England accent many years ago. But the New York adenoidal twang has sneaked in. And what did your father do?

VALERIE JAUDON: My father was a manager of a grocery store. My mother was—essentially she was a secretary, but she was in politics. I would say one of those courthouse ladies that run everything and get things done. Involved in politics. Always had politically-appointed sort of jobs. Things like the [deputy –VJ] chancery clerk.

AVIS BERMAN: But you never moved to the capital of Mississippi, or you never had to get closer to that?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, Greenville [Mississippi] was a small town, 25,000 people.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you have brothers and sisters?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. Brother, two sisters. Younger.

AVIS BERMAN: So you're the oldest?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I'm the eldest by far.

AVIS BERMAN: And do you think in terms of the household dynamics, how did that make a difference for you?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, yes. I was the big sister. It made a great deal of difference.

AVIS BERMAN: Did you have to care for the other children?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I did. [They laugh.] There's a word for that; I'm not sure what it is. We always had a full-time maid. But I was essentially the babysitter. I was working for her. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: I guess you were the permanent au pair.

VALERIE JAUDON: I think that was it; I was the permanent au pair. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And was that difficult for you? Did that affect your relationships with your brother and sisters who were quite a bit younger, for example?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I think that if there's anything that was really interesting about my childhood, would be the context in which I grew up, which was the '50s in the South. We lived across the street from the courthouse; the courthouse looked like a Richardson Courthouse, very turn-of-the-century kind of thing. And she spent a lot of time there. It made our lives exciting, you might say. Television started for us around 1950. Greenville was rather liberal. It had a mixture of people other than just the farmers . Because it was on the river, a river town. We had different kinds of [people: Chinese, Lebanese, and a large Jewish community –VJ]. They didn't have the Klu Klux Klan. It was close [though –VJ]. [It had a very liberal newspaper *Delta Democrat Times* –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: So it wasn't just the northern cliché of just blacks and whites? There were other groups; it wasn't monolithic?

VALERIE JAUDON: There were other groups, and I was aware of these other groups, —It took many years before I realized that my town was 70 percent black. And it was very hard for me to understand that the life was so separate.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, the schools would have been segregated.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, completely.

AVIS BERMAN: What else would have been—The churches, of course. And the neighborhoods.

VALERIE JAUDON: The town was essentially divided into two. You didn't see the other side of town. The town also extended out into farm areas. So, around Greenville itself, life was rather tranquil. We knew there was a lot of trouble in other places, Birmingham and other places. But life was pretty tranquil.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also, you know, in the late '50s, early '60s, when things were heating up, there were also in movies and in the news, it wasn't just that there was desegregation in the South, but a lot of people were always making fun of Southerners as a lower form of life.

VALERIE JAUDON: Absolutely, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Did you get any sense of so-called inferiority complex? Or was there a rebellion against that?

VALERIE JAUDON: I know I felt [isolated –VJ]. I think it was because of television that I was able to understand what was going [on. For towns in the South the outside doesn't really exist –VJ]. It doesn't matter what other people think. I was able to see the contradiction, and I had so many questions about it. I had so many fights with my family and my mother about this.

AVIS BERMAN: Your mother and father?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, my mother and father. Well, everyone. You couldn't get a straight answer.

AVIS BERMAN: How about your brothers and sisters? Did they feel the same way you did?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. I think it was a political moment. And it basically hit me.

AVIS BERMAN: Just a little bit of housekeeping, also; I just want to get your parents' names and dates of birth or deaths.

VALERIE JAUDON: Okay. If I can remember.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, just do the best you can.

VALERIE JAUDON: My mother was Gladys Hill—H-I-L-L, Gladys Ethel Hill. I think she was born in [1921 –VJ]. My father was Baize Russell Jaudon; I think he was born in [1918 –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Is that B-A-Y-S?

VALERIE JAUDON: B-A-I-Z-E.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, okay. And was that a family name?

VALERIE JAUDON: No one ever knew. [They laugh.] He had 15 brothers and sisters, and he was the youngest; I think they had run out of names.

AVIS BERMAN: And was he from a farming community?

VALERIE JAUDON: He was from Batesville. It was closer to Memphis. It was farming. It was also hills, the Red Hills of Mississippi.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you know your grandparents? Or did they have any—

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I did. They all lived for a very long time. I didn't know my [great- grandmother –VJ] on my mother's side. She died, I think, the year I was born. I knew my grandfather, and then I knew my mother's parents.

AVIS BERMAN: And what were their professions?

VALERIE JAUDON: It's all farming, the whole thing.

AVIS BERMAN: And did that interest you—have you ever found a pull toward that at all?

VALERIE JAUDON: Toward farming?

AVIS BERMAN: Or gardening or nature or anything similar, any of that?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. Gardening and working outside. I would help my grandmother a lot. I would visit her every summer, and I would help her. I do feel a great satisfaction in [gardening –VJ]. Just like she did. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: But they survived the Depression, and they were able to keep their farms?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. [Grandfather talked about how they lost all the money that they had –VJ], because they put it in a bank. He never again put it in a bank. I don't know where they put it. Things moved so slowly in the South when you had property [that's –VJ] not worth anything anyway. It's not as if it's a big deal.

AVIS BERMAN: Did they farm cotton?

VALERIE JAUDON: [I think my grandmother on my mother's side may have had cotton. –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Because that's also something in the Depression that was extremely volatile in terms of up and down with it.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. We're talking about small family farms. We're not talking about agribusiness. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: But they stayed. They didn't move? They didn't move to cities to try to find better jobs? They stayed on the land?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, absolutely. No one went very far at all. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Were you interested in something like travel when you were a teenager? Were you interested in going farther?

VALERIE JAUDON: I was out of there mentally by the time I was eight years old, I suppose. I [sent –VJ] away for so many travel brochures in every magazine that I was [using –VJ] an alias because I thought they would catch on that I was getting all of these free travel brochures. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: But your parents indulged you when you were getting those things?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: As your hobby or your passion of the moment?

VALERIE JAUDON: They were wondering why I was doing it.

AVIS BERMAN: And how were you—Were you the class artist? Were you drawing? Were you painting?

VALERIE JAUDON: I was definitely the class artist from the second grade. I had a great teacher from the second grade. [She had been living in New York, and her husband got sick, and so they came –VJ] back home.

AVIS BERMAN: She was a native Mississippian?

VALERIE JAUDON: She was a native [Mississippian, but –VJ] didn't look like anyone else. She had her hair back in a [bun and –VJ] spoke differently. She played classical music for us, which you just did not hear in the [South, and –VJ] was extremely encouraging. She taught the entire [county and –VJ] would come in for a class once a week.

AVIS BERMAN: An art class?

VALERIE JAUDON: An art class every [week there were 30 people in the class. She would have the class close their eyes and draw to the music, then open their eyes and color it in –VJ]. She was a New York artist like Pollock.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. The '50s—

VALERIE JAUDON: It sounds simple, but—She'd put it on the wall, and she would go around and say, "This is the best. Okay. Who did that? Okay, good." I kept being the best. She wouldn't even remember, but I thought, "Wow! I'm really good at something." She didn't even know me. She didn't know I was, you know, so-and-so's little girl.

AVIS BERMAN: She was judging blind?

VALERIE JAUDON: She was judging blind. I thought, well, this is really real. When I say I was the best artist in the class, that's because I was the only artist in the class. [They laugh.] No one else was interested in art at all. So I got to do all the plays, all the [posters –VJ]—I got to do everything.

AVIS BERMAN: And did this teacher, was she introducing you to art books, or did you find those in the library?

VALERIE JAUDON: We had a great downtown library. William Alexander Percy, Walker Percy's uncle—the Percy family, they were very [important –VJ] in the South. A very liberal [family –VJ]. William Alexander Percy had died several years before I was born. He gave his house, which was a fantastic [Victorian mansion to the town as the library –VJ]. I spent my childhood getting on my bicycle and going from the top of that house to the bottom, from the children's section to the [attic –VJ]. It was just a fabulous old house.

AVIS BERMAN: You were a reader, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I was.

AVIS BERMAN: And what did you like, your authors, as a young woman or as a young girl?

VALERIE JAUDON: Almost everything. Since I would just pick for myself. I went through everything that

everybody else did. All of the Nancy Drews. All of the dog and horse books. [Laughs.] I remember spending [every Saturday in the movies –VJ] in the afternoon. That cost a dime. I could spend the rest of the day taking my bicycle over to the library and just wandering. Picking anything! Climbing up on the little ladders. No one was really there. Nobody told me what to do or what not to do. So I could look at anything. Medical books. I could look at the adult fiction that I couldn't understand. I could look at the science [room –VJ]. I could look at the newspapers from other countries. I could look at anything. It wasn't crowded. Nobody cared what I did. It was great.

AVIS BERMAN: It was total freedom—

VALERIE JAUDON: Total freedom!

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: And I had access to fabulous stuff.

AVIS BERMAN: And at this point no one is also saying you're a girl? Was this coming in? Were traditional notions of feminine expectations coming into your life at a certain point?

VALERIE JAUDON: I remember when my brother was born, [I asked my mother –VJ], "Will my little brother have to go join the army?" And she said, "Well, I hope not." "Well, he'll go to college." And I said, "Oh, what will I do?" And she said, "Well, you're a girl." I said, "What!?" What does this mean? Like what do we do with the kitty cats? I think that was the first.

AVIS BERMAN: But you, you know—Were you a good student?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. I was not a good student. I wasn't too bad. But I had some great teachers until college. I think it was because the South has, particularly Greenville, has great writers, and the Percys were connected to [William] Faulkner and the whole kind of New Criticism etc. from Vanderbilt. I grew up knowing these writers. I even tried to write a novel myself when I was 13. Oh, it was such failure.

AVIS BERMAN: It would have been a little bit weird had it not been a failure.

VALERIE JAUDON: It would've been weird. I realize now that I shouldn't have taken it so hard then. No one was interested in it. Not even my brother—

AVIS BERMAN: The fact that you went on with it past a page or two is the amazing thing.

VALERIE JAUDON: It really was. Nancy Drew meets the Nazis and the Communists. It was the '50s, I guess. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, just because you seem very open to learning, and that's why I wondered if that translated into being a dedicated student.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I [had –VJ] tremendous curiosity, but no real discipline. This is something I had to develop later.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was in this period, say, about high school or so, what kind of art were you drawing for your own—or making—for your own pleasure?

VALERIE JAUDON: I was getting mostly everything from art books in the library—there were no museums in the South. Except the Confederate Museum in the service station in Vicksburg. I'm not kidding. Mississippi did not have a museum until I was in college. No art galleries. Nothing like that. It's hard to explain.

AVIS BERMAN: But there must have been some historic houses or plantations. That would probably be about the closest one would get.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, you would get the portrait. The things that you could see would probably go in three categories: Portraits, landscapes, and magnolias. Magnolias were in all the portraits and all the [landscapes –VJ], too. —I drew very well and very academically. The art teachers I had were very good. They would have you draw still-lifes. I really was not really thinking of using my imagination. I could make anything. I was simply very good at it all. I was also good at [sewing and good at making –VJ] a lot of things.

AVIS BERMAN: So besides that original good teacher and some of them, were there any other either relatives or other people who were cultural mentors or encouraging to you in terms of going on? You got to college, clearly.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. I got to college. I went to Mississippi State College for Women. [My art teacher said they

had the best art program –VJ] and I should go.

AVIS BERMAN: This was the best in the state?

VALERIE JAUDON: The best in the state! And it was true. They had a new art [department, several art teachers, and –VJ] a little art department.

AVIS BERMAN: So this is called—I just saw it on your CV—Mississippi University for Women in Columbus?

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. They changed their name.

AVIS BERMAN: And was it a women's college?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it was a women's college. It's the oldest state-supported women's college in the United States. Modeled on Vassar—a bit. It was more [to –VJ] teach women how to run the big houses. It was 1860, something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you have scholarships or was your family—

VALERIE JAUDON: I worked in the dining hall. And it was just a lot cheaper to go to school then. So there really wasn't money involved. I couldn't say that my parents sent me to college.

AVIS BERMAN: Were they encouraging? Or how did they feel about your going to college? You said your mother —

VALERIE JAUDON: They were just curious. [As I was graduating from high school, my mother –VJ] had been called in by the art teacher who said, "You know, you really have to make some college plans. She really should go to art school." Because I was winning the art prize. As I said, I was the best, but there was no one else. Literally there was no one else. So my mother said, "Oh, of course! Let's do this. We'll do it!"

AVIS BERMAN: And did you have friends—Were there other kids who were if not rebellious had sights on different things? I mean did you have a little group of friends that were—

VALERIE JAUDON: I had friends. Yes. I was also in the high school band; I played piccolo and flute. And we traveled a little bit. We went to Minneapolis once. That was a very big deal. So we were a group from the band.

AVIS BERMAN: So you were musical, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I was musical, too. Right. Not particularly good. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: And in retrospect, what did you get out of Mississippi University for Women, did you feel?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, I met some wonderful people. I think the main thing that I remember is that I was campused the whole last year, which was [probably why I left –VJ]. That's for walking barefoot.

AVIS BERMAN: And, man, you really rebelled there. That was terrible.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. It was a women's college, and the only time you could leave the campus was Wednesday afternoon from one to six. And on the weekends, [unless –VJ] you had a letter from your own family, that you were leaving, you were pretty much locked in. So when I was campused, I think they took away my Wednesday afternoons. They were going to give special consideration to the weekend note.

AVIS BERMAN: You weren't treated as adults at all. I mean *in loco parentis* was really strong there.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, it was such a different time and such a different world. This was even further behind the times than other places in the United States. It was 50 years behind, easily.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. It was just lock and key, as you say. So you went to Memphis Academy of Art in Tennessee. And how did that transpire?

VALERIE JAUDON: I applied and sent my portfolio. And I thought, "Well, if I get in, I'll just go." [They laugh.] It was pretty much like that.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean was there a reason you chose it? Was there a teacher or recommendation?

VALERIE JAUDON: [Actually, it's a good art school. –VJ] It was 150 miles away. It wasn't very far away. I was not used to traveling. But that summer, I did go with friends to Atlantic City and to New York City. I saw New York City that summer before I went to the academy. I remember seeing the Metropolitan Museum [Metropolitan

Museum of Art, NYC]. I thought I was in heaven. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I couldn't believe that a place like this actually existed. I thought, "New York, this is for me. I've got to"—It was going to take a while to get me there. But I had been working on it since the second grade. [They laugh.] I think so. So I went there.

AVIS BERMAN: And what kind of classes were you in? I don't know where you would've been a little more advanced. But was it life drawing or sculpture? I mean what kind of—painting or studio courses?

VALERIE JAUDON: Since I was only there for a semester, [I had a sculpture class, a still-life drawing class, and what would be a 101, a Bauhaus-type class. Materials and methods. –VJ] I couldn't take painting yet because it wasn't open; I hadn't been there long enough.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was your work looking like then? What were you doing?

VALERIE JAUDON: I think I was doing a lot of watercolors, and they were probably landscapes. I could go out in the landscape and sit there and do a watercolor. Anything. People, landscapes.

AVIS BERMAN: *En plein air*?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it was just—nothing serious.

AVIS BERMAN: Had you found something that you really liked doing that was serious, I mean in terms of—I'm not saying you were an artist, yet, but I just didn't know if—By now also if you are looking in books, are you looking at magazines? Are you looking at art magazines to see what's happening in 1965 or doing anything like that?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, not really looking. I'm sure I did, but they didn't have them. To be an artist to me was pretty vague. I only had [Mrs. Maxine Holcomb –VJ] as a model. And then of course the other women in Mississippi who were flower painters. And I felt I really had to know more. I was really going to have to get out there and see what the world was like. It had to be more than just this.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you know—I mean but you felt you were going to be an artist whether you—The concept may have been a little amorphous, but that was your goal?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was amorphous, but I was just an artist. It was something I was just really good at. I had total confidence in—. It never occurred to me that I would do anything else. It occurred to me that there were many things I didn't want to do. My mother wanted me to be like her. She wanted me to take shorthand and typing so I'd be prepared. I think I failed shorthand and typing. [They laugh.] I think I probably did not want to do that.

AVIS BERMAN: At these schools, were they preparing you to be art teachers?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, no.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, because there's something to fall back—So they weren't pushing education on you?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, it never occurred to me that I'd ever be an art teacher. It absolutely never occurred to me. Until about a month before I got my first art teaching job. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: We'll wait for that.

VALERIE JAUDON: We'll wait for that one, right.

AVIS BERMAN: At Memphis, did you graduate from there? When you finished your time there, were you done?

VALERIE JAUDON: No —it was basically a semester.

AVIS BERMAN: And were you coming home in the summers during these years?

VALERIE JAUDON: I was coming home all the time. It's 150 miles away.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: I decided to go to New York because I really couldn't afford the tuition. And it was a real problem I'm not very good at finances myself. And I couldn't really depend on my parents. So I decided to go to New York and stay with a friend and go do something else.

AVIS BERMAN: This would be about the summer of '65?

VALERIE JAUDON: This is January 1966. So it would be the winter of 1965-66. [I went home –VJ]. My father was in the hospital for a little operation. And I told them, "I'm going to go to New York, and I don't think I'm coming back to go to Memphis Academy." And my mother said, "You cannot leave. Your father is ill." I said, "He's not really ill." He was okay. And he was saying, "No, no, I'm really sick. You'll have to stay. You'll have to stay." And he didn't sound sick. And I said, "What would I do if I stayed? What would be the point?" She said, "I just don't want you up there. " [Laughs.] And she said, "If you do this, this is it. I don't want you up there." And I said, "Okay. Goodbye." [Laughs.]

So I went to New York, and I stayed with a girlfriend of mine. She had been friends of people at the academy. I got a little job working at an advertising agency [making drawings for instruction booklets for cardboard cosmetic displays in drugstores –VJ]. By the fall, I was going to school in Mexico.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Because that's where the beatniks were. That's where Allen Ginsberg and these people had gone to school. It was a very inexpensive school.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. The University of the Americas [Mexico City, Mexico]. After all those years, that must have been an amazing culture shock.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was. And it was great traveling. It was exhilarating, and I was learning something every five minutes. I just wasn't afraid of traveling. It was great. [My education was travel more than anything else –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Did you study there?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, yes. They had a three-semester system. And I also ran out of money then, and I went to Berkeley [CA] to stay with some friends. This is probably in '67; that was very interesting. And the next month—for a month or so—and then I came back to school and stayed the rest of school in Mexico. I was an art major, but I was also taking film history, [an art history course. South Sea Islands, poetry writing, life drawing, lithography –VJ]. I'm not quite sure.

AVIS BERMAN: How was this experience affecting what you were creating or your sense of art—or it was?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was expanding my whole sense of what art could be. It was amazing. I was seeing myself much more seriously as an artist. I think I was at the top of the class [in life drawing –VJ]. None of it is original work yet.

AVIS BERMAN: Were you doing anything—were you making anything like political art?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, you mean besides doing a self-portrait that looked like Frida Kahlo? I don't think so. [They laugh.] I was trying a lot of different things.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, not just in Mexico. It's been all over now. We're in the mid '60s, and you're aware—late '60s when things were happening. In '68 in France there's the student rebellion. All sorts of things are happening in 1967 and '68.

VALERIE JAUDON: Tremendously, yes. It hadn't connected with the art yet. Being an artist was something different than all of this exciting politics.

AVIS BERMAN: And just also the great political art heritage in Mexico, of course, which you would see all over the place.

VALERIE JAUDON: I thought that was fascinating. It was a bit mysterious trying to figure out, well, who worked on this? Who were they? Where are the murals? It was all [mixed together with –VJ] the Aztecs, the Mayans. My friends were mostly anthropologists, so I was looking at different areas in Mexico from a much [wider –VJ] perspective, the older temples.

AVIS BERMAN: The pre-Columbian artifacts and Mayan.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. And the [anthropological sites –VJ]. This is how I spent most of my time. It was [mostly anthropological –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you were looking at the ancient politics or the ancient world, I guess and those civilizations.

VALERIE JAUDON: Actually I was very curious about everything—everything.

AVIS BERMAN: And also you were seeing all these great design motifs if nothing else.

VALERIE JAUDON: Incredible, absolutely incredible. It's a beautiful culture.

AVIS BERMAN: A magnificent culture. I love Mexico.

VALERIE JAUDON: Absolutely. It had a profound effect. It was interesting I saw this before I saw Europe.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: You know.

AVIS BERMAN: But then you went to a really well-known school of art which is St. Martin's School of Art [London, England]. Now in Mexico are you getting any scholarships? How are you supporting yourself? I mean I know it wasn't expensive in Mexico, but—

VALERIE JAUDON: My mother had to send me some money. I was sharing a house with several people; one was a boyfriend and his mother. Things were so cheap, it wasn't that big of a problem. I had money saved. We're just not talking about big amounts. I mean I was a student, so a hundred dollars goes just way far. It was a whole different world.

AVIS BERMAN: But your mother also agreed to send it, so she must have been somewhat reconciled to whatever you were—

VALERIE JAUDON: My grandmother [helped –VJ]. No, no, it was like—it was to come home, money to come home. And I would spend it. [Laughs.] It just wasn't a big deal.

AVIS BERMAN: Are your parents still alive?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, they died in '84 and '85.

AVIS BERMAN: Did your brother or sisters, by the way, follow in any artistic or cultural pursuit?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. I'm just different. [They laugh.] I don't know why. I'm just different.

AVIS BERMAN: I was just wondering if they would have—if you would have been a model or they would have visited you or used your experiences as springboards for their own—

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I think because my mother was so angry that I had left. They were even joking about taking the crayons away from my baby sister. [They laugh.] No more artists in the family.

AVIS BERMAN: No more mutants.

VALERIE JAUDON: No more mutants, this is it. Get those crayons out of there.

AVIS BERMAN: I was just asking just because, no, it's certainly not large amounts were necessary but sometimes it might have been harder for you as a woman who might not have spoken the language to find a job there.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, finding a job in Mexico City was out of the question. This is a very dangerous kind of place.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: I think the tuition was extremely cheap. When I first got there, I was living with a family that actually lived near [de Chirico –VJ] during the war. They had his things around. I slept under some kind of [de Chirico in –VJ] my little bed. It's very interesting—you just never knew who you'd meet. But it was never a question of getting a job in Mexico City. You just couldn't do that. You just didn't go there. You didn't think about that. It just wasn't that expensive; still isn't. I had saved a great deal of money working in New York for the six months I was there. I saved everything. I was sort of independent. I just wasn't afraid. I wasn't thinking about the future. Of course if I had a daughter, and she was doing something like that, I'd just lock her in the closet. I mean, it would be unthinkable—[Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: But then you would have been more open to letting her do it, so you know. Who knows. Anyway. How did you get to England, St. Martin's School of Art, which is well known.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it's well known. Well, I had gone over in May '68. May of 1968. I had met filmmakers in California, and I wanted to go to film school—it was very specific. It's no different now with everybody wanting to do video. So I had my little portfolio of all my things and drawings. So I went to the London school of Film

Technique [to get an interview –VJ]. These were different days. And then I had this—I was with people and a boyfriend. We were all going to go for interviews. So I had a great interview with somebody. It was so helpful. [He looked at my little art portfolio and said –VJ], "Does your family have a lot of money? Or are they connected with the movie business in California? Because what we really do at this school is teach you how to fund things to do your films." And I said, "No." They said, "What about movie projection, somebody in that union?" And I said, "No." [Laugh] They said, "You know, go across the street to St. Martin's. What you really want to do is go to art school." I walked out and said, ["Oh, films cost money. I really appreciate that. –VJ] That was really good." Because [art –VJ] is what I've got. I've got [art –VJ].

So I went across the street, and I said, "You know, can I apply to this school?" And they said, "There's nobody here except the head of the school, Frederick Gore, up on the fifth floor. I think he's there, but there's nobody else in the whole building." He was the head of the school. And he took a look at my portfolio, and he was just curious. He'd clearly never handled admissions. He said, "You could take the graduate program. I think you'd fit in quite well. Do you have $600 for this tuition?" He said, "That includes all the materials now." And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Now how are you going to live?" I said, "I already have a small apartment that I'm sharing with four people." He said, "Oh, how nice. And you're sure there's no problem with the $600?" And I said, "No, no." [I really had $600 –VJ]. [Laughs.] He said, "Okay. Well, you come to our graduate program because that's where we put our foreigners. You know everybody's really happy there." [Laughs.] So that's how I got in St. Martin's.

AVIS BERMAN: And were you happy there?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was fabulous. It was totally independent. Whatever you want to do—It's called self-discipline. That's where I learned self-discipline.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean so do you feel you found a path there? Or you hadn't had it much before? Or you were just kind of going—

VALERIE JAUDON: Absolutely. I had some great teachers that would come in for tutorials: Gillian Ayres and Henry Mundy. They were a couple, and they were assigned to us. Gilliam Ayres—she asked the toughest questions: "Where is this work coming from? Is it coming out of history? [Or California? –VJ] Where are you coming from?" And I thought, "What an interesting question. So interesting." Because I couldn't answer that. It never occurred to me to stop and think about something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: So was this the first time you were maybe being treated as a professional artist or a professional artist in the making?

VALERIE JAUDON: A professional. Right.

AVIS BERMAN: I don't know if that had happened in Mexico or not?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. That was undergraduate. Now that I do teach, myself, I know how it is. When you're an undergraduate, you're treated entirely differently. There is an age and developmental thing that you go through. They were treating me as if I was going to be a professional, and I was going to go live in New York City because that's where everything in the world was, and that's where they wanted to go. And they kept talking about New York and asking me questions about New York. What did I know about New York and the New York art world? I didn't even know there was an art world in New York, you know. So I couldn't wait to get back to New York. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, now, in terms of—Was it all independent study? Were there courses? In other words, what were you—

VALERIE JAUDON: I could take any courses that I wanted to. I followed my usual path of trying to get as much technical information from my teachers [as possible –VJ]. I took photography and silkscreen, lithography, and etching. There was no art history that I could take. In a sense art schools used to be sort of like trade schools . You really learned your materials and your technique. The idea of doing theoretical things was—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, what important British artists were you either seeing, either meeting, or looking at shows? I mean what were you absorbing from other—

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, it was 1968 in London, and there's a tremendous amount of abstraction out there. That's what the galleries were doing. That's what Henry Mundy and Gillian Ayres were doing. And that's what they would talk about. The one [intellectual moment was when they took us –VJ], the graduate students, as a treat to hear Lawrence Alloway. I've spoken to his wife [Sylvia Sleigh –VJ] about this. She couldn't remember where it was. But it was in a church. And a huge lecture—it must have been in '68 or early in '69 in London—on pop art. It was [fascinating –VJ]. I thought, "Wow! To be able to talk about art like that. That is so interesting. That is incredible." So I started looking at art magazines after that. I think that started it.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, were you going to the Tate Gallery, were you going to the National—

VALERIE JAUDON: Everything.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Of course the Tate had *Whaam!* [1963] by then. The [Roy] Lichtenstein that they bought. They bought that in '66. It's big, you know.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: And also I don't know if Richard Hamilton was on the scene for you, if that was someone who—

VALERIE JAUDON: No, he was a very big British—*big* British. There was a show [at the Tate curated by Eugene Goossens; *Art of the Real: USA, 1948-68* –VJ]. It was a very popular show. It traveled. I was extremely [impressed, and impressed with the catalog –VJ]. And by then I considered myself so sophisticated. And so naïve it's unbelievable. I remember also—and this is the older Tate—they had an incredible Morris Louis. And I think it just stopped me dead in my tracks. I was totally challenged, totally overwhelmed by this large painting—by the materials. It was incredible. I think I was starting to mature a teeny bit here.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Also I shouldn't have said Tate Modern because it was just the Tate Gallery then.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, it was all the Tate. It was just—but they had had a Milbank. Well, also, you're taking all these courses. Are you set on being mainly a painter, or are you thinking about sculpting or—what is attracting you at the moment? Is it color, is it—What's happening?

VALERIE JAUDON: It's painting, it's all painting. It's clearly the most important thing in the world. Film has gone by the board, although I see a lot of film. I realized it's more important for me to actually work and work every day. Because this is what makes me excited, this is the thing that keeps me going. I don't want to have to sit around raising money. That just about did it for me. To make a film I had to go and raise money. They talked me out of it in a second. [Laughs.] I wanted to be always in a position of being able to make a painting. And at this point in London they were teaching us how to grind our own paint, the whole thing. I felt like you could always do a painting no matter what. I never wanted to be one of those people that would sit around and say, Well, this sculpture's going to cost $50,000 [to make –VJ], and it has to be [aluminum –VJ], and it has to be 20 feet high. And I am not going to do a thing until I finish this. I didn't want to do that. [Laughs.] It was more important to keep working.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And is there an art scene you're hanging around, or are there bars, you know, besides working, what is the compass of your experience of the London art world in any way?

VALERIE JAUDON: There was really no connection to the real London art world because I was a student.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I didn't know if there were other students who were British—You know whether you had connected with other people?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, we would go—almost every night—to little restaurants and pubs. There was a huge pub scene in different neighborhoods. This was the center of London. St. Martin's was in their old building that they used to have. It's right there by Piccadilly; it's right there by St. Martin's in the Fields, the old church. It was just fantastic.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's also near their theater, their SoHo, a lot of things.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was [the SoHo theater district –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] I mean that was actually—you probably wouldn't have stumbled in there—but that SoHo area is where Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon and a whole lot of those people used to hang out.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, they had a— room at the top of St. Martin's off to the side. It wasn't Lucian Freud. But it was so encrusted with paint, another guy [Kossoff –VJ]. And it was like they kept it separate for people who were like that. And it was just knee-deep in paint. It was disgusting, you know. And they would just show it to us right away. If you're going to be one of these people, you go in this room. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: You untidy little creature. Let me see there was Bacon who was like that, Freud, and there was Kossoff [Leon Kossoff], and there was Auerbach [Frank Auerbach]. Leon Kossoff and Auerbach.

VALERIE JAUDON: Auerbach. Kossoff.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean those were the thick paint people.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, the thick paint people, and it was definitely Lucian Freud's school.

AVIS BERMAN: That is funny that they had this room of shame, or room of art shame for you.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, it was off to the side, and near the sculpture [area –VJ] where Anthony Caro was. And it was where you could go. You wanted to have that room, you could do it, and they'd give you all the paint in the world . But I thought those artists were rather hopeless, frankly. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: So what were you interested—You know you said you were maturing and enjoyed [inaudible]. Where was this art coming? What were you grappling with? What was something that mattered to you that you wanted to express?

VALERIE JAUDON: At that point I was trying everything. I wanted to see where my limits were or what my boundaries were. What was I good at? What did I want to do? It did not occur to me until I got to New York—I was here [by '69 –VJ]—when I'm seeing basically two things: I'm seeing Lynda Benglis, and Eva Hesse's work. In art schools—The idea was when you get out of art school, then you forget everything you've learned. So I knew I was going to have to forget everything I'd learned. That was daily street talk; just forget it all when you get out. Then you can do what you really want to do.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Yes, and you're also getting an academic—you're getting an armature of training. Just since you mentioned those two artists, in London at the time, was the idea of feminism floating around?

VALERIE JAUDON: In '69?

AVIS BERMAN: At the art school?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. In London—The thing that I did recognize, which really made me almost run back to New York, was that women were not painters. It was a particularly German thing against women painters. The English didn't like art that much. But there were very few women that did it. My teacher was one of the women that was actually successful. But it didn't occur to me to be successful. I don't think it was formulated. [An important academic question at St. Martins was, "How do you know if an artwork is a painting or a sculpture?" The question had seemed a pointless philosophical enterprise until I realized that both Lynda Benglis (paint on the floor) and Heese (cheesecloth rubberized wall curtains) had answered the question. –VJ] I realized after 1969, because of those two artists, this question was never asked again. And by then I was paying attention. This is going to be fun. You can actually end an argument. Or you can communicate with people through the things you do. I wasn't going to just be doing things that I liked. I could actually do something if I pay attention, like they did. That was what was exciting. This is totally different, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Object-making, right, or not. Did sexual art, did anything—did that attract you?

VALERIE JAUDON: I found it interesting because that was what was happening when I got to New York. When I was in London, I was also traveling a lot. I would take off from school and hitchhike to Morocco. When I got to New York, I was paying attention in a really different way.

AVIS BERMAN: And, well, you got to New York. Where did you land? How did you, you know, where did you live, what did you—

VALERIE JAUDON: I had an apartment in the East Village. At first I was sharing it with two people. I was able to buy out a roommate. I bought her a ticket to London. It made sense. She was coming, and I was going. She had been very involved in the Warhol [Andy Warhol] factory things. The apartment was, I think, $32 a month. [They laugh.] Then I met Richard Kalina, and we've been together ever since then. He at the time was showing in a group show—at Castelli [Leo Castelli Gallery]. And he was with Ivan Karp.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, he had then either just finished or was still working for Roy but about to be—about to spaz out on the cathedral. You know I'm making those—

VALERIE JAUDON: He gave up on it, right. In fact it was that moment, I think, that they were done. [Richard worked as an assistant to Roy Lichtenstein the year before. Avis had interviewed Richard. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: So how did you meet your—this is for the tape—your husband, the painter and critic, Richard Kalina?

VALERIE JAUDON: In the Lawrence Rubin Gallery. Larry Poons's show. Larry Poons had changed completely and was doing those drippy things. And all of my teachers in London had been talking about the Larry Poons, so [it

was the first show I saw when I got back to New York. What happened to all those nice ovals, and all the music? –VJ] He's doing this dripping stuff. I was going to ask the secretary at the desk, but I was so intimidated by this woman. Then Richard came up to me and said, "Can you believe $300 a week at Pearl Paint for all this paint?" I said, "What's Pearl Paint?" [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well now, that was one of the more interesting pickup lines I've ever heard. [Laughs.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, he totally got my attention.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, also he knew you were an artist or somebody or other. Anyway, and that was whatever. What's Pearl Paint? And the conversation's gone on ever since.

VALERIE JAUDON: Absolutely. The conversation has not stopped. He's full of information.

AVIS BERMAN: And so you met in '69. And when did you get married?

VALERIE JAUDON: '79.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] That was just for housekeeping. And you met Richard. And did you move in together fairly soon after that?

VALERIE JAUDON: Pretty soon, yes. We were in a building, 76 Jefferson Street.

AVIS BERMAN: oh, I was going to get to that because that is very interesting. And people don't talk about that much. So did you move there in the '70s, shortly afterward?

VALERIE JAUDON: He was living there already. He had bought that place [key money –VJ] from Brice Marden for about a hundred dollars or something. It had no heat or anything. He had another studio, too, on Seventh Avenue where he made this very smelly portion of his work, the sculpture kind of work. My apartment was good for drawing, and it was all a studio. His place was much bigger. [A real loft. –VJ] And $33 a month was way too expensive, so I just dropped that, what a fool. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that is also—Now where was 76—is that on the Lower East Side?

VALERIE JAUDON: If you take Avenue B and you go to the river, it's at the river. It was the old Kaufman Saddle Factory building. It had been condemned since 1945 for children and women. There was a sign in the hallway. You could see through the brick to the river. It was in bad shape.

AVIS BERMAN: And so besides Brice Marden and you two, who else was there?

MS JAUDON: Neil Jenney. He was right below. [Kenneth and Joy Kilstrom –VJ], Gary Stephan, John Duff, Bob Loeb. I'm sure there were other people in this building. And then some friends of ours. An architect on the top floor. People would come and go a lot in this building.

AVIS BERMAN: That was a real—It was a real artists' building. I think that must have—

VALERIE JAUDON: It was a real artists' building. In fact one day [I opened the downstairs door, and as I was leaving, Ileana Sonnabend was trying to unlock the door. You always had to throw down a key for visitors. She looked quite distinct and was bringing people into the building. She knows that she's got to walk up those stairs. (No elevator, no doorbell.) I don't know whom she was going to see. Maybe it was Neil Jenney, who was working for Jasper Johns. She said to the person with her, "These people really have their head in the clouds." She was talking about the whole building, and I thought, you don't know the half of it. –VJ] Everybody here is just, you know. [Laughs.] We were all artists and looking toward the future. Nobody was living in the present. It was a true artists' building.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Because I know there was at the shows, I think that was one of your first group shows. Didn't you, at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York], do a show?

VALERIE JAUDON: I did one at MoMA in '75, [a group show –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Was it condemned by then? Or how long did it—

VALERIE JAUDON: No, no, no. It lasted until the '80s. [Cell phone rings.]

AVIS BERMAN: Why don't we just stop. [Audio Break.]

VALERIE JAUDON: What we're doing here. You're going to have to edit so much. God!

AVIS BERMAN: Don't worry. No, no.

VALERIE JAUDON: You're used to it.

AVIS BERMAN: No, no. I like it baggy. Yes, it looks as if your first group show almost was at the Museum of Modern Art?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it was.

AVIS BERMAN: Gee, this is easy, you thought.

VALERIE JAUDON: I did it. And I think it was '75.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: I thought, wow, that's how it's done.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, what now—And what were you looking—Once you were in New York and in this building, what kind of work are you looking at? What artists are you discovering? I mean what's happening here in these early times?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, I would have to say the first year I got to New York, I stopped doing all work because the whole thing was so much for me. I said I have got to get my act together. And the way to get my act together is not working at this moment. So I stopped the whole year. And I said I have to learn so much. I've got to do so much. I have to go to every gallery. I have to go. I was meeting all these artists. I was meeting people like Lichtenstein and just everybody, just casually. This is incredible to me! I thought this is—wait a minute—this is real. This is not, this is not the cave paintings here. This is [laughs] really real.

AVIS BERMAN: You're not back in Kansas or Mississippi. [They laugh.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, this is not Mississippi. This is where people really love art, they really take it seriously.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, of course this was so in London and probably in Mexico. But that must have been a very—something very different; there was a huge freemasonry of people who really took art seriously and really breathed it and absorbed it and lived it, which was so—I mean it doesn't happen too much in childhood. But from what you're saying, it was sort of zero to, you know, 60 in terms of that.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was. It was exhilarating. I knew it existed someplace. Things had to be better somewhere, [I had been –VJ] telling myself my entire childhood. Then here I was, all of a sudden living this kind of life with these people that were just like me. Just like me. It was incredible. So I was taking it very seriously. I had a lot to learn. I had a lot to do.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you seek out Eva Hesse? I don't know if she was still alive.

VALERIE JAUDON: She was dead by then.

AVIS BERMAN: Or Lynda Benglis or anyone else? You met Lynda anyway, but—

VALERIE JAUDON: I met Lynda later. But I would definitely see everything that she did. I was curious about everything. I wasn't eliminating anything. It was a period of very high formalism. And I was listening very hard to this. I think one of the reasons that ultimately I'm not a formalist philosophically is that I never believed it. I missed the ideology part because I was in other countries and Mississippi. So I was able to come upon it like a real provincial. [Laughs.] I am a real provincial, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, but everybody's, you know, a real provincial. Most people aren't born in New York.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, most people aren't.

AVIS BERMAN: And the ones who want it the most are usually ones who have lived elsewhere and know what it's like. [Laughs.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, you're right.

AVIS BERMAN: That's what E.B. White always said in *This Is New York*, the essay. There would be the native ones who took it for granted. Then there would be the commuters. And then there'd be all these other people who purposely came from somewhere else to be here and they would give the city—They were the ones who gave the city the real energy and tone.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's true. You're from New York, right?

AVIS BERMAN: No.

VALERIE JAUDON: No? Where are you from?

AVIS BERMAN: Originally Hartford, Connecticut.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, well Connecticut. That's almost the same.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, central Connecticut is very different from Fairfield County. Just different. It's not Mississippi, but it's not the same. It's not a bedroom suburb of New York, so you don't get that reputation. But is on the East Coast, which does make a big difference in any of these things that we're talking about.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, you were asking, what was I doing also in the early '70s. By '72 I was doing very serious work. I was telling myself I must get my act together. I was concentrating. Richard was extremely helpful in teaching me discipline and how you really go in there and work eight hours a day—or ten hours a day. This was a new thing for me—where you worked all the way through something and you didn't work [just –VJ] when you felt like it, etc. Also we met Romaldo Giurgola, the architect, which was actually the best kind of educational experience that I had. I think we met him about [1970 –VJ], he and his wife and teenage daughter [Adelaide and Paola Giurgola –VJ]. We would take them to galleries because this was when SoHo was developing; he was very curious. We would also take friends of [his, and got –VJ] to know each other. His wife was, I think, involved with Castelli a little bit [curating –VJ]. He was living in [New York –VJ]. He had the New York office and the Philadelphia office. He was the chair at Columbia, chair of Architecture. He was very good with students. In the summer of [1974 –VJ] he—for six weeks we stayed at his house [house-sitting with his –VJ] teenage daughter [Paola –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: When you said '84, did you mean '74?

VALERIE JAUDON: '74, I'm sorry.

AVIS BERMAN: That's all right.

VALERIE JAUDON: That's right, '74. In East Hampton when he and his wife took a trip to Rome. They left us there with a car and Paola, and we all had a fabulous time. I got to spend every day in his library, which was fantastic. We were living on 20th Street at this time [rent-free –VJ]. We had 17 rooms. It was when New York was really going broke, and there were deserted buildings.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: This was a deserted building on 20th and Second. Margaret Fahnestock Nursing Home—for nurses, [a dormitory –VJ]. We had to walk up seven flights. We were caretakers. Giurgola came over one day in early '74. And I'd done my first monochrome painting because [I'm really getting better –VJ]. And he said, "You know, you and Richard need to go to Italy. You've really got to spend some time in Rome. I'm going to give you a job because I need something done. Can you come to my office." He said, "I really like these paintings—you have a very ordered mind, and I think you'd be able to help me out." He's a man who's great with students.

He wanted me to come to the office and work on an exhibition, for both of his offices, Philadelphia and New York. They had an exhibition with Venturi [Robert Venturi] at the Pennsylvania Academy. He said, "Venturi is so good with graphic design [and we're just not used to doing these exhibitions. We put our architectural drawings behind glass or Plexiglass and let it go –VJ]. We don't do exhibitions. But we realize we've got to do something. This is a museum." He said, "So can you come and work in the office and talk to everybody and help put it together?"

They gave me a desk in the back, and I basically was working there interviewing everybody, finding out about architecture, about everything. It was incredible. It was like being in a graduate seminar in architecture. Plus everybody would answer [my question because they knew –VJ] that I was going to be writing the text or putting the thing together about their project. So they were very straightforward about all of their concerns: which groups in architecture they were against; which principles they stood for. This was an education in itself. I may have done that for six months. Then they'd call me back a couple of months later and say—they were sort of paying me like they pay the junior architects that would just come in. Which was just so much money for me. It was just fantastic! I was learning so much, and they were so willing to talk to me. Giurgola particularly would take me aside and say: "Look, I've got to show you the difference between Baroque architecture and, say, Richardson. I've just discovered this great book. I want you to look at this." And he would tell me. It was incredible. It would be things like the Salk Institute [Jonas Salk] wanted to have a pathway between the parking lot and the Salk Institute because everybody was going in the back door. They were just going over the field. And this is an architectural problem.

AVIS BERMAN: Did he design the Salk Institute?

VALERIE JAUDON: That's Louis Kahn.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, right. Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: And that was his mentor, you might say.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: In Philadelphia. So they got him to do this, and he was doing it for, who was it? Married Picasso's ex-wife?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's Françoise Gilot.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, Françoise Gilot and her husband.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes, Jonas Salk.

VALERIE JAUDON: Jonas Salk [of the Salk Institute –VJ]. He said, "I have an idea here. But we need something, some color. Why don't you work on an idea for this?" He said, "I have a couple of ideas." So I would work on something. I'd come back with sketches. I'd show him and he'd say, "Hey, you know, we'll do this. Why don't we put the pathway over here because we can get to the car here. We can do this." He [taught me the architectural rationale, all the language –VJ]. And he would say, "You can put one of your things [here –VJ]. And we'll put these slabs over here." So I got to work with him in this way. I'd take it to him, and he'd say, "Oh, that's too complicated. Make it simpler." So I'd go back, and I'd make it simpler. Then they would call me and say, "Valerie, we're working on a building for Volvo in Sweden. And I think you should come in." Because they had a team approach, and it was very competitive, this team. They were very critical. These meetings were very intense. And, you know, I'm not afraid: It's architecture, it's not art. Art's the thing that really matters; since it's architecture, I can be loose about this.

So I'd go in and he'd say, "Valerie, what do you think of the round window near the entranceway?" And I said, "Oh, Aldo, you can't do a round window again." And then the team would go: Yes! [They laugh.] Then everybody would have a chance to say something about it. So what about a diagonal? We need a diagonal in the entranceway. Ah, so what's the point of it? You're not leading anybody in. [This was –VJ] architectural logic, you might say. And the logic turns out to be a lot of Louis Kahn. There's a lot of [concern with context –VJ]. It's not monumental architecture. So I'm [learning –VJ] all of these differences.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. You're getting, from the architect's point of view, a real grounding in principles of public spaces.

VALERIE JAUDON: Public, private spaces as well.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: But largely, the real questions were the public spaces —Because I think Kahn and [Giurgola –VJ] were some of the first people trying to bring in the context, even in very subtle ways.

AVIS BERMAN: It's also so unusual for an architect to want the artist in at the beginning instead of being defensive about it or being the add-on. So this is very different.

VALERIE JAUDON: This is not about art. I was in the backroom. It was a huge loft, and I was in the back. It was: Get the artist in and see what she says. There was no question about doing a commission. I was just in on the conversation. There was no art to be done. It was real architecture. And I was right there in the middle of it, having a voice at the table.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you were making some designs for them.

VALERIE JAUDON: [The Salk Institute was for a different thing –VJ]. That was a little more two-dimensional. And I was in a controlled space there. Anyway, I was learning. It was a great seminar. This probably went on for about six years.

AVIS BERMAN: That's fantastic. Great experience. And did you get to Italy, the two of you?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, absolutely. [Laughs.] Yes, we got to Italy. And it ended about 1980 when he got the commission to do the Parliament in Canberra [Australia]. I was so busy at that time. I had started a real career, exhibitions and everything, by '77. I was so busy I couldn't see straight. I was painting. It was a fabulous time.

AVIS BERMAN: And were you developing the, shall we say, the geometric interlacings and—was that beginning to come at this point?

VALERIE JAUDON: I was already there [1974 –VJ] when he had me come in.

AVIS BERMAN: That's what he saw in monochrome?

VALERIE JAUDON: That's what he saw in monochrome. —I had decided to reinvent painting for myself. I was not a purist in any way. I couldn't understand a lot of the theoretical Modernist essence things. I couldn't do that. I didn't do it. It made no sense. Okay. So give me five essences. Then we can go from there. [Laughs.] But you couldn't make a deal with these guys. They were too tough. So it was essence or nothing. So I had to do it you know. Also, painting was dead. I thought this is not true. That's the only place where the juice is.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, and if it's dead, it means you can do anything you want, too. It's liberating. It's dead so—Okay. I can do what I want.

VALERIE JAUDON: I had total freedom. As far as I was able to understand anything, I had total freedom. So that's how I approached it. That was happening at exactly the same time as the architecture thing. And it never really occurred to me that the two were going together.

AVIS BERMAN: Or that there was some—a kind of architectural rigor—to anything you were doing. Did that occur to you?

VALERIE JAUDON: In a way it did, their discipline. They work so hard. Those guys were there 'til ten o'clock at night. They could turn out drawings that were just fantastic. These were the times when architects actually drew, and they inked things up when they did these things. They worked so hard. There are so many levels of architectural [detail –VJ]. All the way from the engineering; it just wasn't design, monumental, whatever. You were thinking of a million things. And so I greatly admired them. I also admired the way they were all teaching. They were teaching with Giurgola. He was the [chair at Columbia University, running –VJ] six projects internationally, two offices, and having his people go in and lecture and take some of the classes. Incredible—these were workhorses. And I thought, women have to work harder, and I've got to work harder than these guys? I had really better get myself together. That was an incredible lesson. You really have to work. You really have to put things together. You don't sit there and see what comes to you. You've really got to have four different ideas going at once. You've got to be able to drop them if it doesn't work. If it's not logical, if it's not in some way logical, or if it doesn't make sense when you finish it, it's all over. I started setting very high standards for myself, which was fun.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also, the peer group you were in, the other people at 76 Jefferson, set high standards.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, they did. Absolutely. Everybody was working.

AVIS BERMAN: And serious.

VALERIE JAUDON: Serious. Really hard. I didn't know any goofballs. I didn't know anybody that was neurotic. People in our building are crazy; artists are crazy. They have some bad habits. They do whatever. But when it comes to the work, oh, it's a different level . You know the work was everything.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And anyone and anything could be sacrificed to that work in terms of coming first. There's no doubt about that.

VALERIE JAUDON: Absolutely. So that was the '70s when nothing happened. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I actually think this is a good time to stop, and we will continue. We'll make an appointment for the next time. So thank you very much.

[END OF jaudon09_1of1_cd_track01.]

AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing Valerie Jaudon for the Archives of American Art GSA Oral History Project, on December 15, 2009, in her studio in New York City.

And as I just mentioned, we're going to start talking today about the paintings that you began making in the mid 1970's. I have read—and also I just want to get a few things straight here, that people thought this early work was based on Islamic motifs. Would you say that that was correct?

VALERIE JAUDON: No.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Because, well, that's what I would like to talk about is what they—I mean people see

things in geometric abstraction and what you did, and they were saying it was Celtic and Islamic. Why don't you say what you felt the basis of that early work was?

AVIS BERMAN: Well you know I'm a very polite Southern girl. And when they would say, Do you like Celtic art? Well, of course, I love it. Do you like Islamic art? And I'd say, I love it. And I do. Clearly I was copying that. [They laugh.] No. It developed very clearly out of 20th-century geometric abstraction. The difference is I think then from, say, Modernist early abstraction is that I wasn't reducing anything. I wasn't paring anything down to an essence. [The elements I was using basically –VJ]—started off as brushstrokes. And I decided I needed some direction to the brushstrokes. So they [became –VJ] vertical, diagonal, circular. [Laughs.] I would toughen them up, and they turned into building blocks essentially. I was thinking of them as units, elements, building blocks, bricks, what have you. I wanted an overall equal field of these different [elements, overlaying three different grids. This is in a metaphorical sense, not in a really geometric or mathematical sense –VJ].

Basically, I was starting off with simple units. But there was no limit to the complexity that I could do. At the time, in the '70s, when people saw what looked like very complex abstract, geometrical paintings, well, it had to be Islamic because there wasn't any other [model –VJ]. [Laughs.] And it also depended who was asking. Artists knew exactly where I was coming from. It was clearly 20th-century abstraction, [Minimalism, if you –VJ] just take off from where Minimalism stopped. I must say I was one of hundreds of people who had this new attitude. You build out. You don't reduce down. You take every single lesson you can get from any other culture, any other situation—you can get it from mathematics, you can get it from philosophy, you can get it from anything.

And the fact [is these –VJ] do have a lot in common with Islamic art. There's no question about the overall field, the way some things meet, they go together. The anonymous quality of it. The way it can fill different spaces. It does have a lot in common with it. But it didn't come from that. I didn't bother telling people it's not Islamic art. Until I started teaching and started knowing so many people who were Islamic scholars. [Laughs.] Who also thought it would be.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's just that this—Because of that and a lot of the literature on you, is sort of very much, you know, and during that time, based on your—you say—non-Western sources, and that ties in to feminism and decorative art and patterning and decorations. So I'd like to clear away some of the verbiage here and find out what was what here? I mean did you—

VALERIE JAUDON: Sure. Just ask the question.

AVIS BERMAN: So I mean—How did you get allied with the pattern and decorative movement, if it is a movement—if it was a movement?

VALERIE JAUDON: It definitely was a movement. It was over a lot sooner than many people [understood. The artists –VJ] weren't speaking to each other very much after about 1977. Richard and I knew a lot of people, and they were in our studios a lot. I was asked by Mario *Yrisarry*, who was Philippine, [to be on a panel at Artists Talk on Art (fall 1994) –VJ]. He had been an abstract expressionist. He'd been around a long time. He was a neighbor, and he was in Richard's gallery, which was OK Harris. There was a lot of talk about patterning. It was coming out of the geometric abstraction, a field of interest. These [artists –VJ] were generally very interested in real geometry, real math, color systems. He asked me to be on the panel. And it was very exciting. I didn't have a gallery. Tony Robbin was on the panel, and he had had a show at the Whitney [Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York]. So he was the most well-known person on the panel.

After this panel, things went very, very quickly. Tony called me after the panel—I think it was in [October –VJ]. We started meeting with Mario—The people on the panel met several times to talk about [our work –VJ]. Why were we all doing this complicated [work –VJ]? Because it was not minimal. And Minimalism was in its second generation— Minimalism and Conceptual Art. Everybody seemed to have developed it separately. We were coming together, and we were very curious. So we met three or four times at Mario's house. [The group would point out to him that –VJ], Well, look, Mario, behind you there is the Philippine straw mat that was very much [a pleasure to look at –VJ]. And he thought, Oh, that's crazy. That's nothing to do with it whatsoever. Well, it looks pretty good, you know. So everybody was asking the question: Where is all this complication coming from? After the panel with Mario, Tony Robbin asked me to go to a meeting they were going to be [asking the same type of questions, at Robert Zakanitch's loft. Bob had –VJ] already been to my studio a few years earlier .

That's where I met Amy Goldin, Joyce Kozloff, Mimi Schapiro [Miriam Schapiro]; there were a lot of people there. A lot of people. We were all trying to figure out, Why are we all here? What was really going on? But it was a time, if you [remember the mid-'70s –VJ], we were all used to going to all kinds of meetings from the '60s. Going on marches on Washington, every school, every university. There was a march every five minutes. [They laugh.] If it wasn't for civil rights, it was for end the war. It was the time.

AVIS BERMAN: It was loft for lofts. There was Westway. There were all sorts of New York protests, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, absolutely. For everything. People would get together and have dinner, keep talking about it. It was a very different time than it is today. It's very hard to explain to people how we did it. But it was very casual. It wasn't, you know, it wasn't unusual that 30 people would end up sitting there talking about something.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: This was probably the first of the pattern meetings. There were probably three or four—I have [the dates –VJ] written down; . The real question is always, Why were we together? What is really happening here? It's also happening in California. Joyce Kozloff had been teaching around the country, and she was seeing it everywhere. It was the next step from, I would say, a Modernism to a Postmodernism. It wasn't a reductive type of thing. It was using the building blocks of everything we had. Then building something with that, which, when you look at it, fit right into Post-Minimalism easily. There were prescient exhibitions. The first exhibition, Jane Kaufman put together—it was her gallery [Alessandro Gallery –VJ]. There were also more panels—with Amy Goldin. Let's see here. December 12, 1976. "Meeting at Kozloff's loft on Wooster. Bringing slides." [We –VJ] showed hundreds of slides of everything, everything we liked. "[It was a larger –VJ] group of people, including Scott Burton, Ned Smyth, Cynthia Carlson, and Barbara Zucker, among others. Lots of slides were shown. This could have been to discuss the CAA [College Art Association] panel coming up in February. This is the last informal meeting of the larger group, which was organized by artists [30 artists –VJ]. The artists met only after this for panels or openings or in small groups." And that's in '76. So essentially that was our last meeting. If you were calling it a movement, that's when it would be over.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, or maybe the generative part would be over, but certainly the exhibitions—In other words, it was off—maybe you didn't have to meet because it was off the ground?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it was off the ground. There were several dealers involved. Holly Solomon was taking the lead on this. There was also Barbara Gladstone, and a lot of people wanted these shows. Because the shows were actually very exciting. There's very little documentation on it. But you'd walk into one of these shows, and it was complete chaos. , What is happening here? What—! Because all the complexity would be the thing that would be holding it together. That's not much to hold anything together, frankly. Different materials, different—

AVIS BERMAN: You're talking about group shows?

VALERIE JAUDON: Talking about group shows. We had group shows, yes. That was the whole thing. The group things were the whole thing. They were almost like anti-war protests except they were anti-minimalist protests. [They laugh.] They were very exciting to see. I think one of the things that made them exciting, as opposed to, say, if you had had this kind of thing today, was that the work was always commenting on historical sources. It was in a Modernist sense a negation of the movement that had gone before like Minimalism. , and you would see that it indeed was a very humorous protest against, say, Minimalism or Color Field painting or any kind of Modernist thing coming from every single angle. They were very funny. They were very humorous, needless to say, colorful shows and everything. All the individuals in these shows—their single shows never had the effect of those group shows. And that's what it was really about. It was about those group shows.

AVIS BERMAN: Why do you think that was, that these single shows never had the effect?

VALERIE JAUDON: People did some great shows. Kim MacConnel, [Robert Zakanitch –VJ], did terrific shows. But they were more focused in almost a Modernist kind of way. There [were artists –VJ] always doing a large kind of metaphorical collage. My shows were, at this point, monochrome. [They laugh.] It was gold, silver, copper, and white and black and gray and whatever. They were essentially monochrome. You had to focus in on a single thing. Whereas the group shows were mixtures of different materials, different everything—elements of Pop Art, elements of just everything. It was a total—I don't know. [They laugh.] Total—It was just inexplicable. You would figure out one or two things, but you could never figure out why all of these people are together—you could never do that. It was very, very colorful, and very, very good-natured.

AVIS BERMAN: And even though there were men and women in the movement, it certainly became very allied with feminism.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was definitely allied with feminism in that feminism was another protest at the very same time. If you're pulling in all of these references, and you're having references to non-hierarchical sources, anonymous kind of sources, this is fitting in with feminism. Plus there [were –VJ] the main people. If you get it down to six people, it's pretty easy. But there were a hundred people backing everybody up. And it was really quite amazing. There was Joyce and Mimi and myself. And we were working at the same time in '76—'76—on the edition of *Heresies* [*Heresies*, feminist art journal. The *Heresies* group first met at Kozloff's New York City loft in November, 1975]. [*Heresies #4: Women's Traditional Arts – The Politics of Aesthetics*. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. We were working on [the magazine –VJ] with nine other women the whole time all of this was in development. The three of us were the ones to get the first show going—with John Perreault [art critic and curator of *Pattern Painting* (1977) at PS1 –VJ]; we told Holly Solomon. She made connections [with John Perreault and Alanna Heiss at PS1 –VJ]. We had the show at PS1. Mimi and Joyce were very—very, very experienced from California in organizing for—basically when women got together.

AVIS BERMAN: Consciousness-raising groups?

VALERIE JAUDON: A conscious-raising group. Yes. But this just took it a step further. In fact often Mimi would try to turn it into a conscious-raising group. People didn't catch on really. So it was definitely an overlay. It was all in the subject matter, it was all in the talk. It was the men who were doing the flowers and the fabric, you know. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, what was Holly Solomon like then as a dealer? What was you know—

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, she had just opened her gallery the year before I met her. I met her essentially just going around and showing my slides. She had one day a week where she would see slides off the street. [Laughs.] She was actually very high energy, very high energy. She was terrific in many ways. She was sort of like a mother to all the artists in the gallery. You could always expect a phone call at eleven or twelve at night. She sort of managed our lives that way, which was greatly to our benefit. She worked really hard. She would have loved to have been an actress. That's really where she was. She even took me to Europe when I had my first show in Europe at the [Bruno] Bischofberger Gallery. We went on the—What was that plane that really—?

AVIS BERMAN: The Concorde?

VALERIE JAUDON: The Concorde, yes. We went on the Concorde.

AVIS BERMAN: Wow.

VALERIE JAUDON: First we stopped in Paris—there was a big pattern show at [America House, a U.S. institution –VJ]. Robert Kushner had a show there. Then we went to Düsseldorf; she wanted to meet all these famous people in Düsseldorf. She didn't know a lot about art [history, but she knew contemporary art –VJ], and she found it a little dull. But she wanted to know all the people who were powerful. She and I were on this trip because she didn't want to travel alone. Horace [Solomon] didn't want to go with her. We basically had terrific fun. I would help us out and guide us places. It was a lot of fun. We went to Düsseldorf; she wanted to meet [Alfred] Schmela, she wanted to meet Conrad Fisher. Then we went to Werner Schmalenbach [founding director of the Kunstsammlung NRW, Düsseldorf –VJ] . He had a small museum. Everybody knew who she was from the Warhol paintings. She was the Pop Art actress, and she played that to the hilt. She was not really there to show people her artists. It the Holly personality.

And Schmalenbach, this incredible man—I remember this [story –VJ] because it was a little embarrassing. He had this collection that he had put together, great collection of 20th-century—early 20th-century—art; got it from the Nazis or something. We're in the middle of Düsseldorf. He is delighted to meet her because she's a character in one of the Warhol paintings . He knows who she is. He's an older man, absolutely delighted to meet her. And she's just flirting like crazy. I'm trying to wander around and look at the art. Incredible art—everything, everything in this museum, the quality was just superb. And it's because he picked it out. I kept saying, this is incredible quality. I felt like I'm in the Prado. And he said, "Well, I did it all myself, you know. And I put it all together." Incredible. She was looking at me like, are you really interested in this stuff? And she asked me later, was I really?—And I said, "Yes, Holly. Didn't you think that was fantastic?" She said, "Well, I liked a couple of them. You know they're colorful, and they're nice." She would hide it pretty well that she didn't [know, but she'd be enthusiastic –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Was that a drawback as a dealer?

VALERIE JAUDON: I think she probably was not respected by a lot of people. But, you know, dealers today, nobody knows anything anyway. They're all [laughs] in good company. I think it's more about money. But for her it wasn't money. She was a celebrity.

AVIS BERMAN: Right—a projection of, you know, she wanted the art world.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. She really was a celebrity. She really was. When we went to these places that I was really intimidated with. I remember—it was Conrad Fisher, I think; he had this great gallery, terrific gallery. Minimalist and everything. And he, too, was totally delighted with her. , Oh! It's Holly Solomon. He did know who I was, and he brought out a painting. And he said, "Do you recognize this? It looks like a pattern painting, doesn't it?" And I said, "Yes, I think it is a pattern painting. Who did this?" And he said, "I did it! Years ago." So it was that sort of trip. At that moment people knew who I was because I was having at show at the Bischofberger

in Switzerland.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Did Holly get you that show?

VALERIE JAUDON: [Yes –VJ], Bischofberger came over. The Europeans definitely were looking around. This was a period where New York was not showing European artists. This is hard to understand. But there were very few European [artists showing in New York –VJ], and all the Europeans were coming over here to get art. So Bischofberger saw my first show and wanted to show [me –VJ] in Zurich.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And Bischofberger was also obviously involved with the pop artists and Warhol and all of that.

VALERIE JAUDON: Everybody. Yes, everybody. He was very close with Warhol.

AVIS BERMAN: So I mean he would've known Holly, too, of course.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, absolutely.

AVIS BERMAN: And you know when the Solomons did—They did collect. They had that great art collection.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, they collected. But forming this gallery and showing this crazy mix of people, people were really interested. She was one of the first people on West Broadway.

AVIS BERMAN: And was she able to sell your work [inaudible]?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, tremendously. With very high energy. I was so busy I couldn't go out of my loft on the Bowery sometimes for a week except to get milk. I was just sitting there painting, painting, painting, painting, painting, painting. It was crazy actually.

AVIS BERMAN: And it looks like you left Holly Solomon about what—'82 or so? And what happened?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was the beginning of '82. As I say, she was like a mother. Sort of the bad mommy. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: She was trying to control you?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, she just knew everything about us. And she was going through a bad period. Pattern painting was not getting as much interest. The Europeans were getting a lot of attention. She was buying a lot of European art, and she wasn't paying her artists. All of her artists were getting very antsy because it was the time to buy a loft before the prices started going up. You used to be able to get a loft for $10,000. Now they were $20,000—if you can even imagine that. So she wasn't paying people. I remember Judy Pfaff and I going in and trying to get our $1,000 a month or $2,000 a month. [Laughs.] We were very funny. So Sidney Janis had been to my first show. Sidney Janis and Carroll Janis had been to my first show. Holly called me up and said, "You know who was just here? Sidney Janis was here. He finally explained your work to me. Now I get it." [They laugh.]

In '82 they offered me a show. Carroll Janis called me up and said, "I want you to come in and talk to Sidney. And we really are very serious about you." I said, "Well, what am I going to do about Holly?" And he said, "Well, I think she'll be very understanding. Just tell her that you're going to be showing with us from now on." And I thought, Oh, that's great. So I was very impressed. I was extremely impressed with Sidney—and Carroll. It was just entirely different—because they knew everything about art.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was really quite an historical place.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, my goodness, yes. [Piet] Mondrian. And you had some of the Abstract Expressionists from Betty Parsons.

VALERIE JAUDON: They had those black books in the gallery that they put up with the artists' names on them. And the first thing I said when I'm sitting in there—it's a very intimidating place—"You mean my name is going to be up there by the Mondrian and [Fernand] Léger on the black books?" And they said, "Yes! We're going to give you a black book right up there." I said, "It's a deal." [They laugh.] You know, it was a deal.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, how did Holly Solomon feel?

VALERIE JAUDON: I think she was mad. She wanted me to rethink it. She thought, Well, why don't we just do both? And I said, "Because I can't handle you. I just can't. I can't do both of you. I can't. I can't handle Sidney Janis; that's too big for me to handle anyway. And the both of you would absolutely be a killer." At that point she

owed me a lot of money, which had been a real problem. So we just—But we've remained—we were not close anymore. But when we saw each other in public, we were very friendly.

AVIS BERMAN: Were you able to get your paintings back that she still had?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And were you able to collect what she owed you?

VALERIE JAUDON: That took about five years. [They laugh.] Yes, I think she had developed a policy, probably with her artists, of giving them just enough money live on, which had really worked.

AVIS BERMAN: The Sullivan strategy.

VALERIE JAUDON: They weren't stipends. They were essentially just part of what they owed you. If she owed you $50,000, then she would give you $2,000 a month, something like that. [All the artists –VJ] talked about it at the time. I've kind of forgotten. All the artists talked about it. They didn't know we talked about it. [They laugh.] But she was doing the same thing with everyone. It wasn't as if anybody else was getting a better deal. We thought, well, it keeps her going. I guess we're just supporting the gallery. We were all pretty naïve.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes. So right.

VALERIE JAUDON: But that's what happens with your first gallery, and there are these opportunities.

AVIS BERMAN: You hadn't had one before?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. I was in my very early thirties. I was very naïve.

AVIS BERMAN: And I guess she didn't do catalogs?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, no. Announcements. She was a beginning gallery. She kept saying she couldn't get the *New York Times* in at all. But no one in SoHo could at the time. The *New York Times* just didn't come down there.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: Those were just different days. There was a sense of real outpost. It was not uptown.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Which was what enriched it all. Now, also this is just reading the big catalog, *Mississippi*, the one with the essay by Anna Chave. I did not—She also thought that your work came out of Frank Stella's work.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, it didn't come out of Frank Stella. But Frank Stella was very important for me, [Anna probably thought it looks like a protractor –VJ], which wasn't the case. The real thing that Stella did, and I think he did it for absolutely everyone, was to show that you could have a real development with your work. That you could take a particular set of ideas, and develop it and change it and go into it very, very deeply and do series after series after series that would develop. Not toward any kind of progression, not reducing it, not working toward a reduction of things, which was in the air in the '60s and the '70s. This idea of development was extremely important—extremely important. I also liked his incised line. [Basically when you're working with this kind of complexity, you bump into things. I knew that I had come upon it. –VJ] And I thought, well, it does look like a Stella incised raw canvas line. But I'm going to go with it until I develop out of it. It's an homage in a way. I respect him. If it had been another artist, I probably wouldn't have done it. But I did have a tremendous respect for him; there's no question about it.

AVIS BERMAN: Was there another figure at the time that you also may have felt that way about? Or other figures?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I can say a lot of people that I would take definitely ideas from—Sol LeWitt was very important. I should have thought of a list for you.

AVIS BERMAN: That's all right.

VALERIE JAUDON: But I was very aware of everyone's work, I must say.

AVIS BERMAN: Now with Sidney Janis, you stayed—did you stay with the gallery until the gallery closed?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I did; 2000, 1999-2000. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So you were very satisfied then.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, they were—it was a fantastic gallery. You would have to be crazy not to respect that gallery.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: And the way that Sidney and Carroll operated, they [put –VJ] no pressure on me whatsoever. The artists in the gallery were close because we went to the dinners every time there was an opening. We all knew each other; we'd go to the openings, and it would be friendly. It was entirely different than Holly Solomon's. I felt like I was part of the family, of the Janis Family. They were really extremely nice to me. Never told me anything to do. Well, never told me so-and-so was in and loved your work or hated it. They didn't bother with that. No. They'd say, Well, let's do a show for March maybe next year. What do you think? And I'd say yes. And I'd work toward it. They'd walk in and say, Oh, this is terrific! How did you do this? Oh, this is great! The artists whatever they wanted to do, they did it. They put on the show.

AVIS BERMAN: And you had a lot. I mean from the catalogs, there were a lot of shows, and a lot of you know—

VALERIE JAUDON: It was every two years.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] I mean just what you would want.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's exactly what I wanted, and I was able to really develop and do anything I wanted. They literally did not care about pushing you toward doing one thing or drawings or anything. It was amazing.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, I guess I should ask you, though, since they were tremendously knowledgeable about art, if they made a studio visit, would they, if not critique, would they offer any kind of suggestions or question you or anything like that?

VALERIE JAUDON: They would come, and then they would talk about the work. But not in the sense of—In a way it would be kind of a critique, but in a very serious way with a great deal of respect. Like, you've done this. It's your life. You're here. This is what you're doing. I'm curious about it. And they would ask questions, particularly Carroll, who had a very sharp eye. They would tell you what they thought. They didn't really want your lyrics to go along with the painting. I remember once Carroll and I went to see Peter [Halley's –VJ] studio in the early '80s. He wanted to meet him, and I introduced [them –VJ]. Peter was trying to explain the work. And Carroll said, "Just don't tell me. I'm here. I'm looking. It's okay." [They laugh.] You don't have to—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's interesting because usually everybody wants you to do—you know they want to pluck the heart out of the mystery. They want to squeeze—

VALERIE JAUDON: They understood—They were very intelligent, very knowledgeable and looked a great deal at art and felt extremely confident. Generally were 100 percent right. It was quite a family. They had spent their entire lives with 20th-century art.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was quite amazing.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: If they were curious about something, [they would –VJ] just ask about it and get the answer. But generally they knew.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right. Also it seems to me that—I don't know if it was a coincidence or not—but about the time you went to Sidney Janis, your work began, it seems to me, to change.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it did. It became much more architectural.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And a little bit looser. And then there was this more evident impasto. In other words, the paint became—maybe I'm wrong—but it became more—

VALERIE JAUDON: It became a lot thicker.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, and more prominent in terms of—

VALERIE JAUDON: It became really exaggerated.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Let me just look and see.

VALERIE JAUDON: Mannerist, almost.

AVIS BERMAN: Let's just look at this one, *Zama* [1982 –VJ], I mean you can really see in the reproduction.

VALERIE JAUDON: —just tons of oil paint. Very, very thick. And I was really thinking of an architectural language at that point. It was trying to [push the reference to building –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Very much so. Yes, I mean it's certainly abstract. But the representational references. Plus there's a lot more depth in it, too. In other words, you're really getting zones of space.

VALERIE JAUDON: They're schematics of different types of perspective systems and things.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean this one, *New Caledonia* [1982], I mean this is just almost like, you know—

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean I want to lick that. You know I want to—

VALERIE JAUDON: It was extremely thick. And the brushstrokes were really showing, the huge brushstrokes; everything is large. They really are wall size. They're really building size. They're not pictures of things.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it looks as if you would walk into them almost as environments, and you would hope for an immersion.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. You could walk into them. [Standing in front of one eight feet or six feet square –VJ]. And [it –VJ] would look as if, yes, this is the path I take; I move into painting this way. And then I can circulate around.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] I mean and how did this change? I mean why did this change happen with the work?

VALERIE JAUDON: This change was not that big of a change actually, in terms of changing a factor in the painting. I simply gave it some gravity in terms of the way that I put the building blocks together. Basically they were standing on their own. Instead of the main device that would hold the painting together, a large subliminal circle, for example, holding it together on a field of horizontal, vertical elements. Then I would cut off the bottom part of the circle, and it would become an arch. You could start walking through it. Then all I had to do was add another layer of perspectival systems instead of grids. I think that was really my intention, getting rid of the grid entirely. Or making it much more obvious that it was not really coming out of the grid.

It was a matter of just shifting the image, but using the same type of building that I had been doing. And it started opening up more. Once things became almost [objects, they looked like a staircase, or a doorway –VJ], I was able to use that device to build on a set of symmetry. [Then –VJ] I very consciously made them asymmetrical.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: So it wouldn't hold together with the symmetry.

AVIS BERMAN: And I also see—See, I'm just looking at some paintings from this '85 show. So what's happening is there seems to be more and more breathing room here—

VALERIE JAUDON: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

AVIS BERMAN: —in terms of, you know, the canvas. Or maybe I'm—

VALERIE JAUDON: There is much more breathing room in that one. That's a huge painting. That's probably ten feet long.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's another question, is that when this idea of the big painting or the size, when did you feel you could really begin to tackle that, you know, something—

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, my first show had six-foot paintings. Six-foot, six by nine. I liked that from the very beginning. It was a very important part of everything, having this architectural presence to the painting, that real physical presence that you actually would stand in front of the painting and your whole body reacts to it.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Instead of just looking at, say, a picture on a smaller level.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And then also you were using things like gold leaf and all, which was—

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —outrageous.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it was. [Laughs.] It was really part of the ornamental aspect of things. It's another sign just tucked in there with everything else. You had to deal with these different signs all together.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's interesting, because I mean even though she's older than you are, I think about that time Dorothea Rockburne was using was using some gold leaf, too, in her paintings. I mean she's not—her work isn't like yours. But I just seem to remember she began to experiment with that, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: She could have been. It was probably all of the pattern and decoration. But her materials early on, were, I thought, terrific. She was using that oil on that paper. Oh! She's terrific.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: People are always asking me if I—Well, are you mathematical like Dorothea? No, I'm not mathematical, you know. Dorothea is; she's really mathematical. But I am not.

AVIS BERMAN: Mathematical and astronomical.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: Cosmology, astronomy, all sorts of things.

VALERIE JAUDON: She has real philosophical systems.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Like [Louis] Carré, all sorts of people.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes

AVIS BERMAN: and [Blaise] Pascal—and—

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: She really reads those. She does find a way.

VALERIE JAUDON: She really does. She's very involved with intellectual history.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right. I mean not in an external way either. I mean she really studies—

VALERIE JAUDON: No, she really. She's always internalized it.

AVIS BERMAN: Let me see. Also, the other thing that begins to happen is there's a kind of a maze-like quality in some of these, too. And I don't know if that's purposeful or not. But, you know, maybe because of the way it is—because you're taking paths in. I'm not sure if that's the correct way. But the way you—

VALERIE JAUDON: [There –VJ] is a bit of a maze-like quality, but not a maze in the sense that you can really get into it or get out of it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: You really can't.

AVIS BERMAN: No. And then also, I'm just looking here, in '86, I mean we have something—this is really very different in terms of the use of the circle and the background grids. I don't exactly know how to describe what's happening here. But I mean you—

VALERIE JAUDON: These become really geometric.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: I'm able to use part of an arch, part of a— square; we have two squares acting off of each

other. Then we have a triangle holding up everything. I'm able to take recognizable things like a portion of a circle. Things you can actually say, that arch or that arc is definitely bumping into that circle, etc. I'm able to loosen this up and to use these images or figures on top of the grid that's underneath. —it's a double grid; it's not a real grid. It's an orthogonal grid. It's the same size as the width of these other elements. It's almost as if they are coming out of the background grid—not really part of it; just sitting outside of it. This is not a grid painting.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. And it's very, you know, you have untied the elements and put them in a new way. I mean I found them all fascinating, how you're true to your premises. But you're able to permute your main idea.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, it's this development. It's—I think at this point I'm really working like an architect. You take a particular problem or you take a particular set of circumstances, and you simply work through it. Which is really what I do now, I mean I do more so.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean was this scary to you, as you were kind of letting go of a lot of other things, at least temporarily?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, no. The development itself was so exciting. [To keep your mind occupied on so many different levels that it's not a simple building process, now –VJ] I really have systems on top of each other. If one part of it's not working out, I can work on the other part. I'm able to really pull them apart and put them back together again. I'm much more in control of the whole thing than I ever was before. It's like going from chamber music to the orchestra.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's the interesting thing about it because I wouldn't have said that you were—You know I would think that using geometric structure is a way to, you know, control one's composition.

VALERIE JAUDON: It is a controlling device. It's as if you're dealing with a language. If you think about it, the only thing that I have eliminated would be the organic line or the natural mark.

AVIS BERMAN: It's something we might call, for want of a better word, something bio-morphic shall we say?

VALERIE JAUDON: Bio-morphic Abstract Expressionism. It's a process that I gave up for this kind of development of the work.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] When did you—I mean I don't know if you knew you were giving it up at the time—but when would that have been?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, definitely. I even had it in my little notebook. I would say 1973 I had to make a real decision to not—not just play around with anything.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] And I mean was that a battle at the time, or was that difficult?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was just a matter of making decisions. I was pretty young then. Once I understood I could make these shapes instead of brushstrokes and still have direction, which is the real thing that I wanted, rather than, say, expression. That didn't mean anything to me. Or the organic line. That's like a signature. I was able to build things. It was an idea that I could ultimately make anything that I wanted to make, or express anything [or say anything –VJ], or communicate anything I wanted with these elements because they were so basic, and they covered all directions.

AVIS BERMAN: So really a lot of this development, one would say, is based on an idea or a concept of construction?

VALERIE JAUDON: It is. A construction of a painting.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: At first I thought, after a few years, [that I was wrong –VJ]. But it's kept going for so long, it even surprises me. If we keep moving until the '90s, you can see where I completely break away from—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: —the grid thing. I can explain how I did this and where it's gone.

AVIS BERMAN: Let's see which one is this one. This is 1988, which is somewhere—These are just fantastic. I love these things. Yes, they're beginning to—

VALERIE JAUDON: They're becoming much more diagrammatic. [It is on top of the grid, visually holding

everything together. These geometric figures are basically taking actions –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: You know there's a lot of movement—motion, motion. Spinning and—

VALERIE JAUDON: There's a lot of [motion and movement –VJ], not only visually but actually pictorially.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes, yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: They're also becoming pictures of different kinds of diagrams. This is surprising, too, because it's the same language that I've had since the very beginning. And I'm able to stretch it out this far.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, and it's interesting because there are fewer shapes, fewer forms in there as well, as the grid —

VALERIE JAUDON: They become just much more obvious.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's not as if I didn't have these larger things in earlier paintings. But they were quite chopped up. Now they've gone from being parts of a field to actual objects within the painting. It's very pictorial.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: I found this very interesting that I could make this language do this.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] And then the next thing, I do have this catalog from 1990, in which it's very different. I mean you've almost went, you know, these vertical designs almost remind me of figures.

VALERIE JAUDON: [I thought of them as figures on a field –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: If you notice, I still have the same grided background—it's [rather –VJ] subtle. But the figures have just really come together in a very definitive way. And they're very ornamental.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean just to give a couple of titles here: We have *Syllabus* from 1990, and *Elevation* from 1989, in which I really, as I said, I did feel that these were definitely stand-ins for the figure. And you were saying—There is a breakaway here. And it's kind of—and maybe you would like to talk about that.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, once they're able to become really stand-alone figures, and they're all symmetrical—Because the thing that was really working in a lot of the earlier work, particularly from the '70s, was the axis line when one side meets another. The axis line is the most intense thing whatsoever, and you have to spread this around; otherwise you look at nothing but the center with the axis line. I wanted to make multiple axis lines and end up making multiple figures. [These are axis figures . –VJ] having them arranged in the same painting—that was the hard thing. [Three grids relate to each other and the ornamental figures relate to each other. –VJ] Which is the way the whole painting has always worked. I've just changed the terms of it.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Exactly. Because there were always shape relationships and line relationships certainly.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's all about relationships.

AVIS BERMAN: It has to be or it doesn't make sense.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. It's sort of like early [semiotics –VJ]. This is not this because it's not this. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Obviously, you have to have the relationships because the whole painting has to work at once, not just a part of it. Yes. Well, these are very unusual—or maybe not predictable.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I think they were not predictable. In fact, I was heading way out on a limb there. At this point the people who had been doing geometric abstraction [or pattern wondered what was I doing? –VJ] [They laugh.] I'm simply developing it. It's going where it's going. And I like very much doing these figures, these ornamental figures. This was interesting, I have to say, constructing these things.

AVIS BERMAN: And obviously, you know, and obviously vertical paintings, too, not very much accented on—

VALERIE JAUDON: I like for people to think about them as figures on a field. And I like to think about a figurative abstraction in a larger sense. Basically having a non-Modernist abstraction. Whatever that means. [They laugh.] It's taking it out of its historical roots, I'm not thinking about roots anymore. I'm not thinking about foundations

of things. I was thinking about using the materials at hand, or using elements at hand to build something else.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And also even though it's within a development, it's all perfectly consistent, I think. Is there a conscious motive on your part now to repeat yourself?

VALERIE JAUDON: I couldn't make an earlier painting if I tried. I can remember how I'm doing it for a year or two, and then—it's developed.

AVIS BERMAN: You're a different person by then.

VALERIE JAUDON: I'm a different person, so I can't remember how I was doing it. It doesn't make sense to me. Or I see the flaws in [it, and don't go back –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Well, about this point, what I'd like to do is to—just because it's about contemporaneous with what we're talking about—I want so start talking about some of the public commissions and how these occurred. We're not going to get to the GSA 'til next time because they're later on.

VALERIE JAUDON: Okay.

AVIS BERMAN: But these works in—I mean I know that you had a mural ceiling in Philadelphia, which is while you were working for the architectural firm.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: And that was a painting. But I find this fascinating. Of course I've been in the subway station on 23rd and Lexington Avenue a million times. And this is called *Long Division* from 1988. And to my knowledge—and please correct me if I'm wrong—I don't know if you had been either thinking three-dimensionally or made any three-dimensional objects.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I had not been thinking three-dimensionally. This is 1988, but started much earlier.

AVIS BERMAN: Of course.

VALERIE JAUDON: In the early '80s [the MTA came to me when they began –VJ] having art in the subways. This goes pretty far back. I never really applied for [anything, but –VJ] they called me because several people on the panel knew that I had worked with Giurgola, and maybe I could handle the difficulty of the architectural situation.

AVIS BERMAN: Because this does have a pattern close to the arches—

VALERIE JAUDON: It does.

AVIS BERMAN: —you were making at the time in the early '80s.

VALERIE JAUDON: It does. It's two-leveled as well. When they called me I knew the subway station very well because it was the first subway station that I had [lived near –VJ] when I first got to New York—I was on Gramercy Park [in 1966 –VJ], so I was right around the corner. This was before I'd even gone to Europe for the first time. I remember going down that stairway on Park Avenue and 23rd Street, [where the light hits in a certain way –VJ]. They were very decrepit. They had barbed wire and everything. So I'd go [down and squint my eyes a bit and say, Oh, this would be just like Paris because it has this very tall underground tunnel –VJ]. I didn't grow up in New York, so subways were pretty interesting to me. Scary, but interesting. This was a nice spot going down into it.

When they [MTA –VJ] called me, they [asked if I could –VJ] make an artwork for the subway. The last person that they had asked was a sculptor, but he had just made some sculptures. This is where my social conscience comes into play. Because I'm thinking, well, that subway needs fixing up really, really badly! And I know how to do it. The way I'm going to get to fix it up is to put one of my artworks there. Basically the place needed a fence, a real fence, and it could look better. So I thought, well, I can do this. [It was a different process than making a painting or even thinking about art. The paintings –VJ] are in a site-specific arena of art, of painting, of history, philosophical ideas, etc. Whereas this is really site-specific, where I take all of that knowledge [and –VJ] go into the subway; I'm going to make this place better. It's a mess. But I can fix it up.

[The idea begins with a different premise –VJ]. I insisted on having solid welded steel. [I like to do things that I understand how they're being done –VJ]. This is actually the second drawing that I did. Because once I really got down there and measured and realized the mess I was really dealing with in terms of how things were going to go together, I changed the design so it's modular within each unit. It's about 60 feet [in five different sections –VJ]. Each section's entirely different. It's truly a 19th century [standardized iron bar –VJ]. It's really 19th century

welding. However, the way they actually made it, which is another long story, [is to laser cut it –VJ] from inch-thick steel. It's actually extremely solid, a rather elaborate grid thing. And it's two levels. It could be there basically longer than the subway could be there. [Laughs.] It's very solid.

AVIS BERMAN: You never thought of making a mural or anything or something having to do—something flat at all?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, I have done.

AVIS BERMAN: I meant for this particular, you know, for this station anyway.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, no. Walking down that stairway, this is such a perfect spot [that –VJ] you want to have it open. I don't want people down there trying to concentrate and giving aesthetic attention to a wall [with –VJ] pickpockets and everything. [They laugh.] I wanted people pretty alert, having it really transparent, really open, really safe. I knew that the idea of these see-through bars would work very well coming down these stairs. That was the whole impetus. Everything else was a fill-in .

AVIS BERMAN: And did you have anything to do with the tiling, or was that—any choice in that or anything?

VALERIE JAUDON: I told them I would do the whole thing for nothing if they would just let me have one more aesthetic decision about anything. These stupid columns [in particular –VJ]. But it was already contracted [out and they wouldn't let me –VJ]. I said, I'll be very happy to help you because you're doing a lot of things wrong here. I can really fix this whole thing up, you know. And it was no. You're just the fence contractor. The subway's just too complicated, I think.

AVIS BERMAN: Would you ever do another one?

VALERIE JAUDON: With the MTA?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I don't think so. [It took about six years –VJ] to even get the contract. And the mayor's office was calling me. Ronay [Menschel, the mayor's assistant, would –VJ] call me once a year and say, You know, it's just a problem with the contracts, and it's not just you. It's the whole thing. And we don't want our artists to be responsible for insuring these for the rest of your life [They laugh.] with the subway. It's a problem. So if you can just hang in there, tell us that you will finish this; we're going to get it fabricated. The mayor wants you just to hang in there, you know. I think it was really her. I was so flattered. And I said, Well, of course. Because I felt that I was doing something for the public good.

AVIS BERMAN: And were you satisfied with the way it came out?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, extremely satisfied. But to get there—that's another story entirely. At one point they were going to put some barbed wire [in the fence –VJ] because they couldn't figure out how to [remove –VJ] a pipe that was going to go through the thing. It had been there since the 19th century, and they couldn't figure out who would cut it. This eventually—[I said –VJ], No, they could not just put the barbed wire on this old pipe because they couldn't find someone to do it. I had a meeting with—We had a table of about six people: the head of the MTA . They wanted to know what my problem was with my contractors because I was throwing such a fit. This meeting must have cost [$10,000 in salaries alone with these men –VJ] to be there for this hour. It was an incredible meeting. But I had their ear. And I said, "Well, you've got to get a guy—and I don't care which union he comes from— to cut that pipe down. That's all he has to do. Then you wouldn't have to tie it with barbed wire. And they all looked at each other and said: This is absolutely crazy. She's absolutely right. What are we going? Who's in charge of this? How is this going to get done? So they fixed it. It took the president to get the thing done. They really appreciated it. When [it was –VJ] finished, they had something extremely good.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean is there anything you would change about your design, looking back?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, you know, you do these things when you do them, and you do the best you can do with the people you've got. I would not do a project like this again unless I truly had the mayor on my side. I'm much more experienced with it [now –VJ]. I have to say that all of my projects have turned out extremely well because I am not thinking about money. I'm probably the only person that's thinking about the real aesthetics. I am thinking about the public. And I'm really demanding [good –VJ] materials for the public—really high-quality materials for the public—because they deserve it. If that's the one thing that I can do, I can use [good material –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: So what do you think that you've learned from this in terms of how to get something done in this arena?

VALERIE JAUDON: I learned that it was very difficult to [do, especially dealing with contractors –VJ]. They're very difficult and they're not doing it for art. I [had –VJ] to learn their language. This is one of the reasons that women aren't architects—they think women can't handle the contractors. But the contractors can be [handled by an artist –VJ]. I can make this one work, but I'll never be asked to do another one. They could have me do a fantastic job no matter what it takes, even if you alienate a lot of people. But the quality of the work is there. I tell people when I am doing these projects, I'm the one that's going to be blamed for this. Not because you couldn't get the guys in to do it. They were late. This shipment arrived late. I said none of this matters. Fifteen years down the road, when this thing falls apart, I'm the one that's going to be blamed. It was the art that was bad. Believe me. So I have to be very tough, and it's not a practical thing to do. Like that's why I wouldn't be a good woman architect. [They laugh.] Because you do alienate the contractors.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And were you able to stay within budget on this piece for the subway station?

VALERIE JAUDON: I'm not quite sure what they did about the budget because they were just giving me a fee.

AVIS BERMAN: They were responsible for the contractors?

VALERIE JAUDON: They were responsible for the contractors. In fact the first person that I went to was Tallix [foundry] in Upstate New York. And Tallix explained to me how to do this. They gave me a lesson. We had agreed that Tallix would get this contract. And I walked in one day to a meeting—I had made the [full-scale –VJ] drawings for it as Tallix had told me —they told me that they didn't get Tallix. They had the equivalent of—basically a lawn mower shop in Yonkers. The guy comes in. And I said, "I'm not sure this is really going to work. But let me talk to him." And we talked to him—I talked to him—and he was saying he couldn't do it. He was going to substitute a lot of stuff. I said, "No, there are no substitutions here. It's got to be inch-steel. And it's got to be welded together. And that's it. It's pretty simple. This has been designed with a 19th-century technology, something that you can do. Basically, at this point, my contract was over, and I walked out. They had to come back and tell me, yes, we're going to do it exactly like you want to do it. I think they wanted my name, still, on it.

AVIS BERMAN: And so did Tallix end up fabricating it?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, they did not. But the lawn mower shop, essentially subbed it out. I had an architect with me and saying, "Well, how did they do this because it's highly precise?" And he said, "Oh, it's laser cut." Must have cost them a fortune. Because they wanted to work for the MTA. They wanted to get on their payroll, so to speak. So they made an investment. So somebody made an investment to do this.

AVIS BERMAN: Now of course Tallix is a very well-known foundry. And who had pointed you toward there? Or who did you get the idea from?

VALERIE JAUDON: Scott Burton. Scott Burton was a friend and was extremely helpful to me all along. And very helpful to me in terms of these public projects. He would say, "You know, Valerie, when it gets tough, what you do—particularly if you're working with the Mafia—what you have to do, you stand on the table, you raise your skirt." [They laugh.] He said, "You'll get their attention." He was quite something.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes, he was hilarious, and biting. Did you find organized crime control in the unions?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well I didn't really—I only came in contact with [contractors –VJ] primarily in the Police Plaza Project. The contractors, all the contractors, were—they were tough. That was a tough crew. And legs were being broken, etc.

AVIS BERMAN: For what?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, I don't know .

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, in terms of—Why don't we go to that—Let me see if that's—I mean let's just skip the Ford Project for the moment, and go to, since we're talking about that, let's go to *Reunion* in 1989 [Police Plaza, Municipal Building, New York, New York].

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So you were willing to work for the city again, just by—

VALERIE JAUDON: That was the MTA; this was the city. Basically I got a letter saying: You have won this quarter-million dollar commission should you care to accept it.

AVIS BERMAN: Had you entered it?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I hadn't. It was one of those things, again, that Valerie, maybe she can do this.

AVIS BERMAN: And who were the officials involved?

VALERIE JAUDON: There were probably 30 people. But the real contact I was having—

The most powerful group that turned out to basically help me out in this was the Art Commission.

[Officials and NYC departments I worked with on the Police Plaza Project:

Jennifer McGregor, Director: NYC Percent for Art

Bronson Binger, Head: Department of General Services (DGS) (design agency)

James Balsey, Landscape Architect

NYC Art Commission

Police Department, sponsor agency

Landmark Preservation Commission

Department of Transportation (DOT)

Walker/Zanger Granite

Hastings Pavers

Department of Cultural Affairs

General Contractors –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: The City Art Commission?

VALERIE JAUDON: The City Art Commission. Very high-quality, very top-notch people. They would handle things behind the scenes. First I went to Ingo Freed [James Ingo Freed], and I asked Ingo what to do because the contractors were demanding $14,000 in cash just to do the drawings. It was kind of a nasty crew, you know. But I have to say, with the help of the Art Commission and a few good people that were working in the Buildings Department who were quite [exceptional, it all worked out –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: I mean it's so ironic that for Police Plaza you're running into all these crooked people.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's ironic. It's ironic, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was the main idea that they wanted here, that they told you what needed to be done?

VALERIE JAUDON: [Laughs.] They basically said: We've done our job. You can do the art now.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, great. So you're supposed to be, as usual, an add-on.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, an add-on. I chose to do the circular piece here. The real thing I did was [to rearrange all the brickwork for the three-and-a-half-acre site –VJ]. So the three-and-a-half-acre site pulled together.

AVIS BERMAN: So actually that wasn't—the brickwork—wasn't completed when you came on the scene. So you were able to influence that?

VALERIE JAUDON: This is what the job was. It was a renovation. They were going to be renovating Police Plaza because it had fallen apart. A lot of water damage. But of course they had hired the same people to do it [again –VJ] that had done it in the first place. It goes on and on. So anyway, I decided to do the whole renovation, to make the whole thing look better, to use bricks in different patterns, different colors. This is a story in itself. This could take three hours to go through this one. I learned a great deal. And I asked every architect. I asked all the [architects at Mitchell/Giurgola Architects –VJ], what should I do? How should I do this? What will work? Really, the research was just tremendous here.

AVIS BERMAN: And do you consider it to be successful?

VALERIE JAUDON: When it was finished, it was extremely successful. I felt it was very good. The problem is within a year—there's no maintenance, so the granite piece is completely covered with gum and bird stuff. And by the time I finished the project, I knew it was going to have nothing. In terms of maintenance, I think they pick up the plastic garbage bags out of the garbage cans maybe once a day. And that's all they do. Everything else is

just completely—it's a mess. But I figured if I made this granite thick enough, and it's four inches thick, that if a really reasonable government came in one day, or if they ever wanted to renovate, all they have to do is sand it like a floor, and it's brought back to life. [The larger circle of granite, 34 feet in diameter, is placed on the center axis of the arch of the McKim, Mead and White building, and is the same diameter as the arch itself –VJ].

[The original 1912 architect's plans, drawn in ink, show a sidewalk base around the Municipal Building made of six-by-six-foot solid granite blocks, now covered by several inches of rubble and brick from earlier renovations. My granite piece connects to the earlier plan. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: Now can you—or can an artist—put a maintenance clause in a contract?

VALERIE JAUDON: I do now or I don't do them. Architects don't do it. It's not their problem. That's why you can design things with huge walls of glass, and there's no way to clean it. But I am very maintenance-conscious, particularly since this one, [which was my second project –VJ]. So I don't even go into [a project –VJ] unless I am assured that it's going to be well-maintained.

AVIS BERMAN: And when did you start requesting or demanding that?

VALERIE JAUDON: The next project, which was the Birmingham Museum of Art [Birmingham, Alabama]. I was working in the garden there.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was a highly protected situation [within museum walls –VJ]. And I did a collaboration on all the plantings with the president of the local garden club and our assigned landscape architect; we three [worked –VJ] together. All Southern women. These women at the garden club—horticulturalists. Talk about quality! They got us plants from boxwoods hundreds of years old donated by members of the garden club. They [Blue Mountain Garden Club –VJ] had built the original garden and promised to maintain [the new garden –VJ] forever and replace it with the same things. [The two tile pools, slate and brickwork paving –VJ], had very high maintenance within the museum itself. It's like taking care of a floor of the museum. In fact once a maintenance man cleaned it with the wrong acid, ruined it, and they redid it. They had me come down and redo it with the original tile cutters and the original [engineer –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that sounds exceptional.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was exceptional. Very high-quality maintenance. It's a very successful project. So it could be done. I learned you can negotiate for anything. If it's going to turn out to be a sloppy maintenance thing, why get involved? Because these projects last several years, and they really get to be part of your mentality. They really expand my thinking, different sets of problems.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, I guess and one of the main problems is that you would, say, differentiate those, the public versus the studio?

VALERIE JAUDON: You mean how is it different?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Well, you were saying it puts you into new or different ways of thinking.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, absolutely. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: I'd like you to elaborate on that.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, okay. In terms of—Well, I can talk about the last GSA project, which was the garden in—Do you want to wait?

AVIS BERMAN: I want to wait until next time.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. Well, you could save that question. That's a real—that's a great story.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, let me ask you—Because this looks like—Let's talk about just—because it looks wonderful—this project, this mural called *Free Style* which was ceramic mural tile for the Athletic and Swim Club at the Equitable Center [1989].

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: Which is absolutely stunning, I think. And must have been a little bit different in terms of budget, in terms of expectations. And how that came about. I mean are you applying for public projects?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I don't. No. It's not that I'm lazy. But I know the processes so well. And in fact I'm a GSA peer, which means I help them out occasionally, or help other artists out occasionally, and tell them how projects are done and the complications of them . If people [and committees –VJ] have done their homework on a project, they're going to be spending a lot of money, I would be on a list [of available artists –VJ]. If they really want a good job, and if it's complicated, usually they will come to me. So I'm on a list.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: But I don't want to have to apply.

AVIS BERMAN: But you must have had to, you know, they must have asked you for slides or something at some point?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, everybody has my slides. Yes. [It is always best to be asked to apply after a committee does their homework. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: I think there's a registry or something.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, the GSA has a registry. But then everybody else does, too. New York City. I mean everybody has it. It's available [because it's public –VJ]. It's not the art world. This is an entirely different world. —people call from Canada, saying, well, can you come up here and do things like this? Also Germany.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] So was this the first time you'd ever worked with ceramics before?

VALERIE JAUDON: —I had tried ceramics. I had worked with two people who helped me do some very small, essentially paintings, in the early '80s. I had about [five pieces –VJ]. I had liked the look. I wanted to be able to do it, but it's difficult to do. [Equitable had originally asked Al Held. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: And who's "they" here?

VALERIE JAUDON: It's a woman, Pari Stave.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, sure!

VALERIE JAUDON: She was working with the president of Equitable . They were relieved that I was not as expensive as Al Held because they couldn't afford him. At the same time I'd gotten a call from Gabriel Mayer of Mayer of Munich. It's one of the oldest stained glass and tile workshops in Munich—in the world. [Everybody they have was –VJ] trained in Italy; they all are [master craftsmen –VJ]. He was trying to move into the United States because they had a great many churches that they had done in the 19th century that needed repairing. They had to set up their own office here for stained glass. I said, "Can you do tiles?" He said, "Of course we do tiles. I have this wonderful ceramic master. Why don't I let you talk to him?"

Again, it's like Tallix, they told me how to do it. [I began –VJ] working with these great European craftsmen. I mean great! This was made from 18-inch tiles that had—The mold originally was made by a company in New York—for the floor of the Metropolitan Museum [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York]. It was specially done, and they found a way to make them this large. And so they were going to laser. Oh, they didn't laser cut. They hand cut. This was about three years too early for laser cutting. I had incredible workmen. The Equitable people paid them directly, and they paid me separately. My idea was a flat fee, I'm here from the beginning, I'll do everything it takes. And that's the way I've always done it. So you don't have to think about every nickel and dime.

AVIS BERMAN: No. Well, this design is very evocative. I mean you can—I mean obviously the blue is a great color for this. But you begin to see almost a figural reference in the circles and, you know, the idea of motion.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's very much like the paintings I was doing, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: We're looking at *Cast* [1988, 72 x 72 inches, oil on canvas –VJ] from 1987, for example, or *Constant* [1988, 72 x 72 inches, oil on canvas –VJ]? Well, that's what I would think, is that what you were working on is what you would incorporate into a different medium or a different format.

VALERIE JAUDON: Having these different shapes cut from the tile, it's a whole other problem. You're really restricted by the material. It was a challenge. So it was another system [added to the mix –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: And was this your first design?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, you mean did I show it to them, and did they like it?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, what I meant was, was this your—You know, in other words, sometimes one has a design proposal, and they say, No. And then you have to go back and redo it.

VALERIE JAUDON: I was basically paid to do a design proposal. Because the way I work is generally—it's not like a sketch. I have to do it down to the final thing.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. You have to figure it out.

VALERIE JAUDON: So it's the equivalent of doing the entire project first. So this is why it's very difficult for me to go into things like, Well, send us a sketch, and we'll see if you're going to do this. It doesn't work like that for me. We had a contract where we were going to work on it several times. They had a choice: They didn't like it, they would send me back. That was built into the contract. It took a couple of months . And I think they loved it right off the bat. There was no question of redoing, changing anything. It wasn't a problem.

AVIS BERMAN: Did this go smoothly?

VALERIE JAUDON: Extremely smoothly. This is the difference between working with private people who care a great deal about the results and working in a public situation for, say, something like the MTA where you have maybe one person cares about this, and another person cares about this. There's no real coordination. So in this case I had two people who cared. The mayor's on your side here. [They laugh.] They can make spontaneous decisions if any workmen were changing things, it was fixed immediately—immediately! Equitable itself [was very high quality-minded –VJ]. Mayer of Munich, they are totally high quality. They don't use shabby materials because they have been in business for 150 years, and they know what happens if you do use bad materials. So I trusted those people.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also, because this was a private commission—I don't know if there was a restriction when you were working for the city, but would you have been able to hire non-Americans to work on the, you know, as contractors or suppliers of materials?

VALERIE JAUDON: I don't know. All contracts are different. I wouldn't get into a situation unless I could have total approval. [Now, I understand how it works. –VJ] I have to have total approval of the people who are going to be making things for me. I don't farm things out [to anyone –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: I just—Because sometimes—Sometimes it's very hard for certain, for governments, if you take a plane, it has to be on a U.S. carrier. I mean it's very hard to sometimes have a contractor outside the country.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. I think it could be—I think it could be a problem. Although I think Mayer of Munich has worked a lot for the MTA because they are the best.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, maybe they have by now.

VALERIE JAUDON: They've really been able to educate so many artists. I know they did an Eric Fischl [project –VJ]. He just turned over the drawing to them, and they did a fabulous job.

AVIS BERMAN: That circus one in the subway?

VALERIE JAUDON: In the ['30s –VJ] someplace. I'm not sure. Actually, I haven't seen it.

AVIS BERMAN: Because he's got something, I think, in Penn Station, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: [Yes, Penn Station. –VJ] I know Eric liked working with him. They thought he was great. Your workmen have to be—you have to really count on them. It can't go out to anyone.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: That's rule number one. And it takes a while to learn all these little things.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] And what did you learn, do you think, from this project, from the pool project?

VALERIE JAUDON: [I knew that I –VJ] could work with all kinds of materials, all kinds of people. I had to be very specific going into the situation about what I wanted. You don't go into these situations experimenting. [You must know what you want, you can ask for it, and people generally, in the beginning, will want to give you what you want since they –VJ] want it to work out. It's down the line that things get sloppy.

AVIS BERMAN: And where does this mural, do you think, fit within the overall development of your work?

VALERIE JAUDON: In the overall development of the [work I am reshuffling the pieces, the different levels and different systems. I think it was the experience of watching the workmen cut the tiles, and seeing the stacks and piles everywhere. To be able to see the tile shapes and to know that this pile was going to go in a particular section was revealing. In another situation I could mix it and turn it into an entirely different thing. These tiles are so beautiful—great lapis lazuli color and the black pieces and the white pieces. The tiles are a half-inch thick. Gorgeous! I still have some in my basement that I've saved. They are pieces from different parts of everything. It's not collage. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: It's almost like a jigsaw puzzle.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's not even a jigsaw puzzle. [It's a little more metaphorical. It's the idea that –VJ] you can actually put all these disparate pieces together somehow.

AVIS BERMAN: In a different way than you had—

VALERIE JAUDON: In a different way. If they were overlapped or were transparent—

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe it's like turning the kaleidoscope.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, turning the kaleidoscope, you get too much symmetry. That's a little too much control. It's not quite the metaphor.

AVIS BERMAN: Looking for something with more liberation to it?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, it comes along later. [In this particular one, the piles of the tiles on the top of the gridded drawing were a revelation. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: To have this on top of this on top of that. It frees up your mind a bit. It was quite beneficial.

AVIS BERMAN: You saw it three-dimensionally, too, that it was happening.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was three-dimensionally and two-dimensionally.

AVIS BERMAN: And there were color blocks, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: They were colored and gorgeous, too. Every single one was more beautiful than the other.

AVIS BERMAN: And I'm going to assume that—It sounds like the New York City pieces might have been a little bit financially ruinous for you in terms of the time it took. But I'm assuming that this Equitable piece was not?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, no. I did very well .

AVIS BERMAN: And is it still maintained?

VALERIE JAUDON: Beautifully. It's still in great shape. It hasn't even needed re-grouting.

AVIS BERMAN: That's terrific.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's amazing. If you use great materials, things will last a very long time.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I guess that's also the fight, is to get the good materials.

VALERIE JAUDON: It is, yes. I think that's why I do so few projects. You have to start off with good materials. The public deserves it. It's the one thing all of my work has been. [It is the closest to a private situation –VJ] where fewer people get to see it. Ultimately it's public. It's available to everyone. Very high-quality materials, but available to everyone.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And to make it a work of art.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. For me the fact that it's public, it's not Louis XIV and it's not only for a select group, as often art can be—

AVIS BERMAN: So you would define public art as access, as being the lynchpin of it?

VALERIE JAUDON: You know I'm not sure how I would even define public art because I'm not thinking about it in terms of a category. Get someone else to describe it. [They laugh.] —I only know what I will do in public.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, I think this is a good place to stop now. So thank you very much.

[END OF jaudon09_1of1_cd_track02.]

AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing Valerie Jaudon for the Archives of American Art GSA Oral History Project on December 22, 2009, in her studio in New York City.

And as I had said before, before we start talking about the public pieces, the architectural works again, I realize that I had not brought up the subject of titles in your work. And the reason I'm asking you is that they seem to be purposeful, or have purposeful groupings. And between about 1982 and 1985, it all seemed to be named after towns in Mississippi. Or most of them. Is that correct?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was from the very beginning, 1973, when I realized it was going to be a development. I could see it coming. I was working very fast, and I really needed titles. It didn't mean that much to me but I didn't want a number. So I started naming them after towns in Mississippi. Other artists were naming things after towns in Europe or China. I can actually hang onto [these because I'll know what they were –VJ]. It'll be funny if I name something, say, *Indianola*, which is near my grandmother's house. I'll know, and nobody else will. It's funny to name a 13-foot painting after an extremely modest town with only a post office at the service station. I did that consistently. I think my mother found out about it in the '70s.

My mother was sort of archivist for the Levee Board [Mississippi Levee Board, secretary/treasurer –VJ]. And she loved the idea of these towns in Mississippi. She got me some very early Mississippi [maps with names –VJ] that were long gone, the towns that had disappeared from the 19th century. She was in on it with me. She would supply me with maps. I had a great quantity of titles. When she died in 1984, I just stopped it. I thought, well, it was only amusing her, and my work is changing so much, and I hadn't thought about it before. I wanted to come up with a different system.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, the next ones were sort of a group of all one-syllable words. Like *Prime* and *Place* and *Zone* and *Cut*.

VALERIE JAUDON: I had liked what Richard Serra did with his titles, which were verbs and nouns, and sort of simple activities. I did that until my work changed materials and processes in 1993. It was wild for me. I named them after movie titles.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly.

VALERIE JAUDON: And movie titles I had never seen. I liked the little phrase: *Now and Forever*, or things like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's what I was going to ask you, why these movies. I mean some of them like, oh, *Run Silent, Run Deep* and *Gentlemen's Agreement* and things like that. But ones you hadn't seen. was that—

VALERIE JAUDON: Ones I could have seen, but I couldn't remember them. Or I hadn't seen.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: And if I named a painting after one and found it on Netflix , I would make a point of going to see it. But it was usually after I had done it. I just liked the way it sounded. And the older titles really—from the '30s and the '40s, the beginning of movies—were much more interesting to me. I didn't want it to sound like a movie. I wouldn't want it to be a 1980's movie, or '70s movie. I wouldn't go that far.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes. So I guess I should just jump back to the '70s there. So your mother sounds as if she was reconciled to your career?

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. [I had grown up. –VJ] And we were all friends. We were all friends and family. So she was reconciled to it. After she died I found—I don't think she was that interested. I would send her things occasionally. But when she died and I went through all of her stuff—she died in '84—she'd saved everything. She had ordered things. She had ordered copies of *Artforum*. They don't sell *Artforum* in Mississippi. I'd have a review or [something, and –VJ] she'd have the magazine. I couldn't believe it. It was interesting.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. And I guess she hadn't told you how much she was following you.

VALERIE JAUDON: No. She wouldn't do that, no. [They laugh.] No, she didn't really approve of me going away in the first place.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. But as you say, you were grown up. You even got married. She probably was—there was that, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. We didn't have a real wedding. We just went to the justice of the peace at the Municipal Building. Both Richard's family and my family were horrified that we didn't have a big wedding. Just horrified. So now when young people are getting married, I tell them, it is not for you; it is for your families.

AVIS BERMAN: Back in the '70s nobody did that anyway.

VALERIE JAUDON: Nobody did that.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean my advice to everyone, which is never followed, is elope.

VALERIE JAUDON: That's essentially what we did then, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. And now I want to move on to the—Is there anything else that we should say? Certainly, by the way, I can see when doing the public projects, that the titles are more literal or more related to what's going on. And I assume because you need some sort of key to accessibility for what happens?

VALERIE JAUDON: I have to be able to remember which one, and they have to be filed, and they all have numbers —because titles don't have anything to do with the paintings.

AVIS BERMAN: Did you resent having to have titles on paintings?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. It turns out to be a little more psychological. I realized probably 15 years later, the first five paintings or watercolors were [the towns in Mississippi –VJ] on the path from my home in Greenville to my grandmother's house. We would go through these little five towns. And you say things don't mean anything, but they do. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Things are sometimes more documentary and more autobiographical than you—

VALERIE JAUDON: Than you really even like to be, yes. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, sometimes this is true, the meaning of things becomes clear later on.

VALERIE JAUDON: It does. It's so much easier to look back.

AVIS BERMAN: And see it, right. Well, just for example, for the Equitable Building, we talked about the ceramic mural that you did last week, and it's called *Free Style*, which is perfect because it's a swimming pool. That's what I meant, a little more related to—

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: —the subject at hand. So maybe we should—What I want to discuss in particular are the next two murals, and maybe we can discuss them together. One is called *Pilot* for the City Hall in Atlanta, Georgia [1989]. And the other is—it sounds like a private commission—*Eastern Standard* for the Rudin Building [1991], and they were both wall murals or paintings. And what I'd like to know is, in this case, how were you differentiating between your easel painting and what a mural was—if you were then?

VALERIE JAUDON: Both of these were actually paintings. But they were the size of a wall. There is a difference for me in the commissioned work. Well, not so much in the paintings. The paintings are the paintings, and they're usually the painting that is next. It's just a different size. In terms of changing it or doing it or giving people a lot of choice, there's not much choice there. It really is the next painting. Sometimes when you get the opportunity, which I love to do, of a really large painting, you can do things that are much more complicated and much more fun. But paintings are paintings for me. That's the really independent work.

AVIS BERMAN: Because when I think of a mural versus an easel painting, I think of it as something that is made for a specific space and harmonizes with the space.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. It does. Well, the thing is, when people come to me for, say, as you would do for a *Pilot* or an *Eastern Standard*, these are paintings that are going to cover an entire wall. One was for I think the courthouse in Atlanta.

AVIS BERMAN: City Hall?

VALERIE JAUDON: City Hall, right. And it had a specific [space with –VJ] so many square feet. It was a question of

putting two squares together. It had to be squares because that's what I was working on. I put two squares together, two eight-by-eights I think. And it came up to 16 feet, eight by 16 feet. They had sent me a lot of samples of the materials around. Luckily they were all kind of grays and blacks, and there was nothing that was going to really interfere. So I did my [regular red; maybe three reds, that I had done in earlier work –VJ]. So there was no color consideration. And the same thing with *Eastern Standard*. This was a very tall [painting, either –VJ] 12 or 13 feet. I had to paint it on its side—out at East Hampton because I have 14-foot ceilings out there. It took up an entire, huge wall. And the glow from the painting, because it was red, turned everything in the house pink. There was a pink light over 3,000 square feet because it was a gigantic wall. So it was the next painting. It was so gigantic it was like building —When they put it together, and they took it apart and they rolled it up for the installation, it was like building a house. It's like having a house within a house. A huge project. That one was definitely more architectural. But again, that was the next painting.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] So you feel that this was the next step in the development in your work on these?

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. I had a real chance to really explore and blow it up. I love to do that.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right. Well, in terms of—how did the Atlantic commission come about, the City Hall?

VALERIE JAUDON: Someone on the panel who was an artist [thought the site –VJ] needed a— a large painting. It was an artist I didn't know very well. I can't remember her now. I think she was a sculptor. And she recommended me because she knew I could do large paintings. She also knew that I would understand the architectural problems that go along with these commissions. I wouldn't be horrified by the square footage that they need. They liked the work. We signed a contract, and I did a drawing—probably it was a watercolor or a gouache—that would show sort of what the painting was going to look like. They liked it, and I did it. It was very simple.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Were there any particular obstacles or challenges?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. It was easy. It was a very organized group of people. They did their homework. There are people who do their homework in these committees, and there are people that don't. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, what about conservation? Because it was going to be out in public, and I don't know if people—if it were hung low enough—if someone could come up and touch it. Or was there any kind of protection?

VALERIE JAUDON: This was going to be on a larger balcony overlooking the entranceway. So I think you could see it from below. You [could –VJ] go upstairs. They didn't have a problem with an oil painting. They said, We can control it. I think there were guards enough in the building, etc. So they went for that. I thought it was a little dangerous to have it out there. But evidently it's survived very well.

AVIS BERMAN: And have you seen it at all?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, not since it was installed. I really don't know what shape it's in. But I haven't heard anything. Sometimes people will call me if there's something wrong.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. I mean is there any special conservation for it?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. I'd say sort of dust it. Don't touch it. Don't wet it. Don't put anything on it. If there's any problem, call me. You know, [if –VJ] somebody spilled coffee on it or something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. And also, how about for *Eastern Standard*, what was memorable about that particular piece? Besides the opportunity of getting to make something that big—

VALERIE JAUDON: It was done for the Rudin Family, and they were extremely—they had a board that handles their art decisions. Extraordinarily professional. They did their homework. The board chose me. There were a number of people that had been [suggested by an art consultant, Randy Rosen, who had done the large feminist show –VJ] that traveled around for a while. [1989, *Making Their Mark: Women Artists Move into the Mainstream* –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: Randy Rosen.

VALERIE JAUDON: I think it's Randy Rosen. She's a very nice woman, and she had been the family's consultant for a very long time. It's a very large real estate—

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: They were extremely professional. They wanted [high quality treatment, care, and maintenance –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I guess that building is probably—it's probably close to here, right, if it's 1675 Broadway?

VALERIE JAUDON: It's about 52nd Street, 53rd. It's right next to a theater. Brand-new skyscraper.

AVIS BERMAN: And have you been in—Can you see it? Is it in the lobby? Can you see it there?

VALERIE JAUDON: You can see it. You can see it from across the street from the Kit Kat Club. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

VALERIE JAUDON: [Anybody can go in. –VJ] There are no guards right up front. So you can see it. The guards are more off to the side behind it.

AVIS BERMAN: Looking into the Kit Kat Club.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right [They Laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: And is there anything you would change about that or redo looking back on it?

VALERIE JAUDON: No —All of my paintings are very archival —

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And once more again, this isn't anything—you didn't compete. Again, you were asked to be. Did you have any sense of being a finalist or down to two or three people and you're one of them? Or did they just come to you and say we want you to do it?

VALERIE JAUDON: [No. We signed a contract, and I did three different watercolors. They had a board meeting –VJ]—they're very careful about what they want. They can hire people to do preliminary sketches for them. And they can then choose. It's a very orderly thing. We like this.

AVIS BERMAN: And of course this is in—the '80s and '90s was sort of the new blossoming of corporations wanting art and having art collections again. Do you find in your experience that the corporations are still out there or eager to have commissions, public commissions?

VALERIE JAUDON: Not really, no. I think that architects that are designing a lot of buildings or a lot of [interiors are –VJ] always trying to make the architecture take the place of any kind of art. Generally if there is something like a large painting that someone wants, it's because there's some kind of enlightened collector on the board. It's much easier to go along with the architect and put up a couple of marble pilasters or something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: And certainly in the '80s and '90s we have Postmodern architecture which was, you know, that Postmodern—That was the time when artists—it was kind of like a new Beaux Arts in which artists and architects, whether the architects wanted it or not, were working together. The developers or somebody was interested in it.

VALERIE JAUDON: There was a certain moment when [public art had –VJ] to do with the Percent for Art [law, where people actually had to spend a certain amount of money on their buildings –VJ]. It took architects by surprise. There was kind of a gap in there where artists got to do many more significant types of art installations. Because architects hadn't been used to doing them. Now you find architects [doing that –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Or it's also when the artist gets, at what stage the artist gets to interact is very important, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, again, it turns out to be the earlier the artist gets in there, the better it's going to be. There's no question about that. But the architect is always trying to delay that to the last moment. What they'd really like to do—and it's practical on their part; I understand—they'd like to say: Okay, we are now leaving the building. It's all done. We've finished our job. And let me introduce you to the art panel. [They laugh.] Now you can go put the art in.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, here's some frosting.

VALERIE JAUDON: Here's some frosting. We're not concerned with the art. We've done the architecture. We're finished with the building. That's the ideal for them.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Exactly. Now on these two paintings that you did, were the buildings both completed when you did the paintings, or—

VALERIE JAUDON: The one in the South, yes. I was not very familiar with it, and I didn't have to go before that particular program. I didn't have to talk to anybody. It was all done with slides and contracts and things like that. With the Rudin, I'm not quite sure what happened with the Rudin. It was simple. Basically it was so simple I can't remember, and that is very good.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, then let's go on to *Refraction*, which was for Staten Island College [1994, New York, New York]. And that was a ceramic wall mural. And I see that the architects were your old friends.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, they were my old friends, and they were doing a laboratory science building. There was a Percent for Art requirement. I was willing to work with them to do the building. It's a beautiful building, but it's not an office building; it's a lab building. They have a beautiful stairway coming up in there. There was a narrow sort of spot for a permanent, material, wall, essentially. Because I know them well, we were really able to figure this out [quickly—the best spot, the best material –VJ]. And I used the same people [to fabricate who had done the Equitable –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Mayer of Munich?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, I don't think I did use Mayer of Munich. —I used the same people who made the original tiles, but I had them cut in the United States because it was a smaller thing. And we cut [it by water jet –VJ]. It was brand new at the time. I found someone in Pennsylvania who was very happy to use his water jet. It was a very, very small company. I basically put that one together myself.

AVIS BERMAN: And what did this piece look like, this mural, look like?

VALERIE JAUDON: I have a picture here.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, good.

VALERIE JAUDON: Here. It's a very large checkerboard. [15-by-15-foot—a combination color chart and checkerboard –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And kind of gestural lines I would say, kind of figurative, gestural lines.

VALERIE JAUDON: They're really figures.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, they are.

VALERIE JAUDON: Blown up and placed on top sort of a color chart and a checkerboard.

AVIS BERMAN: So it was commissioned in '92 and completed in '94, right. So in this case you probably were—you were brought in from the beginning here.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes I was brought in from the beginning because I knew the architects very well. We communicated so easily about measurements and everything. In fact I told them— I don't want to have to deal with a Percent for Art panel. We will work together, and I'll do a beautiful [piece –VJ] for you. But you have to go to those meetings, not me. They had to work that deal out, [and I –VJ] didn't have to go before these boards. I just dealt with them. [It is –VJ] a total dream when you're dealing with people who insist on high quality for their own work.

AVIS BERMAN: So I was going to ask you who from the college, if anyone, had to give an okay to this?

VALERIE JAUDON: [The board. –VJ] Yes, I think they went through [Percent for Art –VJ]. My slides were up there like everybody else's. Yes. But I had been asked to do it. This is always best because they know what they're getting.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. And in terms of the space considerations, was that easy enough? I mean because, you know, you must have—Or were there difficulties in handling that?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was simply a matter of working on the plans. And the architects were very good about the plans. I had to fit a square into a space. The idea is to take up as much space as I could, going from wall to wall. That's one of the bigger decisions, and it was a matter of blowing up drawings for paintings that I was working on at the same time. This just went quite easily. It was not a problem.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. So this was, as you say, within the development of your work at the moment, in other words. And did it lead to anything else in terms of that—

VALERIE JAUDON: I think, again, it was this experience of seeing all these tiles in piles on the floor. These

gorgeously-colored, real physical tiles on the floor. It was giving me the idea, definitely, that I could take these paintings apart. And these did lead to drawings that I did. In fact, it was a tremendous instigator of changing the paintings. I had been trying for years to in some way—The paintings had always been held [together by an –VJ] incised line of raw canvas which made a net, a grid-like, triple grid net over the whole thing. And that grid always [held –VJ] the paintings together. As you can sort of imagine, you're looking through almost like a window with—

AVIS BERMAN: A casement window.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. A casement window, exactly. It was much more complicated because it had curves. But the net was holding it together, and I had been trying to years to break the net.. It was not breaking the grid; it was breaking the net to let these pieces stand on their own and breathe.

AVIS BERMAN: And go out in different directions.

VALERIE JAUDON: And go out in different directions. So when I finished this, and I think several things had happened at the gallery; Sidney Janis had died. It was going into new transition. And no one was paying any attention to whatever I was doing at the moment. I could do absolutely anything I wanted to. I had a loft on Broadway, and I turned it into [an experimental drawing project –VJ]. I was going to use these tracing paper—You remember the drawings that I showed you that were laying on the floor?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: The tracing paper. If you could imagine, [I cut –VJ] these pieces out, very much like the tiles. I had all kinds of paper and pigment. I would cut them out of cardboard and use them as [stencils with dry pigment –VJ]. I trashed the loft. I moved after that. [They laugh.] [With –VJ] all these pigments and I was having to wear a mask. But I was able to, in this whole thing—[break the net –VJ]. And to make these things independent. I did these drawings with all this dry [pigment, rubbing –VJ] it and sanding it into the paper, and then spraying it with fixative. As I was doing that, I think I bumped [into Marcia Hafif, a Minimalist painter –VJ]. And, you know, she's terrific. We had this discussion; because all these artists were using Alkyd paint which she and I both agreed was an incredible invention in terms of transparency and putting one layer on top of each other. You put a layer down one day. 24 hours later you can do things on top of it. The next day you can come in and do things on top of that, and it doesn't dissolve it underneath. You can mix oil into this medium. You have this total transparency and nothing dissolves. The problem with acrylic—you can do this with acrylic, but it's not as transparent, and there are only 16 pigments basically. Acrylic's very limited. And it doesn't have the effect. But this was like oil painting, transparent, transparent, transparent. And something else I had never tried.

AVIS BERMAN: It's almost like glazes, I guess.

VALERIE JAUDON: But these are permanent glazes. You wait until a turpentine glaze on an oil [painting –VJ] is completely dry. You do something on top of it, and it dissolves it in a minute.

AVIS BERMAN: So when Richard came in you were talking about doing the drawing project and breaking the net?

VALERIE JAUDON: I did that in the drawings. It was spontaneous, very freeing up, I have to say. At the same time, I was starting on the story about Marcia Hafif and the Alkyds. I was realizing I'm at the stage where I'd like to really shuffle around all of the components. I've never really worked transparently other than say a few watercolors where I'm always dealing with actual paint. Everything [I do –VJ] is very architectural in a way. I thought, Well, this is a moment I have to experiment. So I got a bunch of the Alkyd paints. It was a miraculous material. I realized people were going to do much more with it. If you start off doing things like this, you can end up doing incredible things.

I did a great many experiments changing materials and process, because it forces you to do different things. So what eventually came out of that is that I—this Alkyd stuff, and Galkyd, which is its medium, you can put pigments in it like I was using pigments with the drawing. Marcia Hafif had given me the idea, that you can put pigments in just raw and it just solidifies beautifully. You can use real cobalt, real cadmiums so they're just floating. The color is more intense than anything else. Then layered on top of each other. It's [intense –VJ].

[I liked –VJ] to let the stuff do what it did best, and it poured best. It took a couple of years to get on my feet with this—I would pour essentially buckets of it, gallons of it, down the back of the painting. on a large easel, like an architectural easel that went from floor to ceiling. And then with sort of a trough, like for horses, underneath to catch it. I could reuse that material. It takes about four assistants to help you with a six-foot painting to keep turning it [over, pouring and adding the color and mixing up tons of color –VJ]. That was very exciting, but it would only pour. Once I had a great background, and poured in the other direction, and you could make a grid out of it. It just goes on and on and on. Then I would put these figures on top of it. So we're dealing with things that look like this.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: You can see it's kind of a pixilated photograph.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes. But you can see in the background—I wouldn't call it a drip—but you see a current?

VALERIE JAUDON: It's almost [a curtain –VJ]. Yes. It is like a current. You can make it look drippy if you wanted to. That was too signature looking. I thought I would make it be a bit more mysterious. It's all transparent. The color! I have been collecting old oil paints for a very long time. Fabulous colors they didn't make anymore with [cadmiums, etc. –VJ] I got to play with color. When everything was dry, I would [use a stencil, similar to the tiles –VJ]. You can see none of these are even touching each other.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. It's true.

VALERIE JAUDON: They're all floating on another field.

AVIS BERMAN: It makes it much more organic.

VALERIE JAUDON: [Somewhat organic-looking. It was a mental thing. –VJ] It enabled me to think about things as different components. And how you can take the components and shift them all around. Not only the physical components. But the different factors, materials, the process, everything.

AVIS BERMAN: What am I looking at? It almost looks like—what are there, two doors here or something?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, [it's a large symmetrical painting. A nine-foot painting. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: Right. It really does have a curtain quality to it. I can see that, especially if you look deeper.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, the front [has black figures –VJ]. I made that for a show in Denmark. They had a very nice curator; I liked her very much. So I did [a painting –VJ] that could fold.

AVIS BERMAN: I see. And so this all—this came out of working on the commission for Staten Island? It was during this time of turmoil?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was during this time. It was definitely about process, again, because I was much closer to the actual water jet cutting of these [tiles –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, also, as you say, you could work this way a little bit more quietly because Sidney Janis had died, and the gallery was changing.

VALERIE JAUDON: They were busy. They had their hands full.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. But the brothers eventually sued each other, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, they did.

AVIS BERMAN: And so there was no way for the gallery just to keep going, I guess.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, they made a decision. Particularly when they got into a lawsuit. They found a Mondrian in the [mid-'90s, in the back . –VJ] They were trying to figure out what they had. They really had their hands full. And Conrad was in Los Angeles. He wanted to make movies. He didn't want to have to deal with the gallery.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: I think Carroll in the end decided that it was a 20th-century gallery and the best thing to do was just to calmly close it up at the end of the 20th century. Because they had a great history and a great—I'm not sure who they gave their archives to.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I don't know. They weren't giving it to anyone. They wanted to sell them, because I tried many times on behalf of the Archives of American Art. I'm sure they offered them to the Getty; maybe MoMA bought them eventually. Because those were never going to be given anywhere. Those were going to be sold. Unless you think you could, you know, get a tremendous tax deduction for giving them. And that interested him a little bit. Money interested him more.

VALERIE JAUDON: The tax deduction would, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: But that still wasn't as good as getting actual money for it. Because the Archives of American Art does not buy.

VALERIE JAUDON: But Sidney had this room upstairs that nobody got to see. And this is where the archives were. His scrapbooks and stuff like this. And he was the organizer. He had put all that stuff together. They were essentially his scrapbooks. And they belonged to the gallery; in a way they weren't the children's. Do you know what I mean?

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: [Sidney had put the gallery –VJ] together with his wife, Harriet.

AVIS BERMAN: Harriet, yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: Once they let me go up there. No one was there, and they let me go up there and just poke around and see it. Incredible scrapbooks going back to the '40s. Just fabulous! Just stuck in there with glue, every time there was a show or review or whatever. It was all organized around Sidney and the gallery. Wasn't a question of the artists or promoting the artists. They had the black books for the artists; that's where all the stuff was kept in a very orderly way.

AVIS BERMAN: It must have been—

VALERIE JAUDON: It was fabulous, just fabulous! To look at. You would've loved it, Avis, I have to tell you.

AVIS BERMAN: And I'm sure he had all these letters, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I didn't go through the letters. I didn't really get into that stuff. But it was all up there. It was a whole [room, not –VJ] quite as big as this one. Just stacked from floor to ceiling. I was looking at a couple of big scrapbooks that were just out on the table, just loosely put together. Just phenomenal! You would have loved it!

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Every newspaper article. Everything. Amazing.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, whatever happened to them, the children knew at least its monetary value. So nothing would have been thrown away.

VALERIE JAUDON: No. It all would have just been put in a big box—boxes. They didn't even sort it. The sorting would have taken—and who would have done that? I was working with Louise Deutschman.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes! Yes, Louise.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, she recently died.

AVIS BERMAN: I saw that in the paper.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: She had an interesting life, a lot more than—

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, she was fabulous. She really was. Sidney had her working on his memoirs, although he didn't really want memoirs. He knew he had to do something. But she didn't even want to go up there and organize. She said, "How am I going to organize this stuff?" It would have taken—it would've had to have been your life.

AVIS BERMAN: Louise, of course, wanted the archives—those archives—for the Archives of American Art. But she did, she was really nice. She sent, when I was there, a whole bunch of like a complete, a very complete catalog collection. So that was nice. But not the same as the scrapbooks. But that was as far as we got.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. Yes. I don't know where they are. I think they sold them.

AVIS BERMAN: I'm sure they sold them because they were fighting over those, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: The kids just loved to fight. That's how the whole family holds together. That's how some families work.

AVIS BERMAN: Anyway. But now in terms of you as an artist, about having no gallery, what was—

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, it wasn't no gallery. They were [just busy –VJ]. This was really experimenting. And if they came in and saw those drawings, they'd say, Well, Valerie, aren't you working on your next show? I mean they

may have said something at this point. But they were busy. And I thought, it's now or never. I'm really going to just experiment wildly. And I want to see if I can break this net. Give myself a couple of years of really free development time. It was extremely worthwhile. They paid attention very quickly after that. But—[They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I guess when they decided to close the gallery, was that worrisome to you?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, it was sad. It was not a good thing. But I realized they were fighting so much. And personally they weren't going to be happy, you know. Carroll wasn't going to be happy. It was ruining his life frankly, all this [fighting with the brother –VJ]. It had reached a point where it was just not fun anymore. I can't remember when George Segal died. But that was about the last straw. Because George was holding everything together in a way.

AVIS BERMAN: Would that be late '90s or 2000, around then?

VALERIE JAUDON: I think it was [late-'90s, 2000 –VJ]. He and Carroll had been extremely close. I was close with him, too.

AVIS BERMAN: With George Segal?

VALERIE JAUDON: With George Segal. Right, there was only George Segal and [Tom] Wesselmann and [myself –VJ], you know, Wesselmann was very upset. I think they both were. When Sidney died, they were very worried and very upset. And their being upset, upset me.

AVIS BERMAN: What was George Segal like?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, what a fabulous man. Oh, what a great man. Just big heart, really serious artist, real craftsman. He did one of those plaster things of me.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh!

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. I went out there to the chicken house, and he gave me his son's T-shirt. I put the T-shirt on, and he covered me with all of this stuff. [Laughs.] It was a little claustrophobic. And we traded basically. I gave him a big painting, and he gave me a plaster sculpture. It's on a board, sort of a piece of door. It's great.

AVIS BERMAN: Now when he was doing you, were you in a scene? Or was it just an individual piece?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was just a head thing, from head to shoulder, like this. And it's on a door; it's just hanging on a door. I was there with my eyes closed because all this stuff goes on you, and I was all Vaseline-d up. I had it in my hair plastered down.

AVIS BERMAN: How did you breathe?

VALERIE JAUDON: There were little straws. [He put the wet plaster on, and took –VJ] the straws out as soon as he finished my nose. Helen [Segal] was sitting there saying, "You know it's okay. Be calm. I do this all the time." So we had kind of a long lunch. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Following my immersion.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. He was a wonderful man. And they were very down-to-earth. And he was very passionate about art. Had started out as an Abstract Expressionist. I remember one evening—We had to go to these dinners all the time. After everybody had a show . [Laughs.] We would see each other at the dinners. Sidney would take us all out. We had this huge discussion about Abstract Expressionism and how they made the break from Abstract Expressionism to the work that they were doing, which was considered pop-ish, at the time. They were very, very passionate about it. There was a hatred of this kind of signature gesture. How awful this was. And how you were expected to do this.

AVIS BERMAN: They being Tom Wesselmann and then George Segal?

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. Yes. They had a rant about it. I was totally sympathetic because I had always hated the signature brushstroke business. And he said, "What's the point of doing this?" And Wesselmann would say, "What's the point of doing this big gesture thing? It's never even looked good. It never worked out." And George would say, "Yes, I could never do it very well either. It didn't make any sense to me. Really why I had to do this, you know. And it was such a relief to finally find something that I could really do." They talked about how they finally got to do what they really wanted to do. And Sidney really paid them attention.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I'm not sure about Wesselmann, but I think George first showed them in '62 or '63 at the latest. Because Sidney Janis had this new realist show.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. That was the big show that broke the back. Oh, yes, that was notorious.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, and of course George Segal had been a graduate student at Rutgers. And [Allan] Kaprow had done Abstract Expressionism.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And George—And so—

VALERIE JAUDON: I had a big discussion with Kaprow when I met him in Los Angeles about the George Segal thing, about the Abstract Expressionists. And he had the same thing. [Kaprow is –VJ] a very conceptual, beautiful man. Beautiful calm, lovely man. For all those crazy performance things. Just really—what a gentleman, what a scholar. Same discussion about the Abstract Expressionists. He really hated them.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I think they—It became—It was alien to their sensibility. I mean I think it must have started because they loved what other people were doing. I mean I don't know if they would have hated it from day one.

VALERIE JAUDON: I think they were so happy that they ended up all doing other, quite significant things. It was the only way to go, evidently, during the '50s. It was just—that's what you were doing or you weren't authentic.

AVIS BERMAN: So was Roy Lichtenstein. He said, you know—Roy was such a planner. He could be abstract, but to be an expressionist was very difficult for him.

VALERIE JAUDON: Difficult. Same kind of difficulty.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean he would do it, but it wasn't really—

VALERIE JAUDON: He didn't think like that.

AVIS BERMAN: No.

VALERIE JAUDON: He was much more about planning everything and working it through and developing it, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly. So this was—And certainly abstracting certain things. But, you know, he would do—he would take a towel and wrap it around his arm, and then he would dip it into the paint, and he would make this swath that way with the arm motion, but with a towel or cloth wrapped around his arm.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. Yes, yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So he was trying all these various things, you know, trying to make it work, etc. And some of them were quite attractive. But he destroyed a lot of them. I mean attractiveness wasn't the issue. He just felt it wasn't, you know, making a difference.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. Exactly. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: That's interesting because George Segal always thought of himself as a Modernist, of course, a classic Modernist, I would say.

VALERIE JAUDON: He did.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean I think that's what he felt.

VALERIE JAUDON: I don't think he really thought about it in terms of being a Modernist so much.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, as Modern.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, he knew he was a very, very Modern artist. Very contemporary artist. He knew he was a very advanced artist. But he felt what he was doing had the same authenticity that Abstract Expressionism did. He was working out of previous art : He had a show when I was there of still-life things. He was doing Cézannes, you know. I loved this. This was so fabulous. And he took those wonderful photographs of them, and we had a great discussion about Cézanne.

AVIS BERMAN: What more classic Modernist could there be than Cézanne or—

VALERIE JAUDON: Exactly. They were beautiful, real-life casts of apples and oranges on a still-life. So we had great discussions about art. Even though he was generations older than I was, I felt very simpatico. They thought of me as the young kid. But they respected me; they did. So that felt good.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: [Once –VJ] Lichtenstein told me—I think Richard [Kalina] introduced me—and he said, "Well, of course I know who you are and love your work." I tell you I could not—my feet were not touching the ground [They laugh.] for days after that.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you must have met Roy Lichtenstein first when he [Richard Kalina] was assisting him.

VALERIE JAUDON: He had just quit Lichtenstein, and I met Richard right after that.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, okay.

VALERIE JAUDON: But I met him several times after that just around, but briefly.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: And then many years later, and that would be in the early '70s when he had his other wife. Still had the other wife.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, Isabel [Wilson].

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, when was this?

MS. BERMAN: Well, Roy and Dorothy got married in '68. But he had—

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, okay. So Dorothy was there.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes, Dorothy was there. But the first wife didn't die until 1980, and Roy was taking care of her because she was ill and had all kinds of issues.

MS. JAUDON: There was some talk about the other wife. We ran into him in the early '70s. This was in somewhere in the '90s he said that. And I was just—I couldn't believe. I was really unapproachable for several days. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also, I don't know when you started going out to the Hamptons, but did you use to see them out there?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, they lived in Southampton. We lived out in [Springs, across the street from Willem de Kooning –VJ]. I mean he was across the street.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. That was like God living next door.

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, his dog, when he had moved—in the back of us. First he lived in the front. Then he moved into the back. And the dog—our house was on a pathway between his house and Joan Ward's [house, on Accabonac Road –VJ]. I mentioned this before—Martin Craig, we had bought the house from his family after he died, he had given Martin Craig a painting to sell to build the house originally. My studio is that original studio that de Kooning's painting bought. I was able to tell him that before he got Alzheimer's. He was at Martin's funeral in 1980.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Since you knew George Segal so well, I just thought I'd ask about it.

VALERIE JAUDON: George Segal was a wonderful man. Helen is great, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes. And Rena, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: And Rena, absolutely.

AVIS BERMAN: The whole family is like three mensches.

VALERIE JAUDON: Three mensches, absolutely. Absolutely. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, anyway, we should probably go on to—Now, we mentioned this a little bit the last time, which was the *Blue Pools Courtyard* [1993], which you had mentioned, the Birmingham Museum of Art. And I think that was your first garden. Is that correct?

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: So you had, I think, you had discussed that about the trio of three Southern ladies. Well, we

certainly can discuss it a little bit more if there was anything else that you feel it related to your painting or what you were—You know if anything came out of that in terms of—

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, [it's again working on these different layers. The planting formed a layer on top of the pools, running water, and the complicated brickwork. –VJ] It was all layered [and floating –VJ] in a very abstract way. It was fabulous to work on. Gardens, oh!

AVIS BERMAN: Did you have to have a gardening consultant? Just assuming that you were a neophyte in using—

VALERIE JAUDON: You know in a lot of these projects, I'm brought in when there's trouble, and things have been tried already. That's why people have done their research when they finally get to me. There had been a number of people that they had thought about for working on this garden. The problem ultimately was Edward Larrabee Barnes who was doing the building; he did a beautiful job—wanted to do the garden as well. His idea was to basically cut it down and keep it very minimal. He wanted to cut those old trees down. They were probably going to die within the next 20 years anyway. They were really scruffy oaks. But they were in a grid format there, and had originally been planted by the garden club. I had known, when asked to go down there, that he basically wanted to level the thing. He basically wanted the building to look good in photographs. You know how they work.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. No garden. Let's make it architect-y.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. It would be okay if I did some [paving –VJ]. But I saw those trees, and that shade—I know what this means. I was born, you know, a couple hundred miles away. So I know exactly what the heat is down there. Those trees were fabulous. Okay, they were scruffy. They were not landscape architect material. But I saw they were fabulous, and the garden club did not want to give them up. And the garden club members were on the board of the museum as well, they'd really built the thing. They'd been right there supporting it forever. Something had to give. They had to give up their garden, but they didn't want to give up the trees; they were fighting for the trees. That's when I was brought in.

[I could see by lunch the first day –VJ], this was going to be a huge fight. And I loved those trees, and I could see a grid going between the center of the garden to Larrabee Barnes's door. And I knew exactly what I had to [do –VJ]. It was a perfectly posed space, beautiful courtyard. It was all set up to be a courtyard without cutting any of the trees down. I had a meeting with the president of the garden club. She had just designed the botanical gardens for Birmingham. But horticulturally-minded, not design-minded. So she knew about the plants, and I knew how to make it a great public space. I could just see it right there. I said, "[We can work together if you promise to take care of the garden forever, have the garden club ladies or a contractor do it –VJ]." [She said –VJ], "We built it, don't you understand? We're not going to let it go. Of course we're going to take care of it."

I said, "[We can design and put in the kind of plants that are going to be best, local and whatever. If we –VJ] can work together on this, we can turn this into a work of art. What it means, when we turn this into a work of art, is that it doesn't get changed. When things die you have to promise to plant what was there or a good substitute. That's the deal. Then it becomes art, and nobody can change it." I said, "If you just do it or you get the landscape architect to do it, it's not a work of art. It's just a job that anybody can go in and change." I said, "We are going to do a collaboration, and it's going to be a work of art." She didn't really believe me. But she said, "Let's do it."

She was absolutely invaluable, giving me books, teaching me about the plants, telling me what we could do, what we should do. We should have the boxwoods because they come from Mrs. So-and-so's [garden –VJ]. She's giving them to [the museum –VJ] . These are 900-year-old boxwoods. And I said, "Fabulous!" I love boxwoods. We had a couple of little fights —She liked pachysandra; I hate it. I love English ivy. She thinks it's too big. She liked tinier things. And I like big English ivy. I wanted it to grow up the trees. No, not good for the trees. Okay. So we had to compromise on things like this. But I got to place everything, and I did it. It was a fabulous collaboration.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right. Well, and how did they feel about the brick and the stone and the pools and the rest?

VALERIE JAUDON: Loved it! Everybody's pleased with different aspects of it. The garden club was happy that I was keeping just a small paved area, which is the center of attention really.

AVIS BERMAN: And how did Edward Larrabee Barnes feel about how this project turned out?

VALERIE JAUDON: He was a little upset about it. He didn't like leaving the trees. He was a little upset. But it worked out because he's a very practical man. And he understood that it was going to highlight his building quite well: You come out of the entrance, you walk around the pools, pedestrians go right around. We agreed on all [circulation paths –VJ]. We agreed on all the materials and everything. [Those trees were a little upsetting to

him. But then, he's practical. This was what the board wanted, that's what the board got. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: And did everyone in the end feel that this was an effective or successful project?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. Extraordinarily successful. In fact the Mississippi Museum in Jackson would like one just exactly like it. In the South it's very successful. They really use it. They have lots of parties out there. It's meant for kids to sit around the pool.

AVIS BERMAN: And because there's shade there.

VALERIE JAUDON: [It has shade, so they have –VJ] a lot of educational classes. They use it. It's heavy use. It's a beautiful sort of patio to the Edward Larrabee Barnes building. It's a really nice accompaniment.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it sounds like you did some educating, too. Because, as you know, most people don't think that art is necessary. And this is what public art's supposed to do, is show that it can make a difference in a place.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. Well, it really did. [It looks great –VJ] even from the museum's windows. It's [an –VJ] incredible garden.

AVIS BERMAN: And they've kept their promise to keep it up?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, incredible maintenance! It's totally private. You know you have to go to the museum to [go in –VJ]. It's not open to the real public. It's public if you pay your museum fee to get in. It's highly protected.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. So it's within the museum grounds. It's not just, say, in the front yard or the entryway or before you get in.

VALERIE JAUDON: The building [surrounds the entire –VJ] sculpture garden that goes down farther. It covers three sides, and then there's a very strong wall.

AVIS BERMAN: So—I'm not saying it's like it. But it looks like MoMA's sculpture garden.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's like MoMA's sculpture garden.

AVIS BERMAN: It's completely protected.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, completely protected. This was ideal. I could have the most luxurious materials, and [beautiful tiles under flowing water –VJ]. I worked with an engineer on the watering. It's about two inches deep, and it flows through quickly over the tiles all the time.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that sounds good. Now, I'm going to move on to the *Solstice* [1996], which is in Washington National Airport. And was that a Percent for Art Program?

VALERIE JAUDON: I don't know. In fact my lawyer did not even know who we were signing the contract with. But the architect was Cesar Pelli.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: And they came to me—talk about doing your homework. They were incredible. They came to see me first, and we had a meeting at Sidney Janis. They had a mockup of the airport interior, and they wanted me to do the windows that Jennifer Bartlett and Al Held eventually did. They had the Equitable [tile mural photo –VJ]; they had minimized it and put it in the plans of the building to show me how it would look. I was surprised. But I thought, gee they really have done their homework here. I didn't want to do the windows because it was only 24 inches high. It would've been interesting to work with stained glass. But I couldn't make a difference [in the building –VJ].

I said, "Show me a different spot." And they said, "Oh, yes, we have 14 artists, so what would you like to do?" And then I found out [Pelli uses fabulous materials –VJ], and they are in total control of those workmen, of all those contracts, of the contractors. Absolute control. It was so interesting, and I felt so confident that I could do this.

I said, I will teach myself how to do mosaics, and I'll work with the mosaic people. Other people were going to be using terrazzo—I don't do terrazzo. And I thought, we get Mayer of Munich. And they said, "We've got Mayer of Munich, and we've got two other people we are looking at already." Working with real professionals who have real control over the materials, you know it's going to turn out well.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, did Cesar Pelli try to control you?

VALERIE JAUDON: He had a lot of people working with him, and he did not care—it's not that he didn't care how the work came out. Basically I was going to do two drawings if necessary. It all worked out. All of the artists that he picked, everybody was so totally professional, he was pretty much going to have to take what was there. You don't tell [artists –VJ] like that what to do. You just don't do it. I was in a great crowd of people. I wanted to do something really good. So it was one of these medallions. It's a medallion that's up there with Frank Stella and Sol LeWitt. It was an incredible crowd of people. And we got to do our own thing. It was going to be permanent and surrounded with great material, almost like a frame. I thought it would really [work, standing on its own, having a lot of integrity –VJ]. An autonomous work of art. This was about the closest thing to a painting I could do.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And you had done, you had a little preparation, not in the material, but the idea when you made *Reunion* [1989], I guess. Or would you say—would you disagree?

VALERIE JAUDON: I had the experience of walking across *Reunion* and seeing how those floor things worked. If you're standing on top of one of these things, with fabulous material, you really get a real sense of the material. You don't even need to stand back and look at it like a picture. You're simply walking through a maze of order and symmetry and these wonderful materials. It's a great experience to stand on top of one. [You're going to have to walk right over this one –VJ] to get to your plane. Which was absolutely perfect for me. People could just walk right through the painting essentially.

AVIS BERMAN: Was it difficult to learn mosaic?

VALERIE JAUDON: I was working with [people trained in Italy –VJ]; it was [Stephen] Miotto . They're all trained at the same place in Italy. Incredible! Miotto is just fantastic. He basically taught me how it goes together with the three or four different sizes. The way the color works. The way the stone works. What was available. He had to teach me, but that's what he does. He teaches people. Then he puts it together. I have final approval over every square inch. We make a model [first, together in my studio—moving stones around on the floor. A four-by-four sample case. –VJ] The whole thing has to look, has to have the same quality, as the four-by-four sample. You can't go wrong with this. Because if it's not consistent all the way through, they have to redo it. It's quite simple.

AVIS BERMAN: And did this stay on deadline and on budget?

VALERIE JAUDON: I'm not quite sure what the materials cost in this one. Cesar Pelli just runs a very, very tight ship. And they did an excellent job. It seemed to go pretty fast actually for what it was.

AVIS BERMAN: Were there special challenges or difficulties in this for you?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, it's interesting working with someone as professional as Cesar Pelli, who was trying to work with all of these very famous artists and pull all of this together. And keep everything in very high quality. Even artists that didn't care about the quality so much were going to be forced into a materials situation that enforced quality . It was extremely interesting watching how organized they really were.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I'm not asking you to name names. But it seems hard to believe that there would be an artist who wouldn't be interested in high quality materials for his or her work because it would look—to keep it lasting and in the shape that it was.

VALERIE JAUDON: It happens.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean I'm not talking about something that might be an installation. But the kind of work we're talking about that, you know, something in a public building like this.

VALERIE JAUDON: [Often artists –VJ] don't think about the material aspect. They're thinking about their own work. Before, when Al Held was working on a GSA project. [It was a courthouse near Disneyland. –VJ] We went to see him in Italy and stayed with him for a couple of days in Italy with some friends of ours. And he was working on it. So I was able to help him. Not the idea or anything. But to explain how the stained glass was actually going to work —helping with some technical details. You know he's extremely conservative with technical details in his own paintings—to the extent that it's phenomenal. You wouldn't believe the surface of those paintings.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Because that's the craft in the surface of these.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, he has four assistants [help him –VJ]. And he in turn said I could use one of his [assistants that would do sanding if I had wanted to do it. We traded. I think I was able to help him a little bit. But he was well into the planning of it. He died before it was built. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: You learn it, and you move on.

AVIS BERMAN: And did that—did this particular piece have anything to do with, did it make changes in your painting? You know was this kind of in sync with what you were doing then?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was pretty much in sync with what I was doing. Mosaics actually are, once you understand the kind of system it has to go through and the scale [changes, it's rather simple –VJ]. I didn't learn too much from that one.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Well, then you did another floor which was in Germany in Frankfurt, Germany, called *Measure for Measure* [1999].

VALERIE JAUDON: *Measure for Measure*, yes. In this wonderful museum, the Städel Museum. I was working with the curator, Margret Stuffmann, who had been trying to get this floor built for almost 20 years. She had gotten in touch with me in the early '80s, I think, another commission for a bank, that Scott Burton and I were going to do. I went immediately to Mayer of Munich, [laughs] the experts. And they were very pleased to be working in the Städel Museum. This worked out extremely well. The interesting thing about this particular project was the room that it was in. It was an eight-sided room that had been built in the 19th century. It was an earlier architecture, which I really loved. It was like the McKim Mead & White; it's a different way of thinking about space and everything. There was a—it was a centered room, [with –VJ] a cupola above it that went to the second floor. Above the cupola was a glass window. So you had the light coming down from three stories up directly on the circle on the floor.

[I worked –VJ] with their measurements—I was working with centimeters for the first time—fabulous, fabulous. Every time I would divide a number into something to try to figure out something, it would come out like magic numbers. Everything was so beautifully—They were flipping, the numbers were flipping like these paintings were. Everything fit into everything. It just fit like magic. It was like a magic room. So that was a total pleasure.

AVIS BERMAN: Because the proportions obviously were perfect. Also to have the light coming down on the floor.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh!

AVIS BERMAN: Did you make an octagonal shape in your design, or was it a sort of—

VALERIE JAUDON: No, no, I did a straightforward circle.

AVIS BERMAN: Was it defined by the way the points of light were hitting?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, center of room.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Absolute center of room, which matched up entirely with the way the light was hitting. Once you get the numbers right, it goes together. The materials I used: The black stone was a local stone that was on the stairwell coming down. I got another local stone, a limestone, that was used on the walls of the building and was used on the floor. Then I got some very beautiful [gray and white marble from Italy that was very flamboyant –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: To surround the circle?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. It's made of different parts. If we can take a look at the circle, there are three different levels: the black, the limestone, and the gray—it has grains .

AVIS BERMAN: Veins?

VALERIE JAUDON: Veins, yes. Not grains. Yes, the veins go through it. [This is on a field of limestone, with black stairs, and black pilasters. –VJ] It's almost as if the floor is coming up out of the floor. It works almost in reverse of walking through a painting because it slightly comes up visually for you. It's very different—It would be almost impossible to see unless you go to the second [floor and –VJ] can see the whole thing. You're really walking through a large maze because it's 32 feet. It's huge.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: [The floor itself is an octagonal frame –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: And what is this room used for?

VALERIE JAUDON: It's the entrance to the museum. [Once in. you can go upstairs, to the right or the left wing – VJ] if you want to go to the Renaissance. Then you go to the cafeteria. They were renovating the whole building. A huge project.

AVIS BERMAN: So it's not as if it were a gallery space, and there would be paintings on the wall or anything. There's a desk or a reception area?

VALERIE JAUDON: There's really nothing there because it's not too much bigger than the 32-foot circle. Maybe it's a 50-by-50-foot configuration. [In photographs from –VJ] the 19th century they used to have two coat racks—literally that you'd hang your little coat on. And you could take off boots and put them under a little stool. It's a small entranceway.

AVIS BERMAN: And have you been back since the installation? Is it being—

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes later they gave me a—about a year later—a one-person show in the museum. [Featuring the floor. –VJ] They didn't have that much contemporary art. It only went up to Richard Serra. [They laugh.] I think they're trying to develop that contemporary collection. [They gave –VJ] me a little retrospective. It was very nice.

AVIS BERMAN: So you liked the way it was being used—so you saw it in use?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, absolutely. Yes. Children love it. They like to get lost in it. Maybe children are closer to the ground. Adults can walk across it and think it's the floor. But children are very close to it, so they want to play in it. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Well, it's also—this is something they can touch and walk on as opposed to something you—they don't have to exhibit conventional strict museum behavior there. So that's very helpful, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: That's right. This worked out extremely well. Because also this was a museum. They love good materials, fine workmanship. And all of the contracting people were on their very, very best behavior. Everyone is doing an excellent job for this very, very special old museum. It's my favorite thing.

AVIS BERMAN: And the budget was—you were accommodated, you and the materials you wanted?

VALERIE JAUDON: It was a contract arrangement where they gave me a set fee. I just came upon a figure, and I said, "Give me that. I'll take care of everything else, and you take care of the area there." So we made a deal. It was quite a simple deal. They would be responsible entirely for all fabrication, getting the people, the contractors, working on the museum. Coordinating with Mayer. Of course they wanted to use Mayer; he's the most famous, you know. They knew who he was! And they were so grateful that he could do it. And he was so happy to do it. They're all German. That was an extremely quality situation.

AVIS BERMAN: There are a lot of German museums and companies that are very hospitable to American artists making things over there. I mean Keith Sonnier did that beautiful Munich Airport installation. And Jenny Holzer's been over there. So they're very progressive there in terms of—

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. They have very high building codes and material codes. Much more so than the United States. So, you know, if they do a sidewalk, believe me, that's a sidewalk that's going to last a hundred years, not 20 years.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: So the city codes take care of it.

AVIS BERMAN: Now I want to get to the two GSA pieces. You were named in, I guess, it was 2002 as a Design Peer, which is an honor. And was that right after you did the first piece, *Portal South, Portal North* [**2002.** Federal Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida, GSA Art in Architecture Program], or was it—

VALERIE JAUDON: I think it was probably after that, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Because I didn't realize it came so soon after doing one piece.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, I think it was because Jennifer [Jennifer Gibson, Art in Architecture project director –VJ] and I would be tramping back and forth to Washington and New York [and Florida –VJ] for these meetings. We had a lot of conversations. At a certain point she asked me if I wanted to be a peer because she realized I could be helpful.

AVIS BERMAN: This is Jacksonville, Florida, which is the first commission.

VALERIE JAUDON: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: So I guess we should talk about—in mean in full—how you, you know, how you got involved with the General Services Administration. I mean clearly you were known to them and all.

VALERIE JAUDON: I had met Jennifer before when I was being considered for [another commission for a courthouse –VJ], the one near Disneyland that Al Held got.

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe that's Anaheim? Maybe not. But anyway in Southern California.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, not California, Florida.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, Disney World.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, Disney World.

AVIS BERMAN: So maybe Orlando or someplace like that.

VALERIE JAUDON: Somewhere around there, right. I got to know her, so she knew what I could do. She had come out to East Hampton while I was working on some large paintings there. And brought an architect with her. The architect had worked with Mitchell/Giurgola [Mitchell/Giurgola Architects (New York and Philadelphia offices) –VJ] before. So we had an architectural discussion with Jennifer. [And she knew –VJ] I could work in a difficult architectural situation. [The architect –VJ] was working with the building. They were trying to figure out what they [liked, and chose –VJ] a number of artists to work on the building. Then they asked us to make an initial site visit down there. It was just a [visit –VJ] to see if we had any ideas or any suggestions.

If I can meet with the architect and the architect shows me through, walks me through—I can tell them in the first hour what I'll do. There's no question. I don't usually change my mind unless it's extremely problematic for some reason. [In this building I realized right away that I wanted to use two sections of the lobby –VJ]. It's an extremely narrow—it's not even a lobby as such—because it has very high security. Some of the highest security after 2001.

AVIS BERMAN: 2002.

VALERIE JAUDON: 2002. That's when security was a huge thing.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: [Courthouses –VJ] were making huge changes to their security systems, and they were going to strengthen the walls so you couldn't blow it down. The area outside is something like a 50-foot glass wall, and it's only about ten feet wide all the way across the front. It's a glass façade, almost like an atrium, where you walk into the building. You have the first eight feet of façade, then you hit the high security. —with all kinds of machines, all kinds of walls . Oh, just huge security. So the area that I chose had no security essentially. I thought it was the best thing, right next to the windows. The drawback for a normal artist would be the fact that you couldn't get back very far. You'd have to go outside the building to see it in full. I very quickly decided that I wanted to do two [large paintings –VJ], one on either side, acting as a portal for the size of the building. So really this photograph doesn't—It was impossible to photograph.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, because you can't get back.

VALERIE JAUDON: You could stand outside, but then again you wouldn't see through the curtained-glass walls. So this didn't get photographed. But it really works on the site. It works very well on the site. I talked to the architects, the judge. a table full of people that were questioning me . I was able to tell them on the spot exactly what I wanted to do. The other people that had been up for the building it was going to take them a while to think about it, see what they wanted to do. But I already knew what I wanted to do. So I got my spot.

AVIS BERMAN: And now how about—Now what did the judge want, because I think, as I had told you, on these courthouses, the judges have enormous power. I mean did you feel that? I mean what was your—

VALERIE JAUDON: [The judge –VJ] had total power. It was incredible. He was like a god, yes. He was indeed.

AVIS BERMAN: Did he try to impose a vision of what he wanted in your spot?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, he didn't. He was just going to choose the best. It would be like going shopping for him. And if he didn't like what I did, he would stop it. It was quite that simple. He would let the GSA go through all of

their exhausting procedures and do whatever they had to do, their committees, but then he would have stopped it dead if he didn't like it. I could see that was the way it was going to go. I said, I'll do several [sketches –VJ]. And if it works out and he likes it, fine. And if [not –VJ], fine. We part friends. It was quite simple. I guess we saw eye to eye.

AVIS BERMAN: So he was able to accept this. And—

VALERIE JAUDON: This didn't seem to pose any problems for him.

AVIS BERMAN: And how about the architects? What was it like for you?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, the architects were the type that were out of the building already. [They laugh.] Yes, I think they were more engineers than architects. And they didn't have much sense of art, or didn't care about it at all. Let's put it that way.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, well, especially—

VALERIE JAUDON: I can't even remember their names, as a matter of fact. But they weren't involved really. They were just at that huge initial meeting just to tell me they were out of it and they would give me the plans. And good luck.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative] Right, right. And once you were selected, what was the GSA—where was the GSA in all of this? I mean were you alone negotiating from then on? Or were they working with you?

VALERIE JAUDON: Jennifer would talk with them, and they would all vote. You know it usually is a table of 30 people here. She would explain the situation to them. She'd give them their choices. And they would vote on it. She would guide them. She was expert in guiding them. Like, no. We wouldn't want to do this. It's not in good taste. And think about that a little more. It's not a good idea to have the judge's wife do this. She was very diplomatic about it. She was trying to get the best—She was trying to get famous artists for the government basically. That's what she was doing. She had a high mission—She took the high road, put it this way. Even the judges know she's taking the high road . They do mess around there, I guess they do. So they'd vote on me. Then they'd have a contract with me. We'd start off by making a site visit. Then I'd make drawings. Then I'd take the drawings to the committee. I walk them through the [plan –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Is this committee in Washington, or are we coming back to Jacksonville?

VALERIE JAUDON: No, it's Jacksonville. It's all local. The GSA would have put this together. It's got local [representatives, the judge, the lawyers –VJ]. Developers, anybody else that they feel is important to this. And they vote on it, the local committees. if I get past this approval stage, then we go to the next stage. [Usually they will visit me –VJ] three different times while in the process of it, to check and see how it's coming along . Then I had to have it shipped all down, which was the biggest problem in the world, just having shippers. Please don't get me started on shippers. These are not installers.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Because this is in various segments. These are in how many segments? One, two, three, four, five segments?

VALERIE JAUDON: Probably five, it's thirty feet high. I really needed very good people to put it together and then attach it permanently to the—or semi-permanently—to a granite wall.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] Right. And you went for acrylic?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. I had to go for acrylic because this is in the sun. It's mostly in the shade, but there will be times of the day when the sun comes in . All of these materials are natural materials: cadmium red, Mars black. a cobalt green; it was expensive. But I had to get things that would not fade, real [inaudible] colors. So they're permanent forever. And in acrylic, I was afraid of the oil. And I think this would last [longer –VJ]. The brushwork is showing enough to keep the sun reflecting on it and sparkling all over. But this is totally permanent. And I have instructions about what to do. Basically don't touch it. [They laugh.] It was simple—

AVIS BERMAN: And what were some of the important ideas for you within the painting, the paintings as paintings?

VALERIE JAUDON: I had basically wanted a large column-like figure for both of these, six-feet wide, and then it was going to act as part of the architecture. If you have a four-inch band [in the painting –VJ] and there are other things nearby that are four inches, like rail ends or anything else like this, it picks up the strength of the building, and it locks [onto –VJ] it like a grid or like a web with the painting. [The elements join –VJ] the composition of the larger building. Basically the painting gets strength from the building. It seems almost as if it's incised into the architecture of the building. There were plenty of measurements on the grid, on the glass, etc. that were all

going to be reflected back and forth. This was going to hold together architecturally like a dream. [The idea first would be –VJ]—the architectural idea of holding it together in the architecture. [These two figures are different –VJ]. They aren't exact, [but –VJ] they do work like columns. But it's still a painting.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] And was this well received eventually?

VALERIE JAUDON: I think it was, yes. They had a party. I was there for the installation. I made sure everything was installed beautifully and photographs taken down there. It looked really good. So it's over for me. And when it's done like that, it's over.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] I mean is there anything, just looking back today, that you might change about it?

VALERIE JAUDON: No. It really worked well.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I'm not saying that you should. I'm just asking you.

VALERIE JAUDON: No, no. I think it—

AVIS BERMAN: And is there anything you would change about the GSA process in terms of how this went, you know, from the artist's point of view?

VALERIE JAUDON: I think it went like a dream. Jennifer paid so much attention to this. She prepared so well. She left nothing to chance here. She took care of everything. It was really—She understood every bit of the process before she would even deal with anyone else. When you have really intelligent people like this, they are incredible.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

VALERIE JAUDON: Some people like to build—

AVIS BERMAN: Let's just—I think we need to pause. [Audio Break.] And is there anything in particular to consider when the government is your client, as opposed to any of the other entities that you've worked for?

VALERIE JAUDON: They have a very particular contract for artists; [it is –VJ] 60 pages long, and it could scare a lot of people. But I'd say 40 pages of it doesn't matter at all. It is a boilerplate. But I think that they have really thought this out. In fact, when I do other things or I talk to other people, I encourage them to take this procedure in terms of how to choose artists. How to make sure that everything is written down. Everybody knows everybody's responsibilities so that there are no real wild cards if you write it all down. And if you don't play commercial real estate or you don't play Halliburton or whatever. If you're really straightforward with the artist, and you tell them their responsibility, then it's fine.

AVIS BERMAN: And I guess besides, you know, we were talking about you had to approach this differently than in your studio, I guess the main reason was having to use acrylic. Would there have been anything else that would have made it different from a studio painting? I mean obviously that it had to fit in the size.

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, yes. I had to rent another studio. I was in 601 West 26th Street and Tenth Avenue. I had to rent another studio up on the sixteenth floor to simply draw it out.

AVIS BERMAN: [Sneezes] Excuse me. Sorry.

VALERIE JAUDON: I had to have a lot of help. I had to make a 16-foot compass that I could draw it on. Blowing it up was a big deal.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: It was a very big deal. So leaning down on your knees on the concrete floor. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yeah!

VALERIE JAUDON: Then organizing that. I had four people helping me drawing it out and transferring it. Once it was on the canvas, then it was in six-foot panels. Then I could handle it pretty easily. It wasn't bad at all. But the whole preparation was quite something. You just can't do this in a regular studio. It can't be done.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, then let us to go on to the second GSA commission, which, again, I think it was good that we talked about Birmingham a little bit earlier because this, again, is figuring out—And this is again—this is for the Thomas Eagleton Courthouse in St. Louis [MO], which is a very large garden and plantings and a

walkway. It looks like it's across the street from the courthouse?

VALERIE JAUDON: Right. It's the block across the street. If you're in the courthouse, you look down on this.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] And why is it called *Filippine Garden* [2004]?

VALERIE JAUDON: Judge [Edward Louis] Filippine was the judge in charge of the project. He built actually the Eagleton Courthouse. He was [U.S. Senator Thomas Francis] Eagleton's—When Eagleton was running for vice president, he was his campaign manager. That was a long time ago [1972]. He built that courthouse. [He was in charge of the art project. –VJ] And he was a great mayor also on the building. He was responsible for ultimately getting [the artwork –VJ] built in the midst of a lot of little political problems.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it looks, just looking at the courthouse—I mean I don't even know what's on the inside—but it looks as if the garden and the plantings that are there, and the way the stones are laid out, that maybe an artist did, someone thought about the paving that was directly in front of the courthouse, too.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes. The building had been built already. It was completely finished before I got there. They had been working for quite a few years with different artists and commissioning them to come up with an idea for across the street. I think that the architect in the beginning had spent a lot of the [art –VJ] budget on the building and on their plantings across the street. [That block was a historical site. –VJ] It had been a paint factory. So all of the earth was contaminated and had to be removed at millions of dollars, by the time that I had gotten there. Also underneath were remnants of houses in early—it used to be a swampy area. It had a lot of malaria and [disease –VJ] in the 19th century. It was during the time that St. Louis was a famous city. It was the city you had to go through to get to California and etc.

One of the most interesting things [was the way this project started –VJ]—it was an architectural charrette. They had decided to do this because the artist who had been there before had been Mary Miss had quit the project. I did not know why, and I'm still puzzled although I can imagine. But I admire her incredibly. She's got to be one of the best public artists there are.

AVIS BERMAN: I agree.

VALERIE JAUDON: I have such respect for this woman and what she's done. —I got the phone call from Jennifer, and she said, "If I were to say to you, could you be ready in a month to go to—Can I say that you're up for a project in a major American city, and I cannot tell you [where –VJ], and you will not know until the week before. This will be a charrette and a competition. We're going to put about five artists together. They're going to be top artists that can handle a particular site. You may need an architect, you may need a landscape architect to help you out. We're going to give you $5,000. We're going to fly you out for two days. All of you will meet there. You will be given instructions at the site. Then you will be given a day, the next day, to work on the whole thing. Your materials will be taken away at seven o'clock. Then the next morning you will present to a committee of 30 people who have been working on this for [years –VJ]—That was intriguing.

AVIS BERMAN: So cloak-and-dagger it was.

VALERIE JAUDON: It was! It was secretive. She said it's a major American city. And I said, "Jennifer, this is incredible. This sounds like you're being thrown in the middle of Afghanistan and you have to work fast on your feet. " So I said, "Well, of course I'll do this, This is exciting." She said, "That's all you have to do. That's what we're going to do. It's a three-day thing. And if nothing else, it'll be a great experience." I said, "Absolutely, it'd be a great experience." So we found out about a week before, much too late to do any research whatsoever. it's going to be St. Louis. if you get off the plane early, you can walk around town. But that's about it. So as soon as I got off the plane, I was walking around town. Mapping out the town. Seeing where the site was. Trying to check it out before the sun went down. It was working very fast. Woke up in the morning. At ten o'clock [we had –VJ] an information meeting.

AVIS BERMAN: Were there other artists there, too?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, there were.

AVIS BERMAN: Who were the others?

VALERIE JAUDON: Dan Graham was the main one. He had brought an assistant with him, a young lady. And there were two other sculptors that I hadn't been familiar with. But they were from the Midwest and very successful people. They all brought secretaries with them. [They laugh.] —So with the meeting of about 30 people, you could tell these people had been working on this building for some time. This was a very informed crew—all the maintenance people, the architect, the people from the GSA from the Midwest, [and –VJ] different contractors that they had wanted to hire. This was a roomful of people. This was a serious bit of business. Judge

Filippine was extremely charming and very much in charge of everything. Showing us around as if it were his living room, which it was essentially.

They said some people could stay in the hotel and draw ideas or whatever. We're all on the site, told the whole history of the site. It all made sense. I kept asking Judge Filippine questions because he was really telling me everything I wanted to know. I said I wanted to work in the courthouse itself on a high floor so I could look down to see the whole city. And Judge Filippine stayed there for about three hours. Oh, we were talking about politics because I found out he was Eagleton's campaign manager. [He told –VJ] me all about St. Louis. He loved St. Louis. He loved this building. And he wanted me to do a good job. He was curious about—what do you do? What do artists do in a way? And he would answer any question I asked him, any question I asked him.

So I was working at the site. There was [a budget –VJ]—I don't know, probably half a million dollars. We had access to the government office that tells you how much things cost, like bricks and everything, which is totally a farce. It doesn't mean anything. I was on the phone an hour trying to find the cost of bricks with architect friends in New York. I didn't know what [material –VJ] to begin with. This is a public space. It's got to be clean. But it's going to take a whole lot of people. This is very public, and it's got to hook up with the rest of St. Louis. For me, it couldn't appear as if it were some jewel in the ocean. This is a part of the city. And it needs a meeting place. I was thinking bricks first, then I was thinking stone. I found out the cost of stone, stone was out of the question.

So I wasted most of the afternoon talking to Judge Filippine and trying to find out about the bricks. And then I was trying to [work the whole sight –VJ]. I had to use a big board, so I had these little stickies all over the board with all these questions. I had about 30 questions with little stickies everywhere. So my presentation in the morning, when they took away my board that night—You know most of them were expecting some little picture. I couldn't [make –VJ] a picture. And I thought overnight [about it –VJ], and I was working on it. This is before the Internet so you couldn't do research really. It wasn't going to work like that.

I went to my presentation, and I say, okay, You know I didn't get to draw anything, but I've got all these stickies with notes. I thought well, since you brought me here, you've paid me to come here, what I'm going to do is I'm going to give you a critique of what this site is and what this site needs. It may be what I could do and the direction I would go. But more than that, I can't give you a picture of anything, I did not have time to do it. So I spent my hour going through, walking them all through the site, telling them what I thought they needed. They needed the connection with the city. They needed the connection to the ballgame. You had to deal with that ugly parking garage. It had to be part of the courthouse itself. Etc. And I couldn't find out about materials. I said, " I have to hire a landscape architect to work with me." I said, "There are so many things I don't know. A lot of these are engineering things. , the irrigation is a problem here. Irrigation can cost half a million dollars [itself –VJ], just to get some grass out there." I said, "So it's a real question of cost. So I just don't know what to do. It depends on the materials."

So they thanked me. I left. I left knowing there was no way I could possibly win this commission. So I win the commission. [They laugh.] Because they liked the way I was thinking [and planning –VJ]. It turns out the sculptors were all thinking essentially of autonomous objects in the middle of a field.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] I mean everybody was to work on this area across the street?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, we had the whole block.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: Somebody had to do something with it. But you could do anything you wanted. This is the thing about the GSA; they don't care what you do.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: And if it works, it works. If people like it, they like it. But they're not going to tell you what to do. So I think the other sculptors had things like a glass building that people could walk in.

AVIS BERMAN: In the middle or something.

VALERIE JAUDON: Something like that. I was thinking, no, you've got to do something to the entire block. And you've got to get this wall painted. The judge said, "I've been trying to get them to paint that wall forever." And I said, "You know you've got to deal with this building back here. This is the parking garage; this is so ugly. [And the mall, of course, leads to downtown St. Louis –VJ]. There's no way that you could have anything this big, this major unless it directly is a continuation of the mall and gives you an access across here. So I [just went –VJ] through the whole thing.

So when I got it, I hired two landscape architects. [One was from Cornell, and one was from Parsons –VJ]. I hired an architect. They were all people just out of school before they had begun their careers. So they were all very talented, and they were all very excited about getting something built. I said, "I have this commission. You can work with me. And we're going to basically figure out what to do." I had an engineer artist—sculptor—from Australia; he had a lot of engineering experience. So we sat down to work on this together. We had an arborist as well. We all had different jobs. We'd meet in the morning in my loft on 26th Street, which is pretty big. It was enough for a lot of tables. So we all had a big table. We'd meet every two hours, and then we'd go off. One person would go off and try to call about the bricks. Or try to find how much granite costs, how much whatever costs. And another person would think about [big trees –VJ]. I've got to find a tree [to make an arcade –VJ] because it's going to need shade, it's going to have to grow, which ended up being a London plane tree. These landscape architects walked me all over New York.

The engineer was trying to figure out the leveling of the ground. We had big problems with leveling, big problems with irrigation. So my job was to figure out what to do, what's going to look good? What's the organization? Do I want to do one of my paintings out there? So my team [put me on the design and they were the information people –VJ]. And if they'd get an idea, they should tell me, too. Like the ground's sloping over here, so you'd better watch out; you can't do this. This experience was so fabulous, of working with these people. If we reached a dead end on one thing, information wasn't coming in, or I didn't have any ideas, or I was getting tired, I could work on another part of it. I'd work on the sidewalk problem. There were a million problems that you could work on. It was almost all summer; it was about three months.

AVIS BERMAN: So that would have been summer of, well, 2003 probably, because you finished in 2004. Or commissioned in 2000—

VALERIE JAUDON: No, it was [in the spring, partially in the summer, the year before. This was just the initial thing. –VJ]

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, so this was 2000.

VALERIE JAUDON: Because I had to do the real measurements. If I do the real measurements, I'm doing the real idea.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

VALERIE JAUDON: I don't want to make a drawing and say, well, I'll find out the cost of granite later. Very quickly we realized they couldn't afford anything. [They laugh.] You couldn't put anything out there —in fact it was Jim Balsley, a Peer in the GSA, a landscape architect. He was saying, half a million dollars for that? That's a joke. No wonder they got an artist to do it. You're the only person that would do it. [They laugh.] Any sort of landscape architect wouldn't touch it. Wouldn't touch that! There's just no money for it. So this is why it's grass and gravel. [They laugh.] That was the simplest thing we could do. We had grass and gravel.

The idea I finally presented to [them was on three different economic levels –VJ]. One, just grass and gravel but with no granite trim. I said, "This is going to look pretty poor. But if you can come up with some extra money, we can trim this." And I drew [how it would look with a local stone. We can pick it out together. –VJ] It's going to look a lot better if you can get an irrigation system which there's not much money here for. If you want to make the grass look good, I would go for the highest quality. Kentucky Blue Grass . In fact we had a custom-made mixture done, a turf. Fabulous, just fabulous stuff, and this grass was great in the end. I said, "I gave them the options so you can do this, this, and this. The trees, the London plane trees. We can get them young. The older we get them, the better they're going to look."

And this is the one thing I regret. I regret that I did not get larger trees. But then again, they would have had to raise another million dollars for it. By then, though, the thing they loved about the project, when we got that far, [the young trees gave them all something to look forward to –VJ]. When I'm talking about "they," I'm talking about 30 people that had been working on this. The fact [was –VJ] they may not get to see those trees grow up in 20 years, but their grandchildren could. So it was the garden of hope almost. Besides it [had –VJ] looked so bad. They had been living with this thing. Oh, it was smelly, it was rough, it was disgusting; it looked like a dump. And they'd been working in a very nice courthouse, the largest federal courthouse in the United States, very good materials in everything there. They were looking out on this pile of junk. They wanted that finished, and I was willing to do it. So these 30 people came onboard. Everybody was incredibly enthusiastic about it. And the judge eventually got more money for it. God knows what he did.

AVIS BERMAN: So you got the granite—you got the trim?

VALERIE JAUDON: We got the trim. In fact the local project manager found a place that sold stone not too far. The whole crew went out there in cars, went out there picking [out the stone –VJ]. Once you get out on the field like that, it's obvious what's going to be the best stone or what's the most suitable thing. And we got it. We all

picked it out together.

AVIS BERMAN: And this seems to be, you know, one of these figural—a motif from your painting.

VALERIE JAUDON: It's a figural form. I needed the pathways eight feet. Once you get the pathways that [wide –VJ], it's not the configuration that counts because you can't really see it unless you're on at least the second floor of the building. I didn't care about that so much. It was sort of an added thing. But when you're walking on it, meandering on these paths, you're dealing with beautiful, lush grass, [and trees –VJ]. Hopefully, one day, the whole thing will be shady. Then I did some benches. You can sit and you can walk. So it's a real prolonged aesthetic experience. Of course the proportions are coming out of the architecture of the courthouse itself: the steps and whatever. It attaches itself to the building when you're down there even. It locks in. It really looks like the building's front porch.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.] And was Judge Filippine happy?

VALERIE JAUDON: He was happy. He had never been on my side at the beginning because he thought it would've been a lot easier to get a sculptor. Just to do it, get it over with. And they already had pictures of things they wanted to do. But he had been talked into it by other people. He had a talk with me. He said, "You know, I insist we are going to do exactly what you want to do. And I will see it through with you. And we will get this built to your taste, to your specifications." He said, "You tell me what has to be done and I will make sure they do it." And indeed he did. Indeed he did. The contractors, they were local people—This was a time when the GSA was dealing with Halliburton and people like that. Halliburton wannabes. [That is, –VJ] they spend most of their money on lawyers. Then they go out in the street and hire anybody out there that does anything.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

VALERIE JAUDON: They aren't talented. They don't know how to do the job, so they get paid for it. Then they mess it up, and then they pay them again to do it. It's a system they have. These are Halliburton wannabes. I shouldn't say that, but they were.

AVIS BERMAN: The contractors, the building people, weren't too good, in other words?

VALERIE JAUDON: They tried to make a lot of substitutions.

AVIS BERMAN: Cut corners?

VALERIE JAUDON: For example, the gravel. I very clearly gave them a four-foot [sample of gravel that we got from the Pulitzer Garden of the Tadao Ando building, which was a fabulous building that had just been built –VJ]. I think Mrs. Pulitzer had bought up most of this gravel. There wasn't much left. It was a white-gray gravel. Beautiful stuff. Local, beautiful stuff. I wanted that. I didn't want a substitute. And they substituted. They put it down the first time. They wanted to use a dark gray. And I said—in the meeting—how can you tell me that this is the gravel at the Pulitzer? And he [said that I didn't really specify –VJ]. And I said, No. I did specify. We can see it in the [minutes –VJ]. And there were minutes of these meetings.

This was done in the judge's [room –VJ]—the table had 30 people. I said, No, it's the Pulitzer Building. That's our model, you know, and that's what I want. I even have some samples with me. I've got it right here, in a bag. And they said, Well, we've never seen these before. And I said, No, you have, I left them with you. So the secretary for—maybe it was Judge Filippine—said, I kept the samples. I can go in my office and get them. She goes and gets the samples. And it's the Pulitzer Garden samples; she had brought them home in her purse. And so we rolled them out on the table, and they say, Okay, we'll fix it. [They laugh.] You know it's like having your kitchen done, but much worse. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And did Judge Filippine live to see this?

VALERIE JAUDON: Oh, yes, of course. He's alive. Yes. I knew everything depended on the stonecutter. So I made personal contact with the stonecutter, and I said, Look, I personally will try to get you guys a raise or a bonus or something because you're making an artwork, and it really has to look perfect. The sample that you did, I want it to look exactly like the sample. You do that, you're going to find me on your side. And when they put pictures of it, in the paper, I'm going to make sure your name is there. I remember my craftsmen.

Sure enough, they sent in the bad team first, and it was not very good. They tried to do it fast, and they were trying to [finish –VJ]. Judge Filippine saw it from his window. He called me up and said, "Valerie, you've got to come to St. Louis. They started off well, but I think something's wrong. Can you come tell me what's wrong? I don't know what's wrong." So I flew out there. , "Oh, judge, they messed up. Let me talk to them. Let's go talk to them. Are you going to come with me?" He says, "Yes, yes, yes." So he comes out. And I went down there, rearranged the stones. I told them it had to be a Cadillac job. They understand "Cadillac job." They redid it, and

it turned out beautifully—they sent in the A Team. It was pretty simple.

The grass people were great because it was custom-made grass. Beautiful job. The tree people, they were crooks, [a problem –VJ]. The government [has contracts with people who supply trees –VJ] and shrubbery and so forth; they can easily do bad things. [They had shown me –VJ] what the trees looked like. Then they substituted the trees, and gave me younger trees because they had a range between a three-inch caliber . Anyway, they cheated. So they were even younger when they started out. Because they were younger, they had to brace them all. And there was nothing we could do about the tree people. And I had trusted the tree people. [Why? I don't know. –VJ] If anything had to change, and this is the only thing I've ever regretted in any project, I would've made those trees bigger. I would've insisted we had to have the big trees. I goofed up there. But it looks nice. It looks beautiful. Right now it's very minimal, and it's being held together by the stone and the gravel. But we're missing the shade.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Right. But in terms of maintenance or conservation, is there anything particular that has to be done there?

VALERIE JAUDON: Well, I wrote a book on it. The book was this thick on the maintenance and what had to be done. I gave it to the maintenance people. A very strong maintenance [plan –VJ]. In fact the people who are maintaining it are [Homeland Security –VJ].

AVIS BERMAN: Homeland Security?

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes, Homeland Security. [They laugh.] I had a book, and it was very clear. I wrote out every single month what they had to do. Fertilizing, I got lots of advice. Nothing could be changed. They can't add anything to it. They can have events and things. But everybody has to clean it off. If they mess up the turf, they have to replace it. They all agreed with this. They agreed with this booklet 100 percent because it was the only thing to do. As soon as I'm off the [project –VJ], what do they want to start doing? They [wanted –VJ] to put signs up. They wanted to put ashtrays up. And I said, "No, it's a work of art. Can't do it." [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I think—

RICHARD KALINA: I'm sorry, but we have people coming by to—

VALERIE JAUDON: Okay.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I think that I'm pretty much done anyway.

VALERIE JAUDON: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So thank you very much. This has been absolutely splendid.

[END OF jaudon09_1of1_cd_track03.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]